



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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League of Women Voters Calls on State Elections Commission to Address Voting System Problems

COLUMBIA, SC – In the wake of problems with touch-screen voting machines in South Carolina's Republican presidential primary, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina strongly urged that the South Carolina State Elections Commission provide paper ballots for the November 2008 election. These ballots should be read by precinct-based optical scan machines and may be used for a random recount to check the accuracy of the machines.

For next Saturday's Democratic presidential primary the League called on the Elections Commission to ensure that enough paper ballots will be on hand at every polling place in the event of machine failure or malfunction. Each polling place is required to have back-up paper ballots available for 10% of the registered qualified voters at the voting place.

LWVSC President Barbara Zia stated, "We were dismayed that that many Horry County voting machines had not been properly configured for the primary and failed to operate. We believe it is important that every citizen be allowed to vote, without being told to go to another precinct or to come back later, when the voting machines may be working. When machines fail to open, voters worry that the machines may have other flaws that prevent the machines from recording their votes."

"There are potential problems with any voting system, but what this event in Horry County shows is that the system needs to be as simple as it can be so that the number of failure points is minimized," stated Duncan Buell, LWVSC voting technology specialist. "Software is hard to get right. And maybe what we will discover when this is examined after the fact is that a complicated high-technology system, distributed across some 2000 precincts in 46 counties, for one-time events like elections, run with largely volunteer staff, is just a bad idea."

The League of Women Voters supports only voting systems that employ a voter-verifiable, recountable paper ballot or other paper record, with the paper being the official record of the voter's intent. Following a two-year study of the iVotronics used in South Carolina, the LWVSC concluded that these machines have flaws that make them unreliable and therefore do not meet League standards.

Zia added, "Throughout the League of Women Voters' 88-year history, we have been committed to ensuring that every American citizen is able to cast an informed ballot and that every vote is counted fairly and accurately."