

May 30, 2003

The Honorable Rush Holt
1019 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Holt,

As the Co-Chairs of USACM, the U.S. Public Policy Committee of the Association for Computing Machinery, we are writing to commend you for your efforts to address the serious concerns raised by a broad coalition of computer scientists regarding the security and trustworthiness of electronic voting systems.

Computers are inherently subject to programming error, equipment malfunction, and malicious tampering. If we are to ensure fair and honest elections, and retain voter confidence in our democratic process, we need to ensure that there are no questions of any such errors or tampering with voting equipment. Therefore, it is crucial that any computerized voting system provide a voter-verifiable audit trail: there should be an anonymous record of each vote that can be checked for accuracy by the voter when the vote is cast, and is difficult or impossible to alter after the vote is cast.

The well-intentioned but premature establishment of a vulnerable system for voting could result in unintended consequences undermining the confidence, integrity and accuracy of the electoral process. Therefore, USACM continues to recommend that a voter-verifiable audit trail be one of the essential requirements for deployment of new voting systems. We are pleased that H.R. 2239, the Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2003, recognizes our concerns by requiring voting systems to generate a physical paper trail that voters can personally verify at the time of voting. Requiring voter-verified audit trails to be included in electronic voting systems is welcomed step towards preserving the integrity of future elections.

USACM's mission is to provide non-partisan, technology-based input to policy-makers on issues of U.S. public policy. Please contact the ACM Office of Public Policy Office at (202) 478-6312 if we can provide input on any computing-related issue.

Sincerely,

Barbara Simons, Ph.D.
Eugene H. Spafford, Ph.D
Co-Chairs
U.S. ACM Public Policy Committee
Association for Computing Machinery

About USACM:

USACM is the U.S. Public Policy Committee of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). ACM is the leading nonprofit membership organization of computer scientists and information technology professionals dedicated to advancing the art, science, engineering and application of information technology. Since 1947, ACM has been a pioneering force in fostering the open interchange of information and promoting both technical and ethical excellence in computing. Over 70,000 computer scientists and information technology professionals from around the world are members of ACM.