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CONTACT:

- Robert Ferraro 301-661-2989, Co-Director, SAVEourVotes.org (Columbia)

**CALIFORNIA DECERTIFIES ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEMS
Citing Insurmountable Security Vulnerabilities, Secretary of State Disallows
Use of Most Touch-screen Machines in February Primary Elections**

In a late-night press conference convened just before the midnight deadline for voting system changes before next spring's primary election, Secretary of State Debra Bowen last night announced widespread decertification of most types of electronic voting equipment used in California.

The withdrawal of certification for the equipment was the culmination of a complete top-to-bottom review of all election systems used in California. In her campaign for Secretary of State last fall, Ms Bowen, a former state senator, had promised a thorough study of the state's voting systems, which she set in motion immediately upon taking office last January. The review consisted of four separate studies encompassing all aspects of the system: security, accessibility, system software, and a review of official documents related to the equipment.

"Secretary of State Bowen took the only responsible course of action in light of the severity of the study's findings," said Robert Ferraro, a Co-Director of SAVE Our Votes, a grass-roots citizens' group working for Secure, Accessible, Verifiable Elections in Maryland. "This underlines the urgency of implementing Maryland's Senate Bill 392, which will replace flawed computerized touch-screen voting machines with optically scanned paper ballots. Governor O'Malley must make this a top priority and provide funds for the changeover to a more secure, reliable voting system."

The decertifications will prohibit the use of most Direct-Recording Electronic (DRE) voting equipment, often referred to as touch-screen machines, except for those used in early voting and one in each precinct to provide accessibility for voters with disabilities. These DREs have been conditionally reapproved under stringent conditions for their use, including a requirement to hand-count all of the voter-verified paper print-outs from the machines instead of using the electronic votes tallied by the machine. California already requires each voting machine to provide a voter-verified paper record of each vote for use in audits and recounts of election results.

While many of the reports' findings reconfirm vulnerabilities revealed in previous studies of Maryland's voting equipment, some shocked even the computer experts who performed those earlier reviews. Dr. Aviel Rubin, a computer security expert at Johns Hopkins University who scrutinized voting source code from Diebold Election Systems, Inc., in 2003, commented on his blog, "In all cases, the analysts were able to rewrite the firmware on the machines. This means that an attacker could change every aspect of the behavior of the voting systems.... There are many other examples of attack that are much more serious than what I expected from this report — and I was expecting a lot." <http://avi-rubin.blogspot.com>

The full reports from California are posted at: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_vsr.htm

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