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March 26, 2007

Honorable Debra Bowen
Secretary of State
Attn: Voting Systems Review, 6th Floor
1500 11th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Bowen:

This is in response to the draft criteria for the top to bottom review of voting systems that I found posted to your website.

I fully support the concept of a top to bottom review of all voting systems. I also fully support comments submitted to you by the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials. I as well as other election officials in the state are very interested in participating in this process. As the County Clerk for Mendocino County, I wish to add the following comments.

Mendocino County is in the middle of conducting a court-ordered countywide election that will be held on April 3, 2007. We just completed conducting a special district election on March 6, 2007. In addition we have begun preparations for the 3 special district elections to be held on August 28, 2007 and shortly will begin preparation for the school and special district elections that traditionally results in a countywide election that will be held on November 6, 2007. This office has only 4 full time staff in the elections division.

I would request that you follow a thorough and orderly process and not try to rush this through. Providing a comment period of only one week does not invite comments but rather appears that you are not interested in receiving them. Posting the draft criteria on your website and not sending it to election officials also appears that you are not interested in receiving comments. While I understand your desire to complete this task quickly, speed should not be the issue. Thoroughness and orderliness should.

I would also caution you that what you are undertaking may be the right thing to do, but unless it is portrayed correctly to the public, it will lead the electorate to believe that all of the voting systems in California are flawed which is simply not the case. Mendocino County voters like and trust our voting system because election after election it has proven its reliability and accuracy.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Marsha A. Wharff'.

Marsha A. Wharff
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder