

March 17, 2019

The Honorable Representative Elijah Cummings, Chairman, House Oversight Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Cummings,

As a voting citizen of the state of Georgia for several decades, I am intimately familiar with the way that our unverifiable, unauditable electronic voting system has failed to serve its people since it was implemented in 2002. Governor Kemp is about to sign House Bill 316 that will replace this system with a similar one that makes absolutely no improvement.

As you examine evidence of voter suppression and election fraud in Georgia, please consider the way we cast our votes as a key element in what needs to be addressed. As House Bill 316 gets closer to implementation, citizens of Georgia are helpless to stop it. We need outside support.

I hope this brief summary of voting in Georgia will prove useful. So much has been written about the sordid performance of our voting technology, but it would fill too many volumes at this time.

I would be happy to assist in any way possible with your efforts to provide justice for Georgia voters.

Susan McWethy  
Decatur, GA

**View from one Georgia voter:**

The “granddaddy” of all voter suppression is electronic voting systems. Designed to make hacking and vote rigging undetectable, entire elections can be thrown. The paperless, Diebold Accu-Vote-TS Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machine system employed by the state of Georgia for the past seventeen years has also precluded the possibility of audits and meaningful recounts. There have been untold numbers of [problems](#) with every election conducted on these machines, but not one forensic analysis has ever been carried out, even after a lawsuit was filed demanding one, because the state’s elections server was magically [wiped clean](#) of all data four days later.

It is anybody’s guess what course Georgia voters really intended for their state and country for almost two decades. After being a Democratic state for almost 140 years, Georgia suddenly became Republican with the introduction of Diebold (a Republican owned and controlled company) voting machines. In the very first Diebold election in 2002, there was an entirely improbable result, with the incumbent governor holding an [11 point lead](#), but losing by 5 points. Democrats have not won a significant race since before 2002, including the very highly publicized 2017 race between John Ossoff and the unpopular Karen Handel, where a glitch occurred on election night. Democrats can be forgiven for not believing these outcomes, especially since there is an identical [“Red Shift”](#) phenomenon across the

nation where these machines are employed. Now the state is poised to continue down the same path by replacing the old proprietary DREs with equally insecure and riggable proprietary ballot-marking devices that embed voter intent in barcodes that are then tabulated, rendering elections again unverifiable, unauditable and unrecountable.

The process that got the state to this point is deplorable by any interpretation of democratic justice. What began as a flawed, corrupt process before the current system was purchased in 2001 continues seamlessly to this day. The same lobbyists are present, such as former Secretary of State Lewis Massey, who lobbied for Diebold and now represents election vendor Unisys, or former Director of Elections Kathy Rogers, who is now a senior vice president at Elections systems and Software (ES&S), formerly Diebold. Numerous other election vendor lobbyists have been added to the ranks at the Secretary of State's office, or left Georgia government to cash in at the corporate level.

What has become very clear to all who sincerely want improvement is that the process to procure a new system has been rigged since the beginning. No good-faith effort has been made to learn from experts in the field of election technology and management, or to listen to the will of the public who made clear what they wanted in a new election system.

Last April, then Secretary of State Kemp convened the Secure, Accessible & Fair Elections (SAFE) Commission that was charged with, among other [duties](#), "...conduct[ing] thorough discussions on all options--including the feasibility of using all hand-marked paper ballots..." as well as "...conduct[ing] cost analysis of market options..." Their job was to make a recommendation to lawmakers before the current session of the Georgia General Assembly.

Market options dominated discussions. At the second meeting, before a complete determination of need had been established, Commission members were treated to demonstrations by several vendors of ballot marking technology, so essentially, it was the vendors who drove the process, rather than the needs of Georgians. Because of the notorious revolving door between election technology vendors and Georgia government, it had the optics of a complete corporate snowjob.

No one was solicited to educate the Commission about hand-marking paper ballots, even though that is how 70% of Americans vote, a number that is rising as the vulnerabilities of electronic systems become impossible to ignore. Instead, the public was treated to lies and distortions about hand-marking on paper, such as "We don't want to go back to hanging chads," when punch-card systems were not being considered, or "That will open us back up to ballot stuffing like what used to happen in the bad old days of paper," ignoring the fact that every system they were considering also uses paper. (And the dreaded "piles and piles of ballots" would be eliminated with on-demand ballot printing.) Absurd claims proliferated of voter inability to bubble in a ballot, ignoring the reality that [hand marking is actually more accurate than computer marking](#), and that scanning technology is able to handle stray marks anyway. Selected speakers claimed that the old DRE system had not experienced problems, when over 120,000 votes went missing from a statewide race just this past November, to say nothing of seventeen

years of unaddressed problems. They ignored the [breach of the state's election server](#) that exposed 15 gigabytes of sensitive files to anyone for an undetermined number of years.

Cost analysis was all but missing. Vendors gave wild estimates when questioned by Commission members, and the final decision of the Commission was made with little understanding of the actual ramifications for taxpayers and county coffers.

Even though only one IT security expert was appointed to the Commission, members also had the benefit of the wisdom of dozens more of the nation's distinguished [IT security experts who weighed in with their concerns and recommendations](#). These experts are unequivocal in their support for hand marking paper ballots. They know that any computer can be hacked, and that it is an unnecessary risk to introduce ballot marking computers into the voting process.

Ignoring the advice of the [IT expert assigned to the Commission](#), as well as the nation's IT experts, and showing a shocking degree of irresponsibility for the state's taxpayers, the [Commission recommended](#) to the Legislature the less secure, more expensive ballot marking technology.

Thus was born HB 316.

Composing the terms for a new election system after almost two decades of unverifiable, unauditable electronic ballot recording requires time and serious deliberation. HB316 did not derive from consensus obtained through a deliberative process, but hastily, on misinformation, speculation and loyalty to vendors. What was a nonpartisan issue one year ago turned into a deeply partisan one this year with the new Republican governor at the helm who had managed his own election win.

In a spectacular display of party unity and absolute defiance of the facts, Georgia House Bill 316 bulldozed its way through all levels of House and Senate hearings and floor votes in less than one month. Committee meetings were crowded to overflowing. During public comments, committee members heard from dozens of members of the public who showed overwhelming support for hand marked paper ballots. Some of the activists did more homework than Commission members or most legislators and presented evidence, charts, and testimony regarding costs, security concerns and voter experience.

Meanwhile, new Secretary of State Raffensperger was stating lies, [comparing costs](#) of hand-marked ballots with computer-marked ones, using bogus data and coming up with absurd totals that defy common sense. His conclusions are soundly [refuted](#). He also [quoted a poll](#) claiming that 78% of Georgians favor ballot-marking devices, but one glance at how the questions were worded completely invalidates that poll. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, using sound methodology, [conducted a poll](#) concluding that 55% of Georgians favor hand-marked paper ballots.

What are we voters left to believe? The misinformation and dismissive treatment of the public points to only one possible conclusion: corruption. This bill is not about the people of Georgia; it can only be about vendors sweetening deals with legislators, and about the Secretary of State wanting to maintain control over programming the machines. The fix was in even before the SAFE Commission started meeting—Georgia is getting another flawed touchscreen system no matter how solid the advice and evidence against it.

What makes passage of this legislation profoundly troubling is the power it gives the Secretary of State and/or the vendor to rig elections. Whoever programs the elections has ultimate power over the results. There is no language in the bill to prohibit votes being hidden in barcodes or QR codes that are then tabulated, so it's a perfect storm for vote manipulation. Voters have absolutely no idea if the information embedded in those barcodes or QR codes matches their selections in spite of the words on the so-called "scanning ballot." Audits and recounts cannot be authentic.

After seventeen years of elections that enable undetectable malicious intent, it is time that all Georgia voters--not just those from one party-- get a transparent election system that they can trust. This has been a rigged system for too long already. We're tired of being cheated.

At the Senate Ethics Committee meeting former Secretary of State Cathy Cox stated, apparently without irony, that if we don't learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it. That is exactly what we are doing—by purchasing another insecure, unverifiable, unauditable election system.

Thank you for pursuing this urgent topic.

Susan McWethy  
Decatur, GA