



The National Defense Committee

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Saturday, May 31, 2008

The Readers' Forum
The Miami Herald
One Herald Plaza
Miami, Florida 33132-1693

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Florida Voters Coalition (FVC) letter regarding the Okaloosa County Distance Balloting Initiative is rife with incorrect characterizations of the technology Okaloosa County uses, the process by which it would execute this initiative, and the relationship with the Operation Bravo Foundation. It appears that the Coalition's knee-jerk Luddite reaction is more due to the mere presence of technology in the voting process, rather than the technology vulnerabilities which they ascribe to this project.

As detailed in the attached letter to Secretary Browning, Okaloosa County's project is not, and cannot be considered under any circumstances, internet voting. Votes are cast and tabulated at the kiosk site, just as at any polling place back in Okaloosa County. The only internet connection is after the votes are cast and tabulated, and then a virtual private network (VPN) connection is established to send the tabulated results back to Okaloosa County in a single transmission. It's essentially a secure e-mail transmission of the already cast, tabulated, and known results.

It is ironic FVC cites the SERVE Scientific Peer Review Group Minority report as supposedly condemning the technology to be used in the Okaloosa County project. In fact, that report not only endorses the Okaloosa County technology of "kiosk architecture as a starting point," saying that such a system "avoids the dangers of these [internet and PC computer] architectural features." It appears FVC cherry-picked those passages from the report that could be presented out of context as allegedly condemnatory of the Okaloosa County project.

Likewise, it is sophomoric and unfair to characterize Operation Bravo as some nefarious attempt to force internet voting on an unsuspecting public. Okaloosa County has been at the forefront of electronic voting support for military voters since 2000, and this latest project is another step in that long history. To an outside observer, Operation Bravo simply looks like a non-profit established to relieve the Okaloosa County taxpayers the cost of this important pilot project.

Your paper should be lauding the work of Pat Hollarn and Okaloosa County in trying to overcome the shameful treatment to which our country has subjected military voters. The voting system under which we force them to labor meant that more than 420,000 military personnel who requested absentee ballots in 2006 never got the chance to cast them. 55,000 of them were Floridians.¹ For FVC to argue that this mass disenfranchisement should persist, denying hundreds of thousands of military personnel the right to vote for or against the same elected officials who will determine when and where they fight is the true national security threat.

Very Respectfully,

/s/

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¹ U.S. Election Assistance Commission [EAC], *The 2006 Election Administration and Voting Survey: A Summary of Key Findings*, tables 26 and 30b; EAC, *UOCAVA Survey Report Findings* (Washington, D.C.: September 2007), tables 19 and 22, extrapolating the proportion of military voters of all the categorized UOCAVA voters into the uncategorized UOCAVA voters as well; 194,000 Florida military voters (J. Scott Weidmann to Kurt S. Browning, September 17, 2007, Letter to Florida, at "Legislative Initiatives" Web page, Federal Voting Assistance Program Web site, <http://www.fvap.gov/services/init-pdf/f108init.pdf>, accessed February 20, 2008), is 13.2% of the total U.S. military population. 13% of 420,000 military absentee ballots requested but never cast are 55,000 Florida absentee ballots requested but never cast.

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