

Errors Made by People For The American Way (PFAW) in their Analysis of HR 811

By NCvoter.net, Feb. 22, 2007

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We applaud PFAW for their support of HR 811 , but we ask them to revise their "analysis" of HR 811

PFAW's newly posted "Analysis of HR 811" indicates favor towards touch-screens voting systems, a position that no longer can be supported. The overwhelming evidence indicates touch-screen voting systems often break down, miscount, and disenfranchise voters.

Some friends of PFAW are contacting PFAW about this; I hope you will do so as well.

Here is an excerpt from PFAW's "An Analysis of H.R. 811 The Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2007: Separating Myth from Fact",
<http://media.pfaw.org/PDF/SarasotaCD13/HoltAnalysis.pdf>

From page 2 & 3

"Additionally, many civil rights and disability rights organizations that have been engaged in the protection of voting rights for many years have testified that DRE technology offers better access options to voters with disabilities and voters who have minority language needs. Indeed, in our own experience through our Election Protection efforts and otherwise, we have seen for ourselves the opportunities such technology affords to voters with disabilities or minority language needs.

Whereas optical scan technology requires the printing of thousands, if not millions, of ballots in multiple languages, the distribution of those ballots in adequate numbers for each precinct, and the training of poll workers to distribute those ballots to those voters who seem to need them, DRE technology is much more effective for minority language voters.

In particular, DRE technology allows voters to decide on their own whether they need a minority language ballot, all of which would be preloaded onto all DREs in a jurisdiction (thus reducing printing costs as well).

Similarly, DREs afford voters with disabilities an opportunity to cast an independent secret ballot— something that optical scan paper ballots cannot fully do. It is important that jurisdictions with large numbers of minority language voters and voters with disabilities have the flexibility to use DRE equipment, so long as those DREs comply with the VVPAT requirements in this bill. Of course, as noted above, nothing in this bill precludes jurisdictions from using existing optical scan technology that addresses the accessibility issues for voters that have language minority needs as well as voters with disabilities.

Please email PFAW pfaw@pfaw.org

Suggested email below:

To: pfaw@pfaw.org

Subject: flaw in analysis of HR 811

Dear PFAW - I couldn't be more upset with your organization right now.

In your "analysis of HR 811" (<http://media.pfaw.org/PDF/SarasotaCD13/HoltAnalysis.pdf>), your information on page 2 & 3 about optical scan voting systems and touch-screen systems is hugely inaccurate.

PFAW seems unaware of the overwhelming evidence that today's touch-screen voting systems are deeply flawed. Improved systems are years away in development, if ever.

Your analysis reads like a sales pitch for touch-screens, and will be used as a rationalization to saddle our states with more failed technology and more failed elections for years to come.

I urge you to consult with credentialed "experts" such as Dr. Barbara Simons, Dr. David Dill, or Avi Rubin so that you can provide correct information.

PFAW has erred regarding voting machines - the fact is:

- touch-screens are not better for minority voters
- touch-screens are not better for disabled voters
- touch-screens are not better for non-English speaking voters.
- touch-screen systems cost far more to own and operate than do optical scan systems
- touch-screens are harder for poll workers and voters to use
- touch-screens caused 15 times as many reports of problems at polling places
- touch-screens are more hackable than other voting systems

Rather than encouraging the use and spread of touch-screen voting, PFAW should instead recommend optical scan systems and ballot marking devices to assist the disabled.

I urge PFAW to correct this analysis, so that our next elections are more secure, more accessible and more accurate.

Please review the attached research, studies and news articles.

I thank PFAW for being a good citizen and look forward to a quick correction on this statement.

Please advise immediately as to whether you would revise your "analysis" of HR 811 accordingly.
Sincerely;

Touch-Screen Problems, Costs, Voter Disenfranchisement

The Democratic National Committee's Report on Ohio. Advised that touch-screens tended to disenfranchise minorities but that optical scan did not.
<http://a9.g.akamai.net/7/9/8082/v001/www.democrats.org/pdfs/ohvrireport/section02.pdf>

Study of New Mexico's 2004 Election showed that Direct Record Electronic DRE's (even with paper) were worse for minorities than for others and that it was the Optical Scanners that reported fairly. <http://www.votersunite.org/info/newmexicophantomvotes.asp>

February 14 2007. Report Finds Voting Systems Fail to Meet ADA and HAVA
Requirements for Voters With Disabilities; DRE's (Touch-Screens) Not The Answer
Authored by access technology expert Noel Runyan.
http://www.voteraction.org/News/02-14-07_1.html

"Touch screen not best choice for disabled voters." Advised Aleda J. Devies, a retired systems engineer and activist for the rights of people with disabilities.
<http://www.votersunite.org/article.asp?id=5588>

Optical Scan and Ballot Marking Best for Accessible and Verifiable Voting,
Voters Can Have the Best of Both Worlds - Verified Voting Executive Director Will Doherty
<http://www.verifiedvotingfoundation.org/article.php?id=6254>

Optical Scan is more accessible, accurate, auditable and affordable for all voters
Non-English voters are well served by paper ballots in jurisdictions such as San Francisco, which has served Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Russian languages for years.
The money saved by using optical scan can be used to provide extensive services to non-English speaking voters, services like multi-lingual voter information lines, multi lingual voter education materials, multi lingual elections websites, and bi-lingual poll workers. See San Francisco's Election Dept website http://www.sfgov.org/site/election_index.asp

Optical scan technology costs less, but PFAW infers that it costs more.
Although Optical Scan does require printing alot of paper ballots, studies prove that it is less expensive than using touch-screen machines.

Miami Dade Study of Ballot Distribution Costs for Multiple Language Ballots
Findings – Paper ballot optical scan systems, even with multiple language ballots still cost less to own and operate than paperless touch-screen machines. See that study and other similar cost studies.
<http://votepa.us/info/MiamiInitialReportfromSoE.pdf>
<http://www.votersunite.org/info/costcomparisonextended.asp>
<http://www.ncvoter.net/affordable.html>

PFAW analysis says that touch-screen voting systems accurate and easier to use, but a report of election incidents by Voters Unite proves otherwise:
"Notably, while precinct scanners are used in 38 states and central count scanners are used in all states, DREs are used in only 34 states. Nevertheless, as the following chart shows, there were over three and a half times as many reports of problems with DREs; nearly nine times as many usability difficulties with DREs; and over fifteen times as many reports of long lines and/or voters leaving without voting.
<http://www.votersunite.org/info/E-VotingIn2006Mid-Term.pdf>

Princeton Study finds that touch-screens are "Inherently More Hackable"
<http://votepa.us/info/tsxstudy.pdf>