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SB 392: Voter-Verified Records

February 22, 2007

Senator Joan Carter Conway, Chairwoman
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Building, 2nd Floor
Annapolis, MD 21401

PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND'S TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 392: ELECTION LAW – VOTING SYSTEMS – VOTER-VERIFIED PAPER RECORDS

Good afternoon Madam Chairwoman and other Senators.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this bill vital to ensure integrity of our elections.

As Maryland's largest grassroots advocacy organization, **Progressive Maryland represents over 50,000 members and supporters and 60 sponsoring religious, community, and labor organizations**. Through research, public education, and direct political action we strive to improve the lives of working families and citizen participation in government.

The reasons we support SB 392, on behalf of our large and varied constituency, include:

1. **Maryland has had many problems with recent elections** including its inability to perform meaningful recounts in several 2006 legislative races decided by a handful of votes. **No paper record means no independent audit capability and no meaningful recount can be done**.

2. **Our current DREs offer no mechanism for voters to verify whom they voted for** and will likely be banned by federal regulation in the near future. As a growing number of experts have documented, if a computer glitch or malicious software code leads to vote switching, loss of votes, or any other malfunction, there is no reliable way to tell. **Moreover, merely adding a printer function to current voting machines could never solve these vulnerabilities**.

3. **In OpScan voting systems, paper ballots are durable and can be counted by hand if an audit is warranted.** The voter marks the paper ballot by hand (or by specialized marking device for those with disabilities), then feeds it into a machine that can read and tabulate votes. This takes back control of our public elections from private, partisan corporations and returns it to citizens.

4. **OpScan voting systems are also much easier and less expensive to operate, store and maintain**, so taxpayers will save much money. Far fewer machines are required to accomplish the task of voting, so election workers will find their jobs and training needs simplified.

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