Top-To-Bottom Review
Summary

May 9, 2007

The test of any democracy is whether you can trust the results at the ballot box. Across the country, authoritative studies and nationally recognized experts are asking the question: Are our voting systems secure, accurate, reliable and accessible?

There's good reason for asking the question. In December 2005, California discovered voting system programming code that escaped the review of federal testers. On May 2, 2007, a congressional task force voted to investigate anomalies in 2006 election results in Florida's 13th Congressional District. These are just two examples that have fueled the debate about whether the systems voters are asked to cast their ballots on are trustworthy and whether the testing processes used to certify voting systems are adequate.

California is facing three statewide elections in 2008, making it even more essential that its voting equipment is secure, accurate, reliable and accessible. That's why Secretary of State Debra Bowen is entering into a contract with the University of California (UC) to conduct a top-to-bottom review of the voting systems certified for use in California beginning the week of May 14.

This first-of-its-kind review will include the following components:

❑ UC will provide specialists from its campuses, as well as experts from public and private universities and private sector companies throughout the United States to create three teams of experts to conduct the reviews.
❑ Each system will undergo a thorough document and source code review, red team penetration testing, and a review to determine whether it's accessible to all voters.
❑ The review teams will provide an independent technical evaluation of the voting systems that the Secretary of State will use to carry out her statutory duty with respect to voting systems in determining whether the systems comply with current state and federal law.

The review is expected to conclude in late July, giving the Secretary of State time to examine the results of the review and determine whether each voting system should retain its current certification, have additional conditions attached to its certification, or be decertified entirely.

Approximately $450 million has been spent or allocated to buy new voting equipment in California over the past few years. The top-to-bottom review will cost approximately $1.8 million and will be paid for by the voting system vendors and federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) money allocated by the Legislature and the Governor in the 2006-07 budget to help answer the fundamental question: Are our voting systems secure, accurate, reliable and accessible?

More information on the review can be found by going to www.sos.ca.gov.