

DEBRA BOWEN

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE NEWS RELEASE

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Independent Computer Expert Teams Release Findings in Top-to-Bottom Voting System Review Ordered by Secretary of State Debra Bowen

SACRAMENTO – Independent analysis teams, led by University of California computer science and cryptography experts Matthew Bishop and David Wagner, today released some of their findings in the technical examination phase of Secretary of State Debra Bowen's top-to-bottom review of voting systems certified for use in California.

“The top-to-bottom review is designed to look at the security, accuracy, reliability and accessibility of the voting systems certified for use in California in a way that's never been done before on a state or national level,” said Secretary Bowen, the state's chief elections officer. “Every voter has the right to have his or her vote counted as it was cast, and voters want to know if the very tools of our democracy are secure, accurate, reliable and accessible. The goal of the review is to strengthen people's confidence in the integrity of our electoral process before California's 15.7 million registered voters are asked to go to the polls on February 5, 2008, and vote in the presidential primary election.”

The independent UC reports, available on the Secretary of State's website at http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_vs.htm, are the culmination of the UC teams' intensive two-month review of the hardware, software, documentation, source code and accessibility of three major voting systems:

- Diebold GEMS 1.18.24/AccuVote
- Hart Intercivic System 6.2.1
- Sequoia WinEDS version 3.1.012/Edge/Insight/400-C

Five other currently certified voting systems were subject to examination under Secretary Bowen's top-to-bottom review. In four of those cases, vendors opted not to subject their systems to the top-to-bottom review because they don't intend to have any county use those systems in California elections after January 1, 2008. In the fifth case, the vendor declined to submit its system in time for the top-to-bottom review even though that system will be used in 2008. As Secretary Bowen noted in May, she has the authority to impose additional conditions on any system that has not yet gone through a top-to-bottom review.

For a county-by-county list of voting systems used in the last statewide election, go to http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting_systems/systemsinuse_110606.pdf.

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DB07:037
July 27, 2007
Page 2

“The UC teams went through a thoughtful, methodical, analytical process in conducting their examinations of these systems. It is my intent to go through a similarly thoughtful, methodical and analytical process in determining what we do next,” continued Bowen. “The next step in the process is the public hearing, when county elections officials, members of the public and the voting system vendors will provide their perspectives.”

California law requires the Secretary of State to periodically review voting systems “to determine if they are defective, obsolete or otherwise unacceptable” and withdraw the approval previously granted for all or part of a voting system if it is subsequently found to be unacceptable. The Secretary of State also has the option of attaching additional conditions to a certification that could mitigate potential vulnerabilities.

To further inform the Secretary’s certification decisions, a public hearing will be held on Monday, July 30, beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the auditorium of the Secretary of State’s Sacramento headquarters. Written public comment is also welcome by email to votingsystems@sos.ca.gov or by mail to Secretary of State Debra Bowen, 1500 11th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, Attention: Voting Systems Review, 6th Floor.

After reviewing the independent UC reports, current state and local elections procedures and public comments on the findings, Secretary Bowen will issue certification decisions for the Diebold, Hart and Sequoia systems by August 3.

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