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MEDIA ADVISORY
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ELECTION PROTECTION REQUIRES PROMPT ACTION BY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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. Today we once again call on County Council, including those Council members who sit on the Board of Elections, to verify the voting software currently loaded onto our county's voting machines. Verification of our voting software is a critical step toward safeguarding our system of elections with accountable software and accountable voter-verified paper ballots. Time is tight if we are to take this step before the presidential election.

We request a random-sample audit of approximately 40 voting machines. We are asking for public observation of this audit as an essential step to validate the process. Once the software is verified, we request that the County place these vulnerable machines under constant public observation with video surveillance of their storage and preparation in their warehouse facility.

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

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, and before this presidential election, it is time to verify that our voting machine software is exactly the software certified by the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

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>