

From the Office of Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz

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For Immediate Release
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SURVEY SAYS PUBLIC LIKES ELECTRONIC VOTING **UConn poll shows voters cast ballots with confidence and ease**

Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz released an independent survey showing that the overwhelming majority of people casting ballots on electronic voting machines during municipal elections in November had a positive experience and found the equipment easy to use.

The League of Women Voters in conjunction with the Center for Survey Research & Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut conducted the exit poll, and over 90% of the 1,478 voters surveyed rated the new technology “excellent” or “good” and expressed confidence that their votes were accurately recorded. Four different technologies were tested, and voters of all ages, education and income rated the machines highly regardless of the type of machine used.

“Electronic voting went very smooth in the test towns and voters found the various machines very easy to use,” said Bysiewicz, who proposed the test to determine what technology would best serve Connecticut voters in the future. “Ironically, the only problems we had with voting machines on Election Day were with older lever machines.”

On a scale of one to seven, with seven meaning “extremely easy”, voters rated the ease of use of the new machines at 6.23. It took 87% of the respondents less than four minutes to vote, with 40% finishing in less than two minutes.

“The survey finds that strong majorities of voters from all eight volunteer towns were very satisfied with their experience using the new technologies,” said CSRA Director Ken Dautrich.

Electronic voting was tested in **Cromwell, Griswold, Hartford, Middletown, Sharon, Southington, West Hartford and Wilton**. Towns were selected by lottery from municipalities that volunteered. Bysiewicz credited local Registrars of Voters for educating the public about the new voting technologies. “Almost 80% of those surveyed were already aware when they went to the polls that they would be using a new type of voting machine, and that is a credit to our Registrars,” she said.

Mechanical lever voting machines have been used almost exclusively in the state for over 50 years, but the federal “Help America Vote Act” (HAVA), which was authored by Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd and signed into law by President Bush, requires all states to upgrade their voting systems by 2006. One requirement of the new federal HAVA law is that voting systems provide persons with disabilities the opportunity to vote privately and independently.

Bysiewicz has already secured \$5 million in federal funds under HAVA, which was proposed as a result of the voting debacle in Florida during the 2000 presidential election. She expects to eventually receive more money from the federal government over the next few years to comply with the new election reforms. Much of these funds could be earmarked for new voting machines.

The November test of new voting systems was done at no cost to taxpayers with private vendors loaning equipment and staff support free of charge. Bysiewicz is required to send a report on the voting pilot to the Legislature’s Elections Committee by February 1.