

Protecting The Vote And Reforming Miami-Dade County's Electoral Process

A proposal of the Miami-Dade Election Reform Coalition

Solutions/Demands

- ε **Poll Worker Recruitment:** Use of County employees as Poll workers is an acceptable first step but is by no means the solution. The County must engage in an aggressive campaign to recruit Clerks and Assistant Clerks who are computer literate and who understand written English. In addition, the County must also aggressively recruit Inspectors and Sheriffs who are bilingual or trilingual.

- ε **Poll Worker Training:** Poll workers must be properly trained and tested.

The Coalition is pleased with reports that state that the County's Employee Relations Department has launched an intense training program with ES&S to "educate County employees" about the Voting Machines. Again, this is a good first step. In addition, however, a mandatory course designed to teach Clerks and Assistant Clerks how to set up, activate, operate and take down voting machines, must also be put in place. The course should be taught in conjunction with ES&S personnel, who must also be available to answer Poll worker questions. The Coalition is disturbed by the fact when inquiring about training, Coalition members have been informed that training will only take place during the work week. This further deters qualified, computer literate applicants from agreeing to serve as Poll workers.

Actual hands-on training on the Voting Machines themselves must also be provided. Clerks and Assistant Clerks must then be tested on actual Voting Machines to determine their ability to operate the Voting Machines. Those Clerks and Assistant Clerks who cannot pass the test must not be permitted to work on election day.

An additional mandatory course must be put in place to teach all Poll workers (including any County employees who are designated to work the polls), basic voting laws. Representatives from civil liberties and voting rights groups must be permitted to review the curriculum to insure that Poll workers are being given correct information. These representatives must

also be given an opportunity to speak to Poll workers and answer Poll worker questions, as part of their training. Any County employee who is designated to answer voter eligibility questions must be trained in Florida election law.

At least three weeks before the November general election, operations manuals must be revised by ES&S and ES&S must be made to certify that they are correct and accurate. Those manuals must then be distributed to Poll workers who must be required to practice operating the Voting Machines using the manuals to the manuals.

Poll workers who are designated to operate Voting Machines must be given a refresher course prior to the election.

- ε **Polling Places:** Polling places must be evaluated to determine that they are properly equipped to serve as voting facilities, that they have adequate technological support to communicate with election officials and to access data to resolve voter registration issues on election day and that they are handicap accessible. Both short term and long term solutions must be devised for polling places that are located in inadequate facilities. In no event should moving polling places be used as a short term solution.

Short term solutions can include the following: Additional portable Voting Machines can be provided to polling places with inadequate handicap accessibility. Cellular phones can be provided to polling places with inadequate telephone lines.

- ε **Voting Equipment:**

The County shall request that ES&S produce recent test data showing the reliability and accuracy of the Voting Machines in recording and counting votes.

The Coalition is aware of reports that state that the County plans to permit ES&S to modify the software of the Voting Machines so that they can be activated more quickly. While this may address some of the problems, each and every one of the 7,000 Voting Machines must still be tested (the random testing done before the previous election is insufficient). In addition, the County must analyze the logistics of opening and set up of polling places, including Machine activation and replacement or repair of malfunctioning

Machines, in order to devise a plan which guarantees that polling places will be up and running by 7:00 a.m. One possible solution is to have Voting Machines set up and tested on site the night before the election. After the testing is complete, the Voting Machines would be turned off and polling places would be secured for the night.

- ε **Provisional Ballots:** Provisional ballots must be on paper for the November 2000 election as intended by Florida Statute Section 101.048. Such ballots must be available to voters in the case of Voting Machine malfunction.

- ε **Plan to Address Voting Problems:** The Coalition believes that proposals to station computer trained County employees at every polling place is a good first step. In addition, at least three weeks prior to the November general election, the County and ES&S shall have completed a plan for assigning trouble shooters and for ensuring adequate communications between troubleshooters and their designated polling places. The plan must include a protocol for Poll workers to report technical difficulties and a schedule for dealing with those.

- ε **Public Service Announcements:** Within the next 14 days, the County and ES&S shall prepare two videotape versions of a Public Service announcement demonstrating the use of the Voting Machines. These PSAs shall be 30 seconds and 60 seconds in length and they shall provide a phone number and a web site for use by persons with questions about any aspect of the voting process. The PSAs must be in English, Spanish and Creole and they must be distributed to all stations and networks that serve Miami-Dade County. Additionally, the PSA's must encourage voters to take advantage of the free demonstrations on the use of Voting Machines. If the County cannot be assured that the PSAs will be aired during prime viewing hours, the County shall invest in paid advertising.

- ε **Demonstration of Voting Equipment:** The County shall send out notices to all civic and religious groups and clubs, senior citizen centers, labor unions and other membership organizations within the County, encouraging them to take advantage of the free hands-on demonstrations of the Voting Machines.

- ε **Distribution of Sample Ballots:** As soon as practicable, and no later than two weeks before the November general election, the County shall mail a sample ballot in English, Spanish and Creole to every registered voter, along with a copy of the “Make Your Vote Count” pamphlet produced by the League of Women Voters of Dade County and the American Civil Liberties Union.

- ε **Accurate Voting Lists:** The County must maintain an accurate list of registered voters, including accurate designations of party affiliation and must create a mechanism for correcting any errors, including errors of party designation. The County must also demand that the State of Florida provide accurate and reliable purge lists and must itself verify the accuracy of those lists prior to removing the names of any voters.

- ε **Independent Observers:** In order to ensure the legitimacy of the next election(s), the Coalition demands that the County provide full and unfettered access to independent experienced credible observers, who will then be able to report whether in their estimation, the election was free and fair. The observers must be given full access to every aspect of the voting process, including, but not limited to, poll worker training procedures and classes; machine operations procedure; poll location opening and machine activation; actual voting; delivery of ballots and voting machines; counting of ballots; and certification of results.

- ε **Expansion of Early Voting:** The County shall expand early voting facilities to accommodate locales with large numbers of employees, such as hospitals. In addition, the County shall expand the voting hours of these facilities.

- ε **Special Needs Voters:** The County shall work to identify special needs residents and to provide them with instruction on how to use Voting Machines.

- ε **Complaint Procedures:** The Miami-Dade County Elections Department shall hold public hearings as soon as practicable, but no later than 30 days, at which citizens can present testimony as to problems experienced in the September 10th election. The County shall develop and circulate forms by which voters can file complaints about any aspect of the voting process.