

— Put Democracy in Our Hands

knowing who actually won?



PRINCIPLES OF ELECTORAL REFORM

From the National Election Defense Coalition

Equal Participation & Access: All eligible US citizens should be able to vote without restriction, with universal registration. All voters should have immediate and secure access to keep their registration up to date.

Privacy: Ensuring and enforcing voter anonymity is required. Measures should be taken to prevent linking voted ballots to voters.

Voter Support: Poll workers and election administrators must be fair and supportive, and take an enforceable oath to uphold the law. Voter information must be available explaining their rights as a voter.

Public Control: The following information must be available to the public: Who can vote (the voters list). Who voted (the polling place sign-in book). Whether the same ballots counted are the same ones as were cast (chain of custody). How the count was made, and how it was validated (public count).

Transparency: All voting processes should be accessible to political parties, candidates, and the public, without unreasonable or arbitrary barriers. Election materials and voted ballots must be public records. National and international observers must be granted appropriate access without unreasonable or arbitrary barriers. No paperless, non-verifiable voting systems or privately controlled "proprietary" software should be permitted.

Accuracy: Voters should be able to easily mark their preferences. Accurate, precinct-based hand

counting and statistically significant and secure machine auditing methods must be strictly maintained. Public reporting of discrepancies found during the hand count or audit must use the manual count to correct any initial reported results. The public must be able to verify the accuracy of polling place results that are communicated to central count locations.

Security: Casting of the ballots must be in public view. Counting ballots in public should occur before they are moved from public view. The election materials chain of custody should be protected by officials sworn to an oath. Ballots must be in the officials' sight at all times. Transport should be under video surveillance, with election materials stored in a public location under video surveillance.

Balance Of Power: All touching of election materials must be done by two people of different parties. All political parties should be represented on decision-making bodies for elections. Conflicts of interest must be prohibited.

Timeliness: Results should be announced at a time that does not compromise the accuracy and completeness of the counting process.



Hand Counting Paper Ballots Time for the US to Join the Rest of the World

by Jan BenDor, Director, Michigan Election Reform Alliance (MERA)

How can we move hand counting forward nationwide? Michigan Election Reform Alliance (MERA) has a proposal to determine best practice protocols for ballot construction, counting, accuracy verification, transparency and public access, and training.

Ballots designed to be read by tabulator scanners often confuse voters, due to such factors as lack of white space and monotonous type, and can be difficult to correctly read and hand tabulate. Design professionals can improve ballot readability and test for reduction of voting and counting errors. Since many states have laws that prescribe the exact format and layout of ballots, the project will need to develop model legislation to permit change.

Speed and accuracy of hand counting methods have never received testing with conditions comparable to a real-life election with controlled research parameters. The pressure of the 24-hour news cycle in the US has long emphasized speed over accuracy, and the narrative widely pushed is that hand-counting would lack both. In large turnout elections, with inevitable delays due to machine breakdowns, there is a brief burst of questioning the machines, but then an almost immediate return to the old narrative that they are the best technology.

To counter this inertia, we call for a credible and scientific study that would use established methodology from "human factors" research in industry. Results from the best-case hand-counted paper ballot (HCPB) methods will lead to a second phase: to develop and disseminate training materials and model legislation for a national educational campaign on HCPB. We will seek prospective national partners in the election integrity movement, and advocate for support in the form of federal legislation to provide incentives for states—the Trust America's Vote Act.