Association for Computing Machinery

Advancing Computing as a Science & Profession

February 6, 2008

The Honorable Rush Holt
1019 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Holt:

On behalf of the U.S. Public Policy Committee of the Association for Computing Machinery (USACM), we wish to thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act of 2008 (H.R. 5036). The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) – a leading society for computing professionals – and its U.S. public policy committee are leaders in educating the public and policymakers about technical issues associated with electronic voting. We appreciate your continued attention to this issue.

The Emergency Assistance for Security Elections Act is entirely consistent with our previous policy statements that voting systems should enable each voter to inspect a physical (e.g., paper) record to verify that his or her vote has been accurately cast and to serve as an independent check on the result produced and stored by the system. With too many jurisdictions using paperless voting systems, H.R. 5036 is an effective way to increase the transparency, accuracy, and reliability of our elections. This measure will help ensure confidence in our election process.

Should Congress enact this legislation, we believe there is still need for broader reforms of the voting system, including greater transparency over software used in voting systems and reforming the testing and certification procedures for e-voting systems. These reforms are contained in your legislation (H.R. 811) and comparable Senate legislation, and we hope that Congress will continue its work on these efforts. In light of the Emergency Assistance for Security Elections Act and with jurisdictions focusing on the 2008 elections, it is reasonable to alter the timelines in H.R. 811 and Senate legislation to reflect the longer-term nature of reforms. We look forward to Congress revisiting electronic voting both before and after the 2008 elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the new voting legislation. Should you need any technical advice from our members please contact Cameron Wilson, ACM's Director of Public Policy at 202-659-9711.

Sincerely,

Eugene H. Spafford, Ph.D.
Professor of Computer Science, Purdue University
Chair, U.S. Public Policy Committee of ACM

Barbara Simons, Ph.D.
IBM (Retired)
Co-Chair, USACM Voting Subcommittee

Alec Yasinsac, Ph.D.
Professor of Computer Science, Florida State University
Co-Chair, USACM Voting Subcommittee

cc: Representative Robert Brady, Chair, Committee on House Administration
        Representative Vernon Ehlers, Ranking Member, Committee on House Administration
        Representative Zoe Lofgren, Chair, Subcommittee on Elections
        Representative Kevin McCarthy, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Elections