October 11, 2006

**Honorable Governor, Secretary of State & State Election Director:**

As you likely know, many legally registered American voters across the country were turned away from polling places without being able to cast a ballot this year. In state after state, voters were unable to exercise their franchise simply because electronic voting systems malfunctioned, suffered programming problems, or were otherwise unavailable for use.

We are sure you’ll agree that should never happen in this country. No legally registered voter should ever be turned away from the polls without being allowed to vote on Election Day in America. No legally registered voter should ever be told to “come back later,” or be forced to use a provisional ballot simply because a voting system is unavailable to them at the time they are able to vote. It is imperative that an ample supply of Emergency Paper Ballots be made available to account for any unforeseen circumstance.

Common-sense legislation for Emergency Paper Ballots at the polling place this November was recently filed in both the U.S. House and Senate. The proposed legislation would have:

- Mandated that voters be given a paper ballot upon request
- Required election officials to post information announcing and confirming that right at each polling place, and
- Mandated that all such paper ballots be counted as regular, not provisional, ballots.

Unfortunately, legislators were unable to pass this important measure before adjourning for the Election Recess. Now the responsibility for this vital democratic process must rest on the States and Counties to ensure that millions of Americans will be able to cast their ballots in the general election on November 7th.

Many of your state's citizens and polling places will be using new electronic voting systems for the first time. Such systems have already caused unforeseen problems this year, resulting in disenfranchised voters from Maryland to California, from Texas to Indiana to many other states and counties around the union.

In Maryland, the Governor recently called for Emergency Paper Ballots statewide after catastrophic problems in their recent primary. In Texas and Arkansas, election officials wisely instructed their counties to have Emergency Paper Ballots on hand during runoff elections after thousands were unable to vote during primaries, or when voting machine companies failed to program balloting systems properly.

In America, in 2006, such occurrences should never have happened, and we write to you hoping that you will take every measure to ensure they do not happen anywhere in your state this November.

Therefore, we, the undersigned groups and individuals, strongly urge you to make contingency plans and procedures to ensure that every legally registered American voter can vote in the upcoming general election. All voters must have the option to vote on an Emergency Paper Ballot if necessary, and all such ballots must be counted as regular -- not provisional -- ballots.
We hope that your state and every county therein will take careful, yet aggressive measures to institute plans for ample Emergency Paper Ballots, to be made available in every voting jurisdiction.

Several states have laws in place requiring the use of emergency paper ballots for voters if voting equipment is unavailable or has malfunctioned. Many more states and counties, however, do not have such provisions. In addition, many poll workers are unaware of such state laws and elections code.

So many Americans have fought and died in this country and around the world -- and indeed, are fighting today – in the defense of our most basic freedoms, to ensure the right to freely cast a vote and thus determine the consent of the governed in this great democracy. Our vote is our precious franchise. We believe it is worth defending, and worth the effort to guarantee that that right remains assured and inviolate.

We urge you to please take this opportunity to draft, establish and publicize your own state’s common-sense plans for Emergency Paper Ballots at every polling place this Nov. 7th, so that every election official, poll worker, and voter may be crystal clear on the procedures for utilizing such measures.

With Great Respect,

The Undersigned

ORGANIZATIONS
51CapitalMarch.com
AUDIT-AZ
BlackBoxVoting.org
Broward Election Reform Coalition
Citizens for Election Integrity Minnesota
Citizens for Legitimate Government
Coalition for Peace Action, Princeton NJ
Coloradoans for Voting Integrity
Common Cause
Democrats.com
Election Defense Alliance (EDA)
Election Reform Network
Florida Fair Elections Coalition
Georgians for Verified Voting
Iowans for Voting Integrity
Las Vegas, NM Peace and Justice Center
MoveOn.org Political Action
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Committee for Voting Integrity
National Election Data Archive
NetworkOfCitizens.org
New Yorkers for Verified Voting
Ohio Honest Elections Campaign
Palm Beach Coalition for Election Reform
Progressive Democrats of America (PDA)
SAVE Our Votes:
   Secure, Accessible, Verifiable Elections for MD
Solarbus.org
TrueMajorityAction.org
TrueVoteMD
United Voters of New Mexico
Valley Grassroots for Democracy
VelvetRevolution.us
VerifiedVoting.org
VotePA
VoterAction.org
VotersUnite.org
VoteTrustUSA
Voting Matters [New Mexico]
Wake Up and Save Your Country
We Do Not Concede

INDIVIDUALS
Clifford O. Arnebeck, Jr, election attorney, OH
John C. Bonifaz, voting rights attorney, Boston
Sen. Barbara Boxer
Bob Fitrakis, Ph.D, J.D.
Brad Friedman, investigative journalist
Bruce Funk, County Clerk, Emery County, UT
Sarah Granger, computer security consultant
Rush Holt, Member of Congress
Douglas W. Jones, computer scientist, U. of Iowa
Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Sen. John Kerry
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Freddie Oakley, Yolo County, CA, Clerk/Recorder
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