

September 20, 2002

Dear Conferee,

As the Co-Chairs of the U.S. Public Policy Committee of the Association for Computing Machinery (USACM), we are writing in light of the controversy which arose after the Florida Primary Election, to recommend that the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) be given the lead in coordinating efforts to establish consensus-based standards for the construction, testing and use of computer voting system technology based on the Common Criteria (CC).

During Congressional testimony in 2001, respected voting technology experts recommended that NIST can be effective in bringing together election officials, the Federal Election Commission, private sector standards developers, the scientific research community, election equipment manufacturers, special interest groups, and local, state, and national public policy professionals to work on the development of CC for voting technology.

NIST has performed research on voting technologies for 30 years, including issuing reports in 1978 and 1988 detailing major problems with voting technologies. NIST's past expertise and ability to assist in the development of CC with regards to secure IT products the non-regulatory agency well suited to create CC for the security, accuracy, maintenance, and usability of voting systems. We are pleased that the House passed version of H.R. 3295 includes a role for NIST under part 4, section 261 of the bill. NIST would be invaluable in providing suggestions of research topics for voting research grants and pilot programs; reviewing grant applications; monitoring and adjustment of grant activities; evaluation of complete grants; and producing intramural research and development on the security of computers, computer networks, computer data storage used in voting products and systems as well as methods to detect and prevent fraud.

The process of vetting voting technology must anticipate challenges to the election process by taking into consideration human machine interaction issues, the robustness, reliability, and information assurance of voting hardware and software, and the need to establish for audit purposes an independent external paper ballot. Each voter *must have* the right to validate their paper ballot as representing his or her choices made in the electronic voting process.

We believe that NIST would be invaluable in coordinating efforts to develop consensus-based CC standards and certifiable election processes that voters can rely upon to reflect the accurate outcome of elections.

Sincerely,

Barbara Simons, Ph.D.
Eugene H. Spafford, Ph.D
Co-Chairs

U.S. ACM Public Policy Committee
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