

The Alliance for Democracy opposes Holt bill (HR 811)

Calls for a ban on the use of Direct Recording Electronic voting equipment (DREs) and to require the use of paper ballots

While the present Holt bill (HR 811, Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2007) is an improvement over the prior Holt bill (HR 550), the Alliance for Democracy opposes HR 811 unless it is amended.

We urgently call upon all citizens to call their Representatives to demand amendments to rectify the defects in HR 811, specifically to ban the use of DRE voting machines and require the use of paper ballots in all elections in the United States. Proponents of HR 811 expect the bill to come for a vote during mid-March 2007.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) was intended to correct the failings of the voting system evidenced in the 2000 election in Florida and elsewhere. The original Holt Bill (HR 550) was designed to fix the problems of DREs that came into increasing use following the passage of HAVA. HR 811 is designed to rectify the defects in DREs and the voting problems which came into view during the election of 2004

An open, accurate and transparent election process is of utmost importance in a democracy. When election processes don't process these qualities, democracy itself is undermined and the people's confidence in fair and honest election results, fundamental to democracy, is undermined. Therefore, protecting this process is of utmost importance. The integrity of democracy is at stake.

HR 811 fails to assure that election processes and results will be open, accurate and transparent.

HR 811 must be amended to eliminate the problems inherent within it. These changes must include:

1. DRE systems must be banned.

HR 811 still allows Touch screen (DRE - Direct Recording Electronic) voting equipment. DRE equipment has proven very unreliable and produces very second rate paper trails. The paper trail produced by the DRE does not always match the vote displayed on the screen and even when the paper trail and the screen display are the same, the vote recorded in the DRE software can deliberately be altered and be fraudulent.

2. All voting must be by voter marks on a paper ballot.

HR 811 allows paper trails to substitute for paper ballots. DRE machines can produce a paper trail, a receipt on which voter can verify their votes. However, surveys indicate that most voters do not verify their vote when given the opportunity because it is an extra step. Use of a paper ballot requires no additional step and must be required in every election.

3. All recounts must be by hand counting of paper ballots.

In recount situations, HR 811 allows machine recounts. In other words, the machine whose count is in question is made to recount the votes a second time. This can duplicate the original error. Only a hand count of the paper ballot can provide assurance of an accurate count.

4. All elections must have a statistically significant verification.

All computerized counting methods are subject to error. We all use ATMs with confidence, a confidence built up over years of error-free use. DRE voting is like using the ATM on its first day. ATMs didn't work well at first but over time, the errors were fixed and we now use them with

confidence. However, every election is different and the programming is therefore always different. Each election is essentially like using the ATM for the first time. The only way to have confidence in an accurate count is to have mandatory, random verification.

5. All recounts at every level of government must be by hand counting.

HR 811 allows certain elections to not be hand counted. In recounts triggered by state law, hand counting is not required.

6. All software must be subject to public disclosure.

HR 811 still allows that some software can be hidden from public disclosure. The conduct of elections must be an open and transparent process. When representatives of "we the people" are prevented from examining the software, the process becomes secret, and election results can be subject to manipulation without hope of detection.

7. No connections to the Internet should be allowed.

No part of electronic voting equipment should be connected to the Internet. All such connections are subject to hacking, falsification of the vote tally, and are insecure.

8. All election records should be available to the public.

HR 811 should require that all election results are public information. Some states prohibit or limit access to election data, thereby, preventing verification of election results. HR 811 has no such requirement.

**ACT
NOW!**

1. Contact your Representative. Ask them to vote No on HR 811 unless the above changes are made. Ask those Representatives co-sponsoring HR 811 to drop their co-sponsorship until these changes have been made.

Find your Representative at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/>.

Find a list of HR 811 co-sponsors at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:HR00811:@@@@>

Contact the Alliance for Democracy at

Phone: 781-894-1179

Fax: 781-894-0279

Email: afd@thealliancefordemocracy.org

2. The Alliance for Democracy calls on all citizens to support a call by over 30 election integrity organizations for legislation mandating that voting be by the use of paper ballots only. Go to <http://www.velvetrevolutionus/Campaigns/PaperBallots/PaperBallots.php> to send a letter to your representatives or mail this statement:

"I join the call for a paper BALLOT for every vote cast in America. It is time for Congress to finally pass an Election Reform bill in which the American people can have confidence. Any such legislation must require a paper BALLOT -- not a "paper trail" nor a "paper record" -- for every vote cast. Please make this a top priority in the upcoming legislative session."