

VOTING MACHINE PROBLEMS IN PENNSYLVANIA — VotePA (www.votePA.us)

In the last decade, Pennsylvania has been plagued with a rash of problems caused by failures of paperless, unverifiable voting machines. These problems have ranged from extremely high levels of undervotes (which indicate that a large number of voters are not having their votes counted) to faulty programming and ballot preparation, to outright loss of votes due to machines being set up improperly on Election Day.

As far back as the mid-nineties there were problems with electronic machines when the MicroVote system was removed from Montgomery County due to machines shutting down randomly and losing votes. Sadly, the MicroVote system was replaced by a Sequoia system that has no voter-verified paper record and is known for extremely high rates of undervotes in many states.

In April 2005, our Secretary of State completely decertified the UniLect Patriot voting machine for use in Pennsylvania elections based on complaints of citizens in Beaver, Mercer, and Greene counties. The UniLect system produced an extremely high number of undervotes in the 2004 general election (approximately three times the historical average for such elections).

It is estimated that at least ten thousand votes of all political parties were lost by the UniLect system in Beaver, Mercer, and Greene counties. Some precincts in Mercer County had undervote rates of over seventy and eighty percent. If this were true, it would mean that, in the incredibly important Presidential election of 2004, eight out of ten voters in those precincts simply did not care to vote for President! The far more probable scenario is that the UniLect machine failed to count most of those votes. With no voter verified paper record available on those machines to recount or audit, there was simply no way to reclaim those lost votes or even to know for sure exactly what happened.

Following the April 2005 decertification of the UniLect machine, the company asked the PA Department of State for a second examination. At this hearing, held in May 2005, the UniLect Patriot system failed even more spectacularly. Again, the president of the UniLect company was unable to get his machine to record votes properly during the hearing. The result was that this system was decertified for use in Pennsylvania for the second time.

Another paperless voting machine made by Danaher failed to record any votes in several Berks County precincts during the Primary on May 17, 2005. Votes were apparently not recorded due to improper settings on the machine during the election. With no paper records to audit or recount, a re-vote was called for, lawsuits were filed, and some voters never did get to cast a vote that was counted in that Primary.

Pennsylvanians of all political parties want to be able to audit our vote on paper and avoid any further loss of votes or waste of taxpayer money due to unverifiable machines.

VotePA recommends the following documents for further reading:

- “Restoring Confidence To Voters” – Findings and recommendations of the Independent Election Committee (Mercer County, Pa., 2/8/05)
- Reports from UniLect Patriot Recertification Exams (PA Department of State, 4/05 and 5/05)
- Reports from expert witness and from citizen observers at the UniLect Patriot Recertification Exam (4/05 and 5/05).