

"Campaign for Verifiable Voting in Maryland"
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARYLAND ELECTION INTEGRITY GROUP LAUNCHES CITIZEN POLL-WATCHING PROGRAM

Today TrueVoteMD launched a statewide drive to recruit poll-watchers to record problems with electronic voting machines in Maryland on November 2, 2004. Part of TrueVoteMD's campaign for verifiable voting, the program will recruit and train hundreds of citizens around the state to document voting irregularities and, where necessary, alert officials.

"Given the known failures of the Diebold voting system, the State Board of Elections should conduct user surveys to catch problems and institute improvements," said Linda Schade, cofounder of TrueVoteMD. "In the absence of action by the state, we are calling on the citizens of Maryland to document observable problems with the voting system on Election Day."

TrueVoteMD poll-watchers will be stationed outside voting places to hand out information alerting voters to problems specific to the Diebold electronic machines used in Maryland. These outside poll-watchers also will take "incident reports" from voters experiencing difficulties. Inside poll-watchers will observe voters needing assistance and document machine breakdowns or technical interventions.

Pollwatchers will be instructed to be lawful and cooperative. "As citizens, we are very much in support of our hard-working local election officials many of whom understand the need for a paper trail," said Amanda Bowers, State Coordinator for TrueVoteMD.

TrueVoteMD will conduct training sessions throughout Maryland over the next month. Topics will include state rules for poll-watching, legal requirements for reporting results, and typical problems experienced by voters using electronic machines and other barriers to successful voting.

Among problems documented with the Diebold system in the 2002 Maryland elections were machines not starting up and entire races missing from the electronic ballot including those for school board, state delegate, and federal senator. "TrueVote documented several dozen incidents during the primary in March of 2004," said Bowers. "Now we are expanding that effort to gather evidence to support critical improvements such as a voter-verified paper audit trail."

Those interested in poll-watching should sign up at TrueVoteMD.org or contact Amanda Bowers at info@freshaircleanpolitics.org or 301-270-6150.

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TrueVoteMD is a statewide nonpartisan citizens' campaign to protect the integrity of voting in Maryland. Its active representatives include people with expertise in elections, computer security, and election reform. TrueVoteMD believes a democracy requires a transparent election process with meaningful recount and audit capacities and that since computers, by their nature, are inherently subject to programming error, equipment malfunction, and malicious tampering, a voter-verified paper audit trail in Maryland is necessary to ensure transparent, fair elections that can be accurately recorded and manually recounted. TrueVoteMD is endorsed by Maryland Common Cause, Maryland Sierra Club, Maryland Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, and Baltimore Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance.