

SOURCE: MIAMI-DADE ELECTION REFORM COALITION

*Miami-Dade Election Reform Coalition*

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Findings on Miami-Dade Elections Show Improvements Still Needed, Coalition Says

MIAMI - Saying Miami-Dade County's November 5<sup>th</sup> elections were far from problem-free, the Miami-Dade Election Reform Coalition today issued a run down of Election Day blunders that demonstrate the county's failure to implement meaningful voting reforms.

Written by members of the citizen-run coalition, the 25-page report on the November 5<sup>th</sup> General Election establishes a framework by which to judge the success of the election, outlines the county's response to the Coalition's pre-election demands, and makes recommendations based on information collected by the Coalition throughout the election process.

"When you break the election down, examining its components piece by piece, you realize that November 5<sup>th</sup> was far from perfect," said Lida Rodriguez-Taseff, Coalition member and President of the Greater Miami American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). "The damage control performed by the County after September 10<sup>th</sup> only served to highlight the systemic reforms that are so desperately needed. As citizens, it is our responsibility to demand from our government officials an elections process that is worthy of our democracy. This report is the first step toward achieving much needed reforms."

The report creates a framework for analyzing the success of the election by differentiating between reforms instituted for "damage control" and those signifying "productive change."

"...[T]he success of the November 5<sup>th</sup> election must therefore be judged against the needless and thoughtless exigency created by those at the County who apparently chose to put off meaningful reforms while limiting their efforts to spending tax payer monies on unproven and complex technology," wrote Coalition members in the report. "In this respect, as this county attempts to create a model for conducting future elections, it needs to differentiate between reforms that are nothing more than successful damage control driven by bad technology and the neglect of voting officials, and those that represent meaningful and productive change."

The post-election analysis documents Election Day reports collected by Coalition members including problems with poll-worker training, language assistance, overcrowding at the polls, absentee ballots and voter roll maintenance. Machine calibration also appeared to be an issue in some precincts where reports of voters touching one candidate's name only to see their choice come up as a different candidate served to undermine some voters' trust in the new system.

Aside from outlining systemic problems that disenfranchised voters, the report goes on to list numerous recommendations that focus on bringing citizen participation back to the running of elections, ensuring that every vote counts and that voters are not needlessly disenfranchised, and making sure that voting is as accessible and easy as possible for all in a community as diverse as Miami-Dade County.

The Coalition's recommendations include:

- Returning to the use of citizens rather than county employees in polling place staffing.
- Using the police model to handle logistics without the involvement of the police department in the electoral process.
- Continuing the involvement of independent observers.
- Revising poll worker instructions and training to emphasize correct handling of problem scenarios involving change of address, voter identification, voter assistance, and provisional balloting.
- Mailing sample ballots to households countywide in future elections.
- Providing sample ballots and polling place assistance in Haitian-Creole.
- Collecting data to identify and remedy problems in each election and their impact on minority communities.
- Creating a board of elections responsible for regulating the office of the Supervisor of Elections.

Formed in the wake of the September 10<sup>th</sup> voting fiasco, the Miami-Dade Election Reform Coalition is a non-partisan organization that consists of numerous groups, including the Miami-Dade NAACP, the ACLU, the League of Women Voters, ACORN, the Miami Workers Center, the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition, The March for Justice, and many others. A full list of member organizations and a history of the coalition are included in the first part of the report.

Copies of the report are available online at <http://www.reformcoalition.org/> or by calling the ACLU of Florida at (305) 576-2337 ext. 18.