



## STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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**GARY O. BARTLETT**  
Executive Director

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December 20, 2007

The Honorable Joe Hackney  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
State of North Carolina  
16 W. Jones Street, Room 2304  
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096

Denise Weeks  
House Principal Clerk  
State of North Carolina  
16 West Jones Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601

The Honorable Marc Basnight  
President Pro Tempore of the Senate  
State of North Carolina  
16 W. Jones Street, Room 2007  
Raleigh, NC 27601-2808

Janet Pruitt  
Senate Principal Clerk  
State of North Carolina  
16 West Jones Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601

Re: Instant Runoff Voting  
Findings and Recommendations

Dear House and Senate Leadership;

We are pleased to file our observations of the pilot program for municipal offices in 2007 using instant runoff voting to the 2007 General Assembly.

### **Voting Equipment**

The State Board of Elections (SBE) staff met with the Election Systems & Software (ES&S), the election equipment vendor in North Carolina, to determine if there was firmware/software available to support Instant Runoff Voting. Representatives from ES&S informed the SBE that no software was currently available, but they were willing to develop the product if the State of North Carolina was willing to pay the costs. The SBE staff informed the vendor no funding was made available by the Legislature for the IRV Pilot Program and all discussions from that point forward focused on finding ways to utilize the current certified voting equipment.

The SBE staff developed methods to utilize both the Optical Scan and Direct Record Electronic (DRE) SBE certified voting equipment.

- Optical Scan –The initial count of all ballots was to be conducted using the automated machine count. Methods were developed and tested that utilized a hand sort of the ballots to be tabulated for a runoff, if necessary, using an automated machine count or a hand-to-eye count. These methods assured that voters would not vote for the same candidate multiple times.
- Direct Record Electronic – The initial count of the DRE ballots was to be conducted using the automated machine count. In case a runoff was necessary, a procedure was developed to read the voting machine data into the SBE certified Unity software and reports would then made available from the Unity Software to provide a method to review the individual vote records to insure that voters did not vote for the same candidate multiple times.

## **Selection Process**

The SBE communicated with numerous municipalities in an effort to select a diversity of population, size, regional location, demographic composition, and a variety of voting systems. The SBE received voluntary approval from the following municipalities to participate in the 2007 pilot program using instant runoff voting:

- The Town of Cary - Wake County
- The City of Hendersonville – Henderson County
- City of Kinston – Lenoir County

Below is a list of the guidelines used for these municipalities:

- Approval of the municipalities and county board of elections;
- Voting System type – one (1) optical scan and one (1) direct record electronic;
- Experienced county board of elections;
- Availability of volunteers to assist in voter education;
- Enough candidates filed for office to insure a potential runoff.

## **Town of Cary**

The Town of Cary was electing a Mayor and two (2) Council At-Large positions at the municipal election being held on October 9, 2007. Two candidates filed for the office of Mayor and four (4) candidates filed for the Council At-Large positions. An optical scan ballot was designed that allowed each voter the opportunity to select their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Choice for each position on the ballot.

## **City of Hendersonville**

The City of Hendersonville was electing two Council At-Large positions at the municipal election being held on November 6, 2007. Five candidates filed for the Council At-Large positions and the SBE assisted Henderson County in designing an optical scan ballot for absentee voters and a Direct Record Electronic (DRE) ballot for the election day voters that allowed each voter the opportunity to rank their choices for each position on the ballot.

## **City of Kinston**

The City of Kinston never reached the approval process as they did not have enough candidates file for office to insure a potential runoff election.

## **Voter Education Programs**

With no funding being provided by the legislature for the pilot program, it was essential that the state, counties and cities create innovative plans to provide voter information. Voter mailings, public demonstrations, media publicity, and volunteer workers at the polling places provided a limited amount of education to the voters on the method of casting votes in the IRV offices.

## **Election Results**

In the Town of Cary the contest for City Council District B was decided by the Instant Runoff Voting method. All other contests did not require a runoff.

In the City of Hendersonville the contest for City Council At Large did not require a runoff.


## **Exit Polls**

Exit polls were conducted by volunteers under the direction of Dr. Michael Cobb, Assistant Professor of Political Science, NC State, and the results compiled and analyzed. The enclosed surveys produced by Dr. Cobb indicate that the voters understood the IRV voting method and favor the continued use of IRV voting in future elections.

## **Conclusion**

These pilot programs serve as basic foundations for counties to continue testing the IRV method of voting on a larger scale in 2008. Consideration for funding by the General Assembly for the IRV pilot program for voter education in 2008 could contribute to the overall success of the program. Funding will be required for software development, after the pilot program is completed, if there is to be any future use of IRV voting in North Carolina elections.

Sincerely,



Gary Bartlett  
Executive Director

Cc: Legislative Library (2 copies)  
Representative Jean Farmer-Butterfield  
Representative Angela R. Bryant