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Mary Norwood to Be Denied Rights Twice in 8 Years
Georgia Voting System Has No Ballot for Legal Recount

ATLANTA, GA – For the second time in 8 years Atlanta Mayoral Candidate Mary Norwood will be denied her legal right to a real recount of Georgia election results. In 2009 and again Wednesday morning, Mrs. Norwood found herself about 700 votes behind in well over 80,000 votes cast for a new Atlanta mayor. Each time her vote total was within 1% of the respective leaders, Kasim Reed and Keisha Lance Bottoms. That entitles her to a full recount under Georgia law. [O.C.G.A. 21-2-495 (c)]

Election officials will go through motions of reprinting electronic results again and announcing a winner. Media outlets will report a recount was conducted and most of Atlanta will be led to believe that the process worked once more. In reality, Georgia’s direct recording electronic (DRE) system cannot perform the recount required by Georgia law. Instead, votes are “recanvassed,” a word not listed in English dictionaries.

Former Kennesaw State (KSU) Center for Election Systems Director, Ray Cobb, explained how a recount differs in a 2007 deposition. “It starts with the ballot rather than the card.” A “recanvass” starts with a DRE internal memory card because a DRE has no ballot that can be recounted. Georgia code defines a ballot as “the instrument by which an elector casts his or her vote.” [O.C.G.A. 21-2-2] Touchscreens cast the votes that disappear when the ballot is cast. No ballot image is stored for manual recounts.

A “recanvass” can only reprint previous unverifiable results. Since it starts after the vote has been recorded on the card, it is only a portion of the full recount required by law [O.C.G.A. 21-2-2] A State Election Board (SEB) rule [183-1-12-02(7)] applied the old lever machine term to new DREs. That SEB rule conflicts with Georgia recount law.

DRE results cannot change with a recount. KSU Professor Emeritus, Britain Williams, who oversaw certification tests for the current system, admitted in his 2007 deposition. “There are two voting systems that will give you the exact same answer on a recount as they do on the original count and that’s an electronic voting system and a lever machine.” Such a meaningless process subverts the intent of Georgia recount law.

Mail-in vote recounts do not fare much better. The code allows election officials to rescan mail-in ballots without hand recounts. So if the optical scan tabulator has an error that produces incorrect results, it will produce the same incorrect results for a recount. Hand recounts that would expose any error are not required by Georgia law.