



## **NASS Statement on Security of Voting Systems**

Approved by Membership Vote, September 10, 2003

The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), representing the nation's top state election officials, has been following the debate on the security of electronic voting systems and wants to reassure the public about the integrity of our election systems.

NASS has served as the professional organization for secretaries of state for 100 years. Our members, thirty-eight of whom serve as their respective state's chief election official, recognize the importance of secure, trustworthy and accurate elections. We also have something that many of the researchers offering opinions do not: collective expertise in election administration, including the laws, processes, and procedures involved.

When we assess the potential for election fraud, we review the security of our systems as a whole. All elections should have multiple layers of security resulting from the combination of people, processes and technologies that go into any election. To fully understand real-world Election Day vulnerabilities, we evaluate our election equipment by examining the technology along with election administration processes and personnel. Election security and accuracy are guaranteed on a state-by-state basis through a complex symphony of state and federal laws, procedures, federal testing, state and local re-testing, on-site verification, public participation, and above all, the oversight of officials charged with safeguarding the integrity of the process.

As representatives of the tens of thousands of state and local election administrators in this country, we also want to emphasize that voting security is a nonpartisan issue. The membership of NASS, like most of our electorate, is even in terms of party affiliation. We do not want any individuals to use this issue for political or personal gain. We fully support the work of our colleagues in election administration who are dedicated to making the electoral process secure, accurate and reliable. These officials have no reason to be anything less than candid about electronic voting systems and their accuracy.

All new technical advances in voting should be required to meet rigorous testing and voting system standards, and should not hamper the ability of all qualified voters to vote privately and independently. With these technical advances, we feel the issue of voting system security needs a more careful review by the scientific community--in particular, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

Under the new federal election reform law, the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), NIST is responsible for chairing the Technical Guidelines Development Committee of a new Election Assistance Commission (EAC.) The law mandates this body to develop a new set of voluntary federal voting system standards. NIST will also provide all technical support to the EAC in the development of those voting system guidelines – including the security of computers, computer networks and computer data storage used in voting systems.

HAVA requires voting systems to, among other things, comply with the following standards:

- Provide reasonable protections to insure the integrity of the election
- Be difficult to manipulate for fraudulent purposes
- Be independently tested by qualified laboratories under the Voting Systems Standards

In addition to developing those standards, the law requires that NIST identify and monitor the independent, non-governmental laboratories that will be certifying voting systems. The states are in need of an independent arbiter to help resolve some of the recent technology questions that have emerged directly from the HAVA implementation process

The Election Assistance Commission has not yet been established, and Congress has not yet fully funded the Help America Vote Act. Without full funding of HAVA, the states are being forced to comply with the new federal law without adequate assistance from the very leaders who promised to provide the resources to make federal participation in this process a success.

We believe that many of the questions about the future use of direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines can and will be resolved once the new Election Assistance Commission is established and the states receive all of the funding they are due under the Help America Vote Act. Working in tandem with independent testing authorities such as NIST, the states can establish the next generation of high-tech voting and the laws and policies that go with it.

Our first priority is always protecting voters. We are dedicated to safeguarding the security and accuracy of our elections. But elections are not about equipment alone. They involve the design of our overall system with multiple checks and balances, one that includes people and processes, as well as technologies.