

MISCHELLE TOWNSEND  
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**REGISTRAR OF VOTERS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE**

June 21, 2002

Mr. John A. Perez, Chair  
Members of the  
Voting Modernization Board

**SUBJECT: DRE TOUCHSCREEN VOTING IMPLEMENTATION IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY**

As a follow-up to your June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, I was asked to provide members of the VMB with some feedback in terms of our experience in implementing a new DRE touchscreen voting system in Riverside County. Enclosed, for your information, is a report provided to the Secretary of State when staff conducted a hearing concerning a date for other counties to convert their punchcard voting systems. It provides, in greater detail, lessons learned from our project implementation.

To directly respond to your question, however, our experience with the voters was very successful and minimal issues arose on election day. We had the advantage of conducting four local elections prior to the November 2000 county-wide implementation, as well as, two early-voting periods. Voters find the technology intuitive and easy to use, primarily because touchscreens are used for a variety of purposes in the business sector. For example, we had video demonstrations in the early-voting sites, instructions playing on cable television stations, as well as, my having addressed many community groups. The critical success factor, however, is effective pollworker training because those volunteers are the ones who will make the voter comfortable with the equipment.

We also had a help desk in Riverside and one in our desert region. All polling sites opened on time because pollworkers set up the equipment the evening before (polls were still sealed), but at least the legs were inserted in the integrated unit and power tested which saved considerable time on election morning. We did not offer paper ballots as an alternative; however, if there was an individual who would not vote on the new equipment, a paper ballot (available for provisional voting) was offered. There were less than a handful of these county-wide.

The equipment performed extremely well, pollworkers generally were successful (there were a few who neglected to press the screen to start voting), but a telephone call to the help desk quickly addressed that situation.

**Allocation of Proposition 41 Funds:**

I do appreciate the time you provided to the public and election officials to address you on June 19<sup>th</sup> with respect to the allocation of Proposition 41 funds, and would offer written confirmation as to what I presented verbally to you:

1. **California Historical Funding Methodology:**

While staff has provided the Board with several alternatives for allocation of these limited funds, consensus will be difficult because one formula will advantage some and not others. The State of California has often disbursed bond and other funds on a per capita or population basis as an impartial methodology in recognition of inherent workload and service needs. This alternative, in fact, will leverage dollars objectively and fairly.

2. **Bond Allocation Criteria:**

The proposition clearly mandates reimbursement in that it requires that a county "has purchased a voting system and is continuing to make payments," as well as, the county is required to commit one dollar for every three dollars received in bond funding. While tentative allocations could be made, it is recommended that a final allocation not be disbursed until there is evidence of an executed contract which specifies how much the actual voting equipment cost the county, as well as, the appropriate resolution by the Board of Supervisors committing the county's pro-rata share of the equipment cost.

A question was subsequently asked about Riverside County's share (\$10.5 million). We did finance the equipment, and the Board has made actual payments since November 2000 on the \$14 million contract, including interest. In addition, the County assumed a significant risk in introducing a new voting system that had not been implemented in a jurisdiction of this size either in California or the nation. I believed in the vendor's long established experience, the Secretary of State's thorough certification process, and the equipment we had tested in smaller elections. However, there have been valuable lessons learned from the two statewide elections, six local elections and three early-voting experiences which will be extremely helpful to other California counties which are planning their own conversions.

For example, many of these counties have received copies of our Request for Proposals (RFP), our training manuals for pollworkers, voter education material, visited our warehouse and operation to observe the logistics of storage and transport, ballot preparation and tally, as well as, other vendors now adopting our staff's suggestion to design a wheeled transportation cart (both for storage and delivery to the polling sites). Other states, such as Florida, Ohio and New Mexico have also traveled to observe our elections using the new voting equipment. As a result, many of them are in the process of converting their systems, now having confidence in their performance, security and observing first-hand the system's positive acceptance by the electorate. Riverside County's share of the bond funds is a good investment in facilitating successful implementations elsewhere in California. It will enable us to amortize the debt and save substantial interest costs, as well as, not having to pass on the cost of the equipment to cities, schools and other agencies which contract with us for their elections.

*Thank you again* for your service and the opportunity you are providing for comments.

Respectfully submitted,

  
MISCHELLE TOWNSEND  
Registrar of Voters

Enclosure

**Distribution:**

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