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November 5, 2004

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. General Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

We write with an urgent request that the Government Accountability Office immediately undertake an investigation of the efficacy of voting machines and new technologies used in the 2004 election, how election officials responded to difficulties they encountered and what we can do in the future to improve our election systems and administration.

In particular, we are extremely troubled by the following reports, which we would also request that you review and evaluate for us:

- In Columbus, Ohio, an electronic voting system gave President Bush nearly 4,000 extra votes. "Machine Error Gives Bush Extra Ohio Votes," Associated Press, November 5.

- An electronic tally of a South Florida gambling ballot initiative failed to record thousands of votes. "South Florida OKs Slot Machines Proposal," Id.

- In one North Carolina county, more than 4,500 votes were lost because officials mistakenly believed a computer that stored ballots could hold more data that it did. "Machine Error Gives Bush Extra Ohio Votes," Id.

- In San Francisco, a glitch occurred with voting machines software that resulted in some votes being left uncounted. Id.

- In Florida, there was a substantial drop off in Democratic votes in proportion to voter registration in counties utilizing optical scan machines that was apparently not present in counties using other mechanisms. http://ustogether.org/election04/florida_vote_patt.htm

- The House Judiciary Committee Democratic staff has received numerous reports from Youngstown, Ohio that voters who attempted to cast a vote for John Kerry on electronic voting machines saw that their votes were instead recorded as votes for George W. Bush. In South Florida, Congressman Wexler's staff received numerous reports from voters in Palm Beach, Broward and Dade Counties that they attempted to select John Kerry but George Bush appeared on the screen. CNN has reported that a dozen voters in six states, particularly Democrats in Florida, reported similar problems. This was among over one thousand such problems reported. "Touchscreen Voting Problems Reported," Associated Press, November 5.

- Excessively long lines were a frequent problem throughout the nation in Democratic precincts, particularly in Florida and Ohio. In one Ohio voting precinct serving students from Kenyon College, some voters were required to wait more than eight hours to vote. "All Eyes on Ohio," Dan Lothian, CNN, November 3, http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/blog/11/02/election.blog/index.htm..

We are literally receiving additional reports every minute and will transmit additional information as it comes available. The essence of democracy is the confidence of the electorate in the accuracy of voting methods and the fairness of voting procedures. In 2000, that confidence suffered terribly, and we fear that such a blow to our democracy may have occurred in 2004.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this inquiry.

Sincerely,

John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee

Jerrold Nadler
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Constitution

Robert Wexler
Member of Congress

cc: Hon. F. James Sensenbrenner
Chairman