



OREGON VOTER RIGHTS COALITION

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Vote of no confidence: Will Oregon's new recount law actually verify election results in 2008?

Portland, OR – The Oregon Senate is considering an election verification bill, HB 3270, that passed the Oregon House Friday, June 8, 2007 (<http://tinyurl.com/2fkxhs>). This bill will be profoundly important to Oregon voters who currently must depend on proprietary "trade secret" software created by private corporations to count all our votes. The two main producers of Oregon's software, ES&S and Sequoia, are at the center of many ballot counting controversies in other states (ES&S: <http://tinyurl.com/yqzcoy>; Sequoia: <http://tinyurl.com/2zlaeh>).

Unfortunately for Oregon, HB 3270 as written will not provide an adequate check on this software nor verify statewide results. Instead, HB 3270 will merely spot check a small number of precincts for vote tally errors. Because the current HB 3270 will not check a statewide sample of ballots that is representative of voters, it cannot check the accuracy of statewide election results. Oregon voters will have no independent basis for confidence in the machine-counted results for President, U.S. Senator, Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, or statewide ballots measures. HB 3270 also cannot be used to trigger a full statewide hand count or challenge statewide election results.

Representative Jeff Merkley, Speaker of the House, Representative Dave Hunt, House Majority Leader, and Representative Diane Rosenbaum, Speaker Pro-tem, deserve Oregon's gratitude for moving HB 3270 swiftly through the Oregon House. However, as written, HB 3270 will fall far short of its purpose.

The goal of HB 3270 is to ensure that the state's election results are accurate before certification. To achieve this goal, HB 3270 should rely on an efficient, scientifically designed statewide sample verification method. A statewide sample would also cost less and impose less of a workload burden than the "spot check" approach in the current version of HB 3270. The Oregon Voter Rights Coalition has appealed to the Secretary of State's office to support amending HB 3270 in the Senate.

Without the needed amendment, HB 3270 is like a paper seatbelt--it does not protect us.

For additional information, visit our website at www.oregonvrc.org. For questions, contact R. Jerry Adams, Ph.D., at 503-307-6673 or jadams@awesomelibrary.org.