New Law Leaves Slim Pickings for Georgia Voting Systems

ATLANTA GA – The new law requiring Georgia to purchase electronic ballot marking devices (BMDs) has left Georgia with slim pickings for a new voting system. The law was implemented as HB316 and signed by Governor Brian Kemp as Act 24 of this year's General Assembly.

Most BMD systems demonstrated to Georgia tabulate votes embedded in bar codes printed on unverifiable "ballotless" summaries similar to receipts from a grocery store or gas station. These systems like ES&S Express Vote and Dominion's Image Cast X offer little security improvement over direct recording electronic (DRE) machines. Of the systems likely to be proposed, only Clear Ballot's Clear Access produces a full face ballot with no bar codes. Another option is Hart InterCivic's Touch Writer and Duo BMDs that use bar codes but do not embed votes in them. Touch Writer also produces a full face ballot but VoterGA has learned Hart may only propose Duo partly because its integrated printer makes it more cost effective.

Incumbent vendor ES&S has a full face ballot BMD but will not likely propose it for reasons similar to those of Hart. Instead, it will propose its newer Express Vote system that not only embeds votes into bar codes but is also riddled with a security design flaw. The flaw allows votes to be added by a tabulator that is integrated into the marker. Dominion's Image Cast Evolution produces a full face ballot but it has a similar design flaw that is lacking in security. Both BMDs have the capability to retain votes like a DRE which **violates** the new Georgia law.

Two other vendors who originally proposed systems to Georgia will not likely be competing for the contract. Unisyn, which proposed its Freedom Vote Tablet, dropped out of a December vendor demonstration and mandatory March bidder conference. Smartmatic, which proposed its A4-600, has not obtained certification for it yet from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC). EAC certification is required by the new law although the vendor driven EAC has a history of certifying unverifiable DRE and BMD voting systems.

The Secretary of State will also consider third party poll book systems including ones from KnowInk and Tenex Software Solutions during the Request for Proposal Process (RFP) now underway for BMDs. Meanwhile Tuesday, plaintiffs argued in a federal court hearing that all BMDs are insecure and cannot be properly audited.