

# Office of the County Clerk-Recorder

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO ♦ 1055 MONTEREY ST. RM. D120 ♦ SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93408 ♦ (805) 781-5080/5088



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March 29, 2007

Deborah Bowen  
Secretary of State  
1500 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento CA 95814

Dear Secretary Bowen:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft guidelines for the top to bottom review of voting systems in California. As the elected County Clerk-Recorder for San Luis Obispo County for the past 13 years, I share your concerns about the security, accessibility, ballot secrecy, accuracy, usability and public confidence in our voting systems and I applaud your efforts to ensure that voting systems meet these requirements.

The review that you are proposing is very broad and all aspects of it that warrant considerable attention. CACEO's comments represent a collaborative effort on behalf of the association and as such addresses all aspects of the review. My concerns, however, are narrowly focused on an issue with which I have had personal experience, which is the timing of any decision that would necessitate a change in voting systems, particularly one that would require a number of counties to implement new voting systems prior to the February 2008 presidential primary election. If the decision to decertify is not made until close to the August 3, 1997 deadline, counties would have just 6 months to procure and implement a new voting system. In 1999, San Luis Obispo undertook such an implementation in a likewise short period of time (5 months from request for proposal to Election Day) in preparation for the 2000 Presidential primary election. We accomplished a mostly successful implementation but not without a great deal of stress, anxiety and many, many 12 hour days for our staff, all conditions that invite oversights and mistakes. In hindsight, we were overly optimistic about our ability to implement in such a short period time and were fortunate it was not a disastrous experience. One of the major factors behind our success was that we were one of only two counties who were implementing this particular voting system in the same timeline and as such the vendor had sufficient staff and inventory resources to dedicate to our success. This will not be the case if numerous counties are forced to migrate to a new system and there could be a significant lack of resources or inventory to accomplish a successful implementation prior to the February 2008 election. This concern is further exacerbated for those Counties who have numerous jurisdictions scheduled for election in November, 2007.

I am also concerned about an all or nothing approach to the voting system approval. While the possibility of withdrawal subject to recertification with additional security measures is addressed in the forward, the language in the draft criteria merely states that the process for withdrawal of certification may be initiated upon written findings. I would hope that included in

the recommendations for each voting system for which issues have been identified would be the recognition that some issues can be mitigated with the use of uniform procedures and/or additional security. The ability to mitigate identified issues should be fully vetted and when appropriate, additional security measures should be considered prior to the decision to withdraw the certification of any voting system.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft guidelines and look forward to working with your office towards our mutual goal of increasing voters' confidence in our systems, procedures and the conduct of elections in California.

Sincerely,

Julie L. Rodewald  
County Clerk-Recorder