

MIAMI-DADE ELECTION REFORM COALITION

October 4, 2002

Via Facsimile

Mr. Steve Shiver, County Manager
Office of the County Manager
Stephen P. Clark Center
111 NW 1st Street, Suite 2910
Miami, FL 33128

Dear Mr. Shiver,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Miami-Dade Election Reform Coalition. The Coalition was very disappointed by the fact that you canceled our meeting that was scheduled for this past Wednesday, October 2, 2002 at 4:00 p.m. Our intent in meeting with you was to update you on our meeting with the Supervisor of Elections, David Leahy, to learn more about steps that your office is taking, and to discuss ways in which the various community organizations that comprise our Coalition can partner in this effort. During our meeting with Mr. Leahy, he informed us of the following facts, all of which cause us serious concern.

1. The Plan for the November 5th Election: Mr. Leahy stated that while the County has developed an overall plan for implementation of policies and practices to ensure the smooth running of the November 5th election, the plan is nowhere in writing. In addition, no County official appears to have undertaken the task of compiling and setting forth the entire plan in writing. We are very troubled by this, since the absolute need for a written action plan has been expressed repeatedly in this process by the Inspector General in his report released on September 20th; in our letter to Mr. Leahy dated September 20th, setting forth the Coalition's proposals; and in our testimony to the Commission's Elections Oversight Task Force on September 30th, 2002.

The Coalition therefore calls upon your office to provide the Public with a written action plan of how the County intends to deal with the November 5th election. In addition, the Coalition calls upon the County to prepare and make public a checklist setting forth every function that should be completed before, during, and after the November 5th election. As previously requested by the Coalition, the checklist should also include the title of the official, poll worker or County employee who is to perform each and every task. The checklist must also serve as an accountability tool, requiring specific designation of duties to individuals as well as signatures certifying the accomplishment of each task. Lastly, the Coalition requests that the County develop and circulate an organization chart, setting forth the line of command and reporting structure of the Election Team that is currently being put in place.

2. Poll Worker Training: Coalition representatives also discussed the issue of poll worker training with Mr. Leahy. Based on that discussion, the Coalition calls upon your office to ensure that the Public be given immediate access to the current draft of the Poll Worker Training Manual and an opportunity to provide input on the draft prior to the Elections Department's planned date for distribution of the Manual to all poll workers and County employees working the November 5th election. As previously requested, both in writing and in our oral testimony to the County Commission's Task Force, the Coalition further demands that the public be permitted to observe training sessions for all County employees and poll workers who will be working the November 5th election.
3. Sample Ballots: Additionally, Coalition representatives discussed with Mr. Leahy the need for mailing out sample ballots to all Miami-Dade County registered voters well ahead of the November 5th election. While Mr. Leahy indicated that he hoped that this would happen, he stated that it was a decision that requires final approval by your office. We therefore ask for written confirmation on this issue, and also ask for written confirmation that the "Make Your Vote Count" questions will be included on the reverse side of the sample ballot.
4. Early Voting: Coalition representatives also discussed with Mr. Leahy the issue of expanding early voting hours and locations. As we have previously requested, both in writing and orally, the Coalition believes that the best way to ensure a successful election on November 5th is to give as many people as possible the opportunity to vote early. The Coalition is pleased to learn that all early voting locations will be open on Saturdays, with the possible exception of two, which Mr. Leahy assured the Coalition that he was working to resolve. However, the County needs to expand early voting hours to include voting opportunities in the evenings and early mornings. Please confirm in writing, all of the locations at which early voting is to take place, as well as the hours of operation of each location.
5. Backup Ballots: The Coalition is very concerned that the County has not adequately provided for a paper ballot backup system in case there are failures with the electronic voting equipment. As we stated previously, it is the Coalition's position that Florida Statute Section 101.048 requires that provisional ballots must be on paper and available to voters in case of voting machine malfunction. The Coalition does not agree with the tentative proposal to have only 100 provisional ballots available at each precinct. The Coalition therefore demands that the County employ a statistically reliable method for allocating sufficient paper provisional ballots so that, in the case of machine failure, every eligible Miami-Dade County voter will have the opportunity to vote.

The Coalition asks that you provide us with your answers to each of the above listed items in time for the meeting of the Miami-Dade County Commission Elections Oversight Task Force, set for Monday, October 7, 2002. Since time is of the essence here, we plead that you not allow another day go by without addressing these very serious concerns.

Very truly yours

Mr. Steve Shiver
October 4, 2002
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Lida Rodriguez-Taseff
President, American Civil Liberties Union
Miami Chapter

cc: Mayor Alex Penelas
Board of County Commissioners
Christopher R. Mazzella, Inspector General

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