



**THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS**
OF GREATER PITTSBURGH

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Suzanne Broughton, President, Remarks to the Board of Elections, December 4, 2006

Last November, members of the League served voters in three ways: (1) helped the County demonstrate the voting machines, (2) served as poll workers, and (3) volunteered for the Election Protection project. This experience gives the League a broad perspective on the election process.

From our experience in demonstrating the machines, we can see that most members of the public have not gotten beyond thinking about usability to consider the security of the machines. This Board can either reflect that limited mind set and emphasize usability, or it can take the lead in learning about and educating the public on security – which seems to the League to be a better way to serve the voters.

I sent my email requests to League members and poll workers (some of whom were both) asking for their election-day experiences, both as poll workers and as voters. I received 28 responses. Of these, about half were satisfied with the process. Of the others, half cited a lack of privacy as their main concern, due both to voters having to walk behind another voter's machine and to undesired assistance from poll workers. Voting machine errors and lack of security, difficulties with getting printouts at the close of balloting, confusion over emergency and provisional ballots, poorly functioning facilities for the disabled, and overwhelmed election officials were among the other comments. In addition, two members who are poll workers sent detailed critiques of the election-day process. While these critiques don't necessarily represent League position, they are important observations. I have attached these critiques and a more detailed summary of the problems mentioned by respondents.

The County has presented to the public a resolutely upbeat assessment of the efficacy of the voting process — a depiction that everything is fine. While much of it apparently is fine — for which the Election Division is to be commended — the reports of the Election Protection Project, VotePA and others have identified areas in need of improvement. These reports represent a great deal of largely volunteer effort on the part of dedicated people with considerable expertise. The League supports those efforts and their results, and trusts that county officials will both act to implement their recommendations and make those results and recommendations public.

Finally, basic to the League concept of good government are honesty and frankness in the interactions of public officials with citizens. With respect to voting machines, two phrases that should never again be heard from the lips of Allegheny County officials are “We had no choice” and “Paper Records are illegal in Pennsylvania.” These statements are simply not accurate, but are still being made—one as recently as in a conversation at CMU a few weeks ago. An accurate statement would be: No DRE machine using a paper record has yet been certified in Pennsylvania. My point is not a brief for optical scan. That case can be made, has been made and will surely be made again. But the point here is that since optical scan is legal in Pennsylvania, it is deceptive to claim that no paper record is legal. This board indeed had a choice and chose, by a split vote, to buy DRE machines. Hiding that choice and a complete description of what is legal from citizens is an abdication of responsibility to provide accurate information to the public.

Thank you for this opportunity to present these comments and the additional information attached.