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AAAS Statements on Elections and Paper Ballots

“All voters should have the knowledge -- and confidence -- that each vote is recorded and counted accurately. The United States is one of the only advanced nations that allows computer-assisted elections without requiring paper ballots to verify votes. Multiple lines of evidence have demonstrated that paperless electronic voting machines are fundamentally insecure, leaving open the possibility of interference and errors. Many computer scientists agree that we should implement a national standard that enables our elections to be independently audited.”

-- Rush Holt, CEO, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)

“Computerized voting systems should be backed up by paper ballots. This reform, already adopted in many U.S. states, would help mitigate harms that might come from foreign attempts to interfere in elections. Members of the AAAS Section on Social, Economic and Political Sciences are drawn from disciplines that include scholars who specialize in studying electoral processes. Many among them have long noted the vulnerability of computerized voting systems to breakdowns, subversive manipulation and unintended errors. Paper records allow for audits that can ensure that the results reported by computerized systems are accurate. We are pleased that the importance of paper trails are being discussed at the highest level of government. As representatives of our disciplines, we encourage U.S. states that still lack paper trails to adopt systems that provide for them before 2018 elections.”

-- AAAS Section on Social, Economic and Political Sciences leadership

“The use of paper ballots is considered a necessary, but insufficient, means of ensuring the integrity of elections. That is, the use of paper is essential but there also must be a comprehensive legal framework for ensuring the integrity of the paper trail and auditing the results against the paper trail. The use of such an approach is essential to prevent the outcome of an election being questioned on process grounds.”

-- AAAS Section on Information, Computing and Communication leadership

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