Mr. Kevin J. Kennedy, Executive Director
State Elections Board
Madison, WI

Dear Mr. Kennedy:

Since the control of the electoral process lies within the state we are writing to you to let you know some of our thoughts about it.

Some of the problems with the electoral process are the following:

First, often there are too many questions in the ballot that the voter has to answer; second, voting on a workday (Tuesday) creates an inconvenience for many voters; third, in the last election, in many precincts it was reported that there were not enough voting machines and/or officials to ensure efficient handling of the vote; next, the use of "computer" voting as it was used created the opportunity for irregularities and fraud; next, purging of voter lists was not always conducted in a correct manner; and there are more deficiencies that should be corrected.

In a New York Times editorial dated November 7, 2004, which may be found at http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/07/opinion/07sun1.html?ex=1101531600&en=ad2820b80cd5517e&ei=5070&oref=login&ei=1&en=33730e970e900764&ex=1101014349&pagewanted=print&position=, the writer recommends the following measures that should be taken to improve the electoral process:

"1. A holiday for voting. It's wrong for working people to be forced to "choose between standing in a long line to vote and being on time for "work. Election Day should be a holiday, to underscore the significance "of the event, to give all voters time to cast ballots and to free up "more qualified people to serve as poll workers.

"2. Early voting. In states that permit it, early voting encourages "people to turn out by letting them vote at times that are convenient "for them. And it gives election officials and outside groups more time "to react to voting problems ranging from faulty voting machines to "voter intimidation.

"3. Improved electronic voting. For voters to trust electronic voting, "there must be a voter-verified paper record of every vote cast, and "mandatory recounts of a reasonable percentage of the votes. The "computer code should be provided to election officials, and made "public so it can be widely reviewed. There should be spot-checks of "the software being used on Election Day, as there are of slot "machines in Nevada, to ensure that the software in use matches what "is on file with election officials.

"4. Shorter lines at the polls. Forcing voters to wait five hours, as "some did this year, is unreasonable, and it disenfranchises those who "cannot afford the wait. There should be standards for the number of "voting machines and poll workers per 100 voters, to ensure that "waiting times are reasonable and uniform from precinct to precinct.

"5. Impartial election administrators. Partisan secretaries of state "routinely issued rulings this year that favored their parties and "themselves. Decisions about who can vote and how votes will be "counted should be made by officials who are not running for higher "office or supporting any candidates. Voting machine manufacturers "and their employees, and companies that handle ballots, should not "endorse or contribute to political candidates.

"6. Uniform and inclusive voter registration standards. Registration "forms should be simplified, so no one is again disenfranchised for "failing to check a superfluous box, as occurred this year in Florida, or "for not using heavy enough paper, as occurred in Ohio. The rules "should be geared to getting as many qualified voters as possible on "the rolls.

"7. Accurate and transparent voting roll purges. This year, Florida once "again conducted a flawed and apparently partisan purge of its rolls, "and went to court to try to keep it secret. There should be clear "standards for how purges are done that are made public in advance. "Names that are due to be removed should be published, and posted "online, well in advance of Election Day.

"8. Uniform and voter-friendly standards for counting provisional "ballots. A large number of provisional ballots cast by registered voters "were thrown out this year because they were handed in at the wrong "precinct. There should be a uniform national rule that such ballots "count.

"9. Upgraded voting machines and improved ballot design. Incredibly, "More than 70 percent of the Ohio vote was cast on the infamous "punch card ballots, which produce chads and have a high error rate. "States should shift to better machines, ideally optical scans, which "combine the efficiency of computers and the reliability of a voter-"verified paper record. Election officials should get professional help to "design ballots that are intuitive and clear, and minimize voter error.

"10. Fair and uniform voter ID rules. No voter should lose his right to "vote because he is required to produce identification he does not "have. ID requirements should allow for an expansive array of "acceptable identification. The rules should be posted at every polling "place, and poll workers should be carefully trained so no one is turned "away, as happened repeatedly this year, for not having ID that was "not legally required.

"11. An end to minority vote suppression. Protections need to be put in "place to prevent Election Day challengers from turning away qualified minority voters or slowing down voting in minority precincts. More must be done to stop the sort of dirty tricks that are aimed at minority voters every year, like fliers distributed in poor neighborhoods warning that people with outstanding traffic tickets are ineligible to vote. Laws barring former felons from voting, which disproportionately disenfranchise minorities, should be rescinded.

"http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/07/opinion/07sun1.html?ex=1101"531600&en=ad2820b80cd5517e&ei=5070&oref=login&ei=1&en=337"30e970e900764&ex=1101014349&pagewanted=print&position=

"12. Improved absentee ballot procedures. Voters outside of their "states, including military voters, have a right to receive absentee "ballots in a timely

fashion, which did not always happen this year. "Absentee ballots should be widely available for downloading over the "Internet. Voters should not be asked, as military voters were this "year, to send their ballots by fax lines or e-mail, denying them a "secret ballot."

To which we may add, require that states adopt same day registration, as suggested by a Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel editorial (www.jsonline.com/news/editorials/nov04/274773.asp) .

In reference to item 3 in the above list, there have been several reports of "glitches" (www.roanoke.com/columnists/gottstein13719.html , www.eff.org/deeplinks/archives/002075.php, http://www.commoncause.org/site/pp.asp?c=dkLNK1MQIwG&b=186966 [scroll down], www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=200411206&=corn2, *et pari passu*). There is no doubt that electronic voting is the way of the future, but its vulnerability to irregularities has to be addressed. As an aside, it is noted that one of the electronic machine makers, Diebold, is headed by a GOP fundraiser who refuses to disclose its source code. This, of course, is no proof of culpability, but it raises questions of propriety.

Personally we are in favor of the "run off" system of voting, in which the voter assigns priorities to the candidates.

We are aware that control of the electoral process is within the jurisdiction of the states; however, we believe that measures designed to standardize the electoral process would be beneficial.

Sincerely,

William R. Bunge   Mary C. Bunge
(signed)   (signed)

CF: Senator Mary Lazich
    Representative Mark Gundrum
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