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NORTH CAROLINA FACED WITH UNVERIFIABLE ELECTIONS

September 27, 2019. **Transparent Elections NC**, a group advocating for transparent, verifiable, and audible elections, is warning that one of the voting systems being considered by some North Carolina counties may jeopardize the validity of the 2020 elections.

Beginning on December 1, 2019 counties will no longer be permitted to use touchscreen (DRE) voting systems and 28 County Boards of Elections¹ are in the process of making critical decisions as to which voting system they will recommend to County Commissioners for purchase. Transparent Elections NC is urging counties to reject any system that prints a “barcode ballot”, computer marked printout indicating a voter’s selections in the form of an unreadable and unverifiable barcode. Although a human-readable summary is included on the printout, the barcode is the only part that gets counted!

“Cybersecurity experts are recommending that ALL states move to hand-marked paper ballots,” said Lynn Bernstein, Director and Founder of **Transparent Elections NC**. “In this modern age when electronics are easily hacked, returning to hand-marked paper ballots is **NOT** a step backward, but the smartest way forward.” Bernstein, an Aerospace Engineer, is not opposed to technology. She insists, however, that there should NOT be a computer between a voter and her ballot.

Citing security and accuracy concerns, the group urges counties to follow the emerging national consensus that elections be conducted with hand-marked paper ballots so they can be properly audited. In support of their position, **Transparent Elections NC** points to Colorado, which recently banned voting equipment that uses bar codes and to Maryland and Virginia, which are now requiring hand-marked paper ballots.

Nationally renowned statisticians and computer security experts have also spoken out against computer-marked ballots, called ballot-marking devices or BMDs. As stated in a recent report, *Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs) Cannot Assure the Will of the Voters*², “The **only** known practical technology for a contestable, defensible, strongly software independent voting system is *hand-marked paper ballots...*”

The vendor selling the barcode voting system (called the ExpressVote) is Election Systems & Software (ES&S), the nation’s largest voting equipment company. ES&S pays six lobbyists in North Carolina to help it keep its monopoly in the state. Unfortunately, those representing the vendor appear to be influencing County Board members with misleading and confusing claims, making it difficult for the decisionmakers to get accurate information. As a result, some County Boards do not understand the perils and possible dire consequences of purchasing a barcoded, non-transparent, non-auditable, non-verifiable, non-recoverable voting system that will also cost an exorbitant amount compared to a hand-marked paper ballot system.

John Brakey, director of **AUDIT USA**, a national organization supporting the North Carolina coalition, reminds people that democracy is about the peaceful transition of power. “It’s as important for the losers to know they’ve lost as it is for the

¹ NC Counties making decisions about new voting systems: Alamance, Brunswick, Burke, Caswell, Cherokee, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lenoir, Madison, Mecklenburg, Moore, New Hanover, Pamlico, Pender, Perquimans, Polk, Richmond, Rutherford, Surry, Transylvania, Union, Warren, Wilson

² April 21, 2019 https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3375755

winner to know they've won," Brakey said. "This is only possible with a transparent, verifiable, trackable, auditable voting system – meaning hand-marked paper ballots."

Barcode ballot systems makes it difficult if not impossible to verify results and are a form of voter suppression. This fight is about making sure that voters have their votes accurately and publicly counted so that the election results are worthy of the public's fullest confidence. Another form of voter suppression are the long lines that are inevitable with ballot-marking devices, because voters must wait for a machine to become available.

Dr. T. Anthony Spearman, President of the North Carolina NAACP, also serves on the Guilford County Board of Elections. After extensive research and study, Dr. Spearman is advocating for hand-marked ballots and plans to vote against the barcoded voting system. He sees past the vendor's propaganda. "We the people are smarter than that, if we are properly informed," Spearman said.