

Michigan Election Reform Alliance.org
An affiliate of VoteTrustUSA

For immediate release

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Michigan Election Reform Alliance Commends Oakland County's Local Clerks for Speaking Out on Assistive Ballot Marking Machine Failures

(Ann Arbor, MI) The Michigan Election Reform Alliance, a statewide organization advocating for election integrity and voters' rights, praises the actions of clerks in Oakland County who recently stepped forward with a public demand that the state's AutoMark assistive ballot marking machines be completely recalled. Despite the \$34 million in federal grant funds spent on the devices in Michigan, Oakland County's jurisdictions saw a failure rate of thirty percent in the election on November 7. Reports from other counties suggest that similar failures occurred around the state.

Assistive ballot marking devices, introduced in 2006, were supposed to provide all voters with disabilities an unprecedented opportunity to mark a ballot in complete privacy. The purchase of the AutoMark machines manufactured by Election Systems and Software was indeed too rushed. When the devices were delivered to local clerks for the August, 2006 primary, it was without thorough certification and realistic testing, and with our clerks having less than a week's advance time for preparation.

Disregarding widespread failures in August, including ballot jams, screen blackouts, and printing votes on only one side of the ballot, the State Bureau of Elections insisted that the devices be used again in November. With little time to proof for programming and audio errors, local election administrators were once again placed in the position of having to disappoint and inconvenience voters with disabilities.

Oakland Clerk Ruth Johnson and her colleagues are to be commended for standing up and insisting that the machines be recalled and corrected. The State Bureau of Elections needs to pay attention to this action.

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The Michigan Election Reform Alliance.org (MERA) is a nonprofit, non-partisan, pro-democracy, grassroots organization dedicated to the realization of election processes that consistently uphold the principles of democracy to ensure the confidence of voters and maximize representation of all citizens of the United States of America.