



COUNTY OF MERCER

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

P.O. Box 8068

Trenton, New Jersey 08650-0068

Phone: 609-989-6464 • Fax: 609-989-1111



PAULA SOLLAMI COVELLO
County Clerk

WALKER M. WORTHY, JR.
Deputy County Clerk

March 1, 2008

Ms. Bettye Monroe
Superintendent of Elections
640 S Broad Street
Trenton NJ 08650

RE: Independent Investigation of Sequoia Voting Machines

Dear Bettye,

As you know, there were problems with 30 Sequoia voting machines in Mercer County on the February 5th Presidential Primary Election, and other counties in New Jersey experienced similar problems. Yesterday, Sequoia released its findings concerning these problems, following a weeklong review, attributing the problems to poll-worker error. For the following reasons, I respectfully suggest that you ask the Attorney General to conduct an independent investigation into these problems.

Frankly, the findings do not make sense. It is far too easy to blame the poll-workers. Errors such as this have never happened before in Mercer County; or in other counties based on my conversations with other County Clerks in New Jersey. Mercer had these voting machines for over 4 years (and may have had the same poll workers as well), yet never had this problem before.

Additionally, while I would like to believe there is no system error and rather there is a usage error, there is no doubt that Sequoia has a substantial business interest in not finding a design flaw or problem with its own machines but rather in attributing it to poll-worker error. Therefore, I suggest that your office call for an independent investigation from the Attorney General.

As Mercer County Clerk, I am responsible for certifying an accurate vote count at the close of elections. I will accept nothing less than 100% accuracy when it comes to counting votes and certifying election results. While Mercer County voters should take comfort that no vote was changed or affected by these machine errors, because actual vote tallies are recorded on a completely separate cartridge that is removed from the voting machine and read independently at the Mercer County Clerk's Office, any error cannot be tolerated.

Ms. Bettye Monroe
March 1, 2008
Page 2

Further, I would like to echo the sentiments of the Honorable Joanne Rajoppi, the Union County Clerk, who also has concerns about the findings. She stated:

“I have used Sequoia (voting) machines for 10 years and 2008 is my 3rd Presidential Primary and 10th election year. This PROBLEM HAS NEVER OCCURRED BEFORE.

If it is a human error, as Sequoia states, I find it statistically near impossible that this error did not occur before. I have been certifying and checking the election results for 10 years in the exact same way: i.e., crosschecking cartridge readings with tapes.”

I know I am not alone in expressing concerns over Sequoia’s findings concerning its own machines. As I told you on the phone yesterday, I feel that at this time we should have a separate independent group or company investigate these errors, rather than waiting for errors to occur again. This is a responsible course of action.

Further, if Sequoia is confident this was poll-worker error, I’m sure they would welcome the additional scrutiny and perhaps they would pay for an independent study. Again, I believe you should ask the A.G. to conduct the study since it affects several counties Statewide and frankly, I remain committed to making this process as accurate and flawless as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this letter.

Respectfully yours,

Paula Sollami Covello, Esq.
Mercer County Clerk

CC: Arthur Sypek, Jr., Mercer County Counsel
Dominic Magnolo, Chair- Board of Elections
Marge Caldwell-Wilson, Vice Chair- Board of Elections
Donna Kelly, DAG
Rush Holt, Congressman
Brian Hughes, Mercer County Executive
Lucy Walter, Chair, Freeholder Board

PSC/tb