

Brenda Black
Presentation to Forum of April 30, 2008

As a frustrated voter, I thank you for another opportunity to try to impress upon you my firm conviction that nothing less than our democracy is at stake in our voting procedures and our oversight of the recording, counting and reporting of our vote.

During the winter of 2006 I became aware of the new HAVA regulations and the planned purchase of new voter technology. I was at a large group meeting attended by Chris Exarchos when he promised the audience that he was concerned about touch screen technology and would not support it in Centre County. He received loud applause and cheers from the meeting's attendees.

As events transpired, he not only appeared to ignore the quantities of technical and cost information that we sent to the Commissioners, he broke his promise and voted for ES&S touch screen machines.

We know that he lost his bid for reelection and ironically, could not question the results because the technology that he had chosen does not allow a recount or audit of the voting results. The public does not forget when it is manipulated and deceived and perhaps, another commissioner who ran a campaign based on supporting a voter-verified paper record may find his reelection wishes dashed.

Many of my friends and acquaintances have asked me why our elections are not secure now since they had voted for the two commissioners who had promised to seek a voter-verified paper record.

I have served as a poll watcher or a poll worker for every election since that winter of 2006. I am shocked and dismayed when I see the media and the Centre County Election Board statements following an election which portray the election as uneventful. Each time I have observed malfunctions with the machines and disenfranchisement of the voter.

Touch screen voting machine malfunctions occur every election despite the information that the voting public receives.

Twice I have observed touch screen voting machines where the security zip-strips were absent. These strips are in place to protect the machines' flash drives from tampering. On one occasion the precinct officials decided to use the machine throughout the election without knowing why the security strip was missing or without trying to secure the machine throughout the rest of the election day.

During the recent primary, I observed a precinct in Patton Township where all 8 machines were missing the protective zip strip. When I informed the Judge of Elections about the lack of security on her voting machines, she said she knew as she had removed them.

After a check with the Election's Office, a repair crew was sent to reinstall the security zip strips on the machines.

I know that the exposed flash drive is important to the correct function of the machines. During one election, a touch screen machine continued to malfunction and a repair crew was called to address the problem. As a poll watcher I tried to determine what they were doing to the machine and was told that I should not watch as they poked around in the flash drive area with a distorted paper clip. Although I only observed this once, others have reported that this paper clip probing in the flash card area was not an isolated event. That the machines can be altered in such an easy fashion concerns me because they are often left in poll workers' homes or in easily accessed churches overnight before the election.

During the recent primary the Supervisory PEB which activates the machine for each voter, was not cleared of prior votes and there was a scurry the morning of the election to collect the faulty PEBs and to substitute another PEB. I question whether the Election's Office was successful and whether this mistake had an impact on the election results.

When it came time to collect the data on the machines during the recent primary, the repair crew had to circulate among at least five polling places of the eight polling places that I had observed as a poll watcher because the process had become problematic. In some instances I heard that the printers were not working properly.

Every election I have observed voters being disenfranchised due to the use of touch screen technology. A voter has a constitutional

right to a timely vote without duress. During one election I observed long lines and voters frequently leaving without the opportunity to vote or saw election officials telling voters to return at another time which the voter might not be able to do. Poll workers told me that they found the new procedures more time consuming and confusing. They expressed a need for additional poll workers to help them through the election process using touch screen voting machines.

Some voters are disenfranchised because they find the new technology confusing and stay at home rather than exercising their right to vote. The November 2007 exit poll conducted by Concerned Voters of Centre County found that those aged 56-75 years of age were 2.1 times more likely to express dissatisfaction with the touch screens than younger voters. Election code requires a voter complete the process within 3 minutes unless no other voters are waiting. I have often watched the judge of elections helping voters while viewing the screen after the ballot is on the screen. This is a violation of the election code.

After my observations of touch screen machines in operation, it is inconceivable to me that we would still be asked to risk our election results by voting on this faulty technology. Currently, all indications are that over 75% of the counties in Pennsylvania will be using technology without a voter-verified paper record during the 2008 election of the President of our United State. I feel that the Commissioners have disenfranchised me and deprived me of my constitutional right to a secure vote that will be accurately counted by their choice of technology that is confusing and which has a history of security and malfunction problems. I request that the Commissioners act in a timely manner to protect my 2008 vote for President. The best way to accomplish this is to purchase or lease optical scanners with a mandatory random audit of the vote.

Thank you