

DEBRA BOWEN

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Secretary of State Debra Bowen Comments on Field Poll About Voter Confidence in Elections

SACRAMENTO – Secretary of State Debra Bowen commented on a Field Poll released today measuring 402 likely voters' confidence in California elections and voting methods.

The Field Poll, available at <http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2240.pdf>, shows less than half (44%) of the likely voters surveyed have a “great deal of confidence that their votes are being accurately counted.” Another 52% of the likely voters surveyed have only “some confidence” or “only a little confidence” that their votes are being accurately counted.

“I am surprised that so few people are firmly confident in the accuracy of our elections,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “My goal is to ensure all Californians believe their votes are counted accurately and the people who are in elected office are the ones who received the most votes.”

The Field Poll also reported a correlation between voter confidence in accuracy and voter confidence in specific voting systems. Voters who have less confidence that their votes are being counted as they were cast have less trust in touchscreen systems than they do in paper-based optical scan systems.

“The systems we use to cast and tally votes in this state are the fundamental tools of our democracy,” Bowen said. “My job is to be the voters’ analyst and advocate when it comes to the security and accuracy of voting systems. The top-to-bottom review was about trouble-shooting hidden problems and preventing them from occurring, instead of waiting to react to a crisis after it happens.”

After two months of unprecedented analysis of California’s optical scan and touchscreen voting systems and related election security procedures, Secretary Bowen decided August 3 that some of those systems can continue operating in 2008 in California while others are too flawed to be widely used.

Diebold, Hart InterCivic and Sequoia optical scan systems were decertified and then recertified with requirements to adopt increased security and post-election auditing procedures. Diebold

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and Sequoia direct recording electronic (DRE) systems were decertified and then recertified solely for the purposes of conducting early voting and to allow counties to have one DRE machine in each polling place on Election Day for the purpose of complying with disability access requirements of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Furthermore, these DRE systems will be required to comply with increased security and post-election auditing procedures. The Hart InterCivic DRE system was decertified and recertified for wider use but with requirements to comply with increased security and post-election auditing procedures.

Secretary Bowen's decisions on voting system certifications follow her thorough review of detailed academic findings by teams of nationally respected computer experts, as well as extensive input from voters, voting system vendors, and national, state and local elections experts. The most serious vulnerabilities – never before discovered by federal or state testers – were security holes in the Diebold and Sequoia DRE systems that made viral propagation and multi-election exploits possible with no knowledge of the computer source code or access to the central parts of the voting system.

For more details about Secretary Bowen's top-to-bottom review of California's optical-scan and DRE voting systems, go to http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_vsr.htm.

For a county-by-county list of voting systems used in the last statewide election, go to http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting_systems/systemsinuse_110606.pdf.

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