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ALLEGHENY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS FACES TWO URGENT MATTERS

September 2, 2008. VoteAllegheny, a non-partisan election integrity organization, is pleased to recognize the achievement of the FACT citizens' group for being the first to navigate the referendum process of our Home Rule Charter through the signature certification phase. We call on the Board of Elections to consider the citizen proposal according to the requirements of the Charter without regard to personal agreement or disagreement with the subject matter.

Today the Board of Elections faces two important agenda items. On June 17th and again on July 8th, County Council called on the Board of Elections to investigate the critical issue of whether Allegheny County voting machines are running authentic software.

Our iVotronic voting machines are "software dependent," which means that the results they report are right or wrong depending on what software they are running, because there is no machine-independent cross-check such as a voter-verified paper ballot. Yet our county has never checked that the software running our elections is genuine. After two years, it is time to verify that our voting machine software is exactly the software certified by the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

Our iVotronics may well be running the wrong software. In the past, voting machine vendors have intentionally installed uncertified software on voting machines — for example, the Indiana Election Commission found in 2004 that our voting system vendor, ES&S, installed uncertified software on iVotronics in four Indiana counties.¹ Also, a team of computer security experts from Penn State and the University of Pennsylvania, among others, recently demonstrated serious security problems that permit attackers to install unauthorized software on iVotronics.²

Because the ES&S iVotronic voting machines used in Allegheny County provide no way for voters to personally verify that their votes have been correctly and accurately recorded, voters must trust the iVotronic program code to be correct. The inspection and certification process carried out by the Secretary of the Commonwealth is meaningless unless the County ensures the machines run exactly the same program the Secretary certifies.

Two of the three members of the Board of Elections have endorsed an investigation into whether our voting machines are running the right software. VoteAllegheny calls on the Board to protect the November election by acting promptly on software verification.

VoteAllegheny is a non-partisan volunteer election integrity organization which advocates secure, accessible, recountable voting for all.

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1 “Election Commission Bails Out Voting Machine Maker In Time for May Primary,” March 11, 2004, retrieved from <http://verifiedvotingfoundation.org/article.php?id=1529>

2 “EVEREST: Evaluation and Validation of Election-Related Equipment, Standards, and Testing,” Sections 6.3 and 7.2.2, retrieved from <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/upload/everest/14-AcademicFinalEVERESTReport.pdf>