

Minutes of the 21st Century Vote Commission Meeting
May 16, 2001
1:00 p.m.
Macon, GA

Members Present

Honorable Cathy Cox, Secretary of State
Honorable Judge Mike Bracewell
Honorable Judge Kenneth Van Horn
Honorable Rep. Tom Shanahan
Honorable Rep. Buddy DeLoach
Honorable Sen. Jack Hill
Honorable Sen. Billy Ray
Ms. Linda Beazley
Mrs. Lynn Bailey
Mrs. Kathy Rogers
Ms. Linda Latimore
Ms. Gloria Champion
Mr. Robert Woodruff, representing Mr. Larry Singer
Ms. Erica Brooks
Ms. Molly Dye
Mr. Michael Cartwright

Members Absent

Ms. Justine Boyd
Honorable Rep. Mark Burkhalter

Staff Attendance

Mr. Bob Ray
Mr. Terrell Slayton
Mr. Michael Barnes
Ms. Chrissie Rickard
Mr. Chris Riggall
Ms. Saralyn Skinner
Ms. Ann Hicks
Ms. Jo Wingate
Mr. Tom Mishou
Mr. Jeff Lanier, Legislative Counsel

I. Call to Order

- A. Secretary Cox called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.
- B. Mr. Terrell Slayton welcomed the newly appointed Commission members and members of the public attending the meeting and gave a brief overview of what topics would be discussed during the meeting. He then turned the meeting over to Secretary Cox.

II. "How We Got Here" & Review on Commission Purpose

- A. Secretary Cox made a brief introduction and explained the circumstances that brought about the proposal for the 21st Century Vote Commission. She explained that the purpose of the Commission would be to ensure that by the

2004 general elections, the state of Georgia will have a uniform system of voting equipment. Secretary Cox suggested that the best way to determine the type of voting equipment the state of Georgia will use is to experiment with different types of electronic voting equipment by way of the proposed "City Pilot Project".

- B. Secretary Cox asked the Commission members to introduce themselves and state who they were appointed by. She then turned the meeting over to Ms. Beazley.

III. "Voting Lingo" – Overview Voting Terminology & Equipment

- A. Ms. Beazley proceeded to explain to the members of the Commission terminology used by elections officials and persons involved with elections. Ms. Beazley also described the different types of voting equipment that are currently used in Georgia.
- B. Secretary Cox went on to state which counties in Georgia use which type of voting equipment and discrepancies apparent with certain types of equipment. She then introduced a new type of voting equipment to the Commission, called DRE (Direct Recording Electronic), which some have described as an electronic version of the old mechanical lever machines. This equipment enables a voter to cast a vote by touch screen or other electronic interface. Secretary Cox turned the meeting over to Mr. Bob Ray.

IV. Review "The 2000 Elections: A Wake up Call For Reform & Change"

- A. Mr. Ray made a brief introduction and went on to review with the Commission the above referenced report, which was prepared by the Secretary of State. The report revealed several critical issues including outdated voting equipment, voters who are not adequately informed about the voting process, polling place deficiencies, untrained poll workers, low and declining turnout at the polls, and the growth of language minorities. Mr. Ray mentioned solutions for some of these problems, including replacing outdated voting equipment, pursuing options to address the shortage of poll workers, changing the primary date, and being prepared for language minorities. The meeting was then turned over to Mr. Michael Barnes.

V. Overview of Statistical Analysis of Georgia's Undervote

- A. Mr. Barnes shared with the Commission a precinct-by-precinct statistical analysis of undervotes from the presidential race of 2000 in both 80% or above majority precincts and 80% or above minority precincts, also factoring in the type of voting equipment being used in the county in which the precinct was located. It was found that there were huge differences in majority and minority undervotes, especially in counties that used optical scanners.
- B. Mr. Barnes then shared a similar statistical analysis of undervotes from Clark County, Nevada (using the DRE system) compared to Georgia counties (using Opti-Scan, lever machines, or punch cards). The analysis showed that undervote rates in this particular DRE county were much lower, including both majority and minority populations. It was further noted that of all counties in the United States currently using the DRE equipment, the highest undervote percentage was smaller than nearly all of Georgia's counties undervote rates and all of them combined.

VI. Overview of Senate Bill 213

- A. Ms. Beazley spoke briefly about Senate Bill 213, the "Elections Reform Bill". She stated that the Bill provides for uniform statewide voting equipment and authorizes the Secretary of State to develop a "pilot project" to be conducted during the municipal general elections this year in cities selected by the 21st Century Vote Commission, a bi-partisan commission composed of two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, two members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, two members appointed by the Governor, the chief information officer of the State of Georgia or his or her designee, eight members appointed by the Secretary of State of which six shall be county or municipal election officials, the director of the Elections Division of the office of the Secretary of State, one member designated by each political body that qualified candidates in the 2000 November general election, and the Secretary of State who shall be chairperson of the commission. The bill states that the Commission must hold public meetings in different regions of the state. The entire project has received a budgetary allocation of \$200,000.
- B. The bill also provides that there must be accessibility for the disabled at the polling places, technical support for the polling places, training for poll workers, and extensive voter education. In addition, the bill states that whatever type of voting equipment is chosen to be used uniformly throughout the state, it must have the capability of producing an independent audit trail.
- C. Ms. Beazley further explained that a significant provision in the bill provides for the elimination of the nonpartisan primary and provides that it will be a nonpartisan election held at the same time as the general primary. Those candidates elected in the nonpartisan election would not appear on the November general election ballot.
- D. She also explained that a brief description consisting of not more than fifteen (15) words describing a constitutional amendment would be printed as a "short title" for each proposed constitutional amendment that appears on the ballot.
- E. Following Ms. Beazley's presentation, the Commission recessed for 15 minutes

VII. First Commission Task – Selecting "Pilot Cities"

- A. After the recess, the Commission took up the task of selecting "Pilot Cities." Secretary Cox first gave a background on how the list of possible host cities for the "City Pilot Project" was compiled. She explained that after Senate Bill 213 passed, twenty-nine (29) cities sent letters to the Secretary of State's office expressing interest in becoming a test site. At that time, a survey was sent out from the Secretary of State's office asking questions pertaining to the number of registered voters in such city, the number of precincts in such city, the current voting equipment being used in such city, the reason the city wanted to participate in the "pilot project", and what was likely to appear on their ballot in the upcoming election. Twenty-four (24) cities responded to the survey.
 - 1. Secretary Cox discussed how her office had compiled from the list of twenty-four (24) cities a recommendation of twelve (12) cities that could serve as "Pilot Cities." The twelve (12) cities being recommended anticipate high voter turnout and contested races and reflect geographic and demographic balance. The list of twelve (12) is

a combination of small, medium, and large cities, geographically spread out across the state. Secretary Cox took particular note of Augusta, which she said had made a very strong presentation. She indicated that while her office would very much like to pick Augusta, the city's very large number of voters and precincts, coupled with the limited budget and available voting units assigned to the project, made selecting Augusta impossible.

2. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the Secretary of State's office presented its compiled list of twelve (12) cities. The list of cities included Reidsville, Statesboro, Thomasville, Dawson, Lithonia, Suwanee, Canton, Decatur, LaGrange, Rome, Hogansville, and West Point. Mr. Barnes explained to the Commission members in detail why these cities in particular were chosen.
 - a. Rep. Tom Shanahan made a motion to adopt the Secretary of State's cities of recommendation for the "City Pilot Project". Rep. Buddy DeLoach seconded his motion. Judge Van Horn asked if it would be appropriate to consider selecting some alternate cities for the project in the case that after qualifying, some of the preselected cities did not have contested races. Secretary Cox responded that it would not be a bad idea. She then mentioned to the Commission members that the City of Buena Vista had a situation arise recently and would benefit from being involved in the pilot project. Judge Van Horn then made a motion to amend the original motion presented by Rep. Shanahan. Judge Van Horn's motion added the City of Buena Vista to the list of pilot cities. This motion increased the number of pilot cities from twelve (12) to thirteen (13). Judge Van Horn's motion was seconded by Ms. Lynn Bailey. The Commission then voted on the motion to amend. The motion to amend was unanimously approved. The Commission then voted on the underlying motion approving the selection of pilot cities motion as amended. The amended motion was unanimously approved.

VIII. Observing DRE Voting Systems in Use – Oakland, CA

- A. Mr. Michael Barnes spoke to the Commission about a recent trip to Oakland, California that he and Rep. Buddy DeLoach took to observe the use of DRE voting systems. Their observation was very positive. Of the many advantages, some were: Smart Card Interface, portability and fewer supplies required, less set-up time, voting was quick, simple option for write-in votes, go-back option to check votes cast, tallying of votes was quick, and less time for the shut-down of polling precincts. Mr. Barnes stated that the voter feedback was positive and enthusiastic, and the poll workers liked the high-tech system. Rep. DeLoach stated another advantage he observed was audio voting for visually disabled voters. Rep. DeLoach expressed his thought that this added benefit of DRE would offer ballot secrecy for Georgia's visually disabled voters for the first time. Rep. DeLoach also spoke highly about a program Oakland election officials had implemented to get high school students involved in the polling precincts. Rep. DeLoach described a program where high school honor students were trained on how to operate the DRE voting equipment and were placed in every polling precinct. These students provided assistance, as requested, to

voters who were voting. Rep. DeLoach spoke of how he observed that elderly voters were not intimidated to seek assistance from these young students.

- B. Ms. Cox mentioned that another aspect of the DRE voting systems that hadn't been mentioned was that DRE could display the ballot in other languages, which would solve Georgia's language minority issue. Mr. Barnes added that the DRE unit observed in Oakland could display the election ballot in seven (7) different languages.

IX. Public Comments

- A. Public concerns included adaptation of elderly voters and getting younger voters informed and involved, both of which the Secretary of State's office has taken into consideration. Secretary Cox stated that she feels there are many advantages for all age groups with the new DRE voting equipment.

X. Preview of Second Meeting

- A. Secretary Cox announced that the next scheduled meeting for the 21st Century Voting Commission would be June 11, 2001 in Atlanta at the Capitol Education Center. The meeting would include a ceremonial swearing-in of the members of the Commission by the Governor of the state of Georgia.

XI. Adjournment

- A. Secretary Cox adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Prepared by:



Chrissie Rickard

Approved by:



Cathy Cox, Secretary of State