FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   **Contact: Melissa J. Urda**

WILL DUPAGE VOTERS GET "SCRUNCHED" IN EARLY VOTING?
Cutting corners: County will begin using touch screens and printers that often failed in testing

February 25, 2006. Early voting in Illinois begins Monday February 27th and voters throughout Illinois will use new voting equipment purchased at a cost of about $100 million, primarily with money appropriated under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) which provides funds to replace outdated and outmoded voting systems and ensure increased accessibility and independence for voters with disabilities.

The majority of counties in Illinois, including DuPage, have purchased touch screen devices made by Diebold Election Systems, Inc. The AccuVote-TSX® touch screen comes equipped with Diebold's AccuView® thermal printer because the Illinois Election Code requires that all touch screen machines have a Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). The touch screens are significantly more expensive on a per precinct basis so most election officials are providing only one or two per precinct. That means that most DuPage voters will use paper ballots read by optical scanners.

But how reliable are these new touch-screens and their printers? In the first significant large-scale testing of the Diebold touch-screen terminal and attached printer on July 20, 2005, 96 Diebold TSXs with AccuView printers were tested by the California Secretary of State's office in a setting designed to emulate a real election. In its report "Analysis of Volume Testing of the AccuVote TSx / AccuView," issued by the California Voting Systems Technology Assessment Advisory Board, 14 printer problems and 20 software crashes were noted. 29 distinct machines were involved, meaning that 30.2% of the machines tested, nearly one-in-three, failed.

"It has been said that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." What burden, what price of their liberty, are people willing give up to voting machines with a thirty percent failure rate? Will it be their healthcare, their children's education, their right to self-determination, their right to privacy, their hope for a better life? As a voter, I say that price is too high and the burden too great for our democracy," said Mellisa Urda, co-chair of the DuPage County Chapter of the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project.

On December 20, 2005, Mark Radke, vice president of sales for Diebold, described the California test as "successful" at a meeting of the Illinois State Board of Elections. However, members of the Illinois Ballot

Integrity Project read several statements from the report into the record that contradicted Radke's characterization, including this key finding, *"It is hard to escape the conclusion that any system with failure rates this high is not ready for use in an election."*

Radke also told the Board on December 20th that the problems with respect to the AccuView printer had been "fixed." However, that appeared not to be the case. When the State Board of Elections met again on January 27, 2006 to consider certification of the AccuVote-TSX touch-screen and its attached printer, Dianne Felts, director of voting systems and standards for the State Board said that during testing done by her staff, printer jams had been experienced on several occasions. She described the problem as the paper getting caught and "scrunched." Ms. Felts indicated that it was possible to read some of the records, but others weren't legible.

This was similar to the California test report which stated, "In every case where a printer failure occurred, the loss of VVPAT [Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail] records would be evident upon inspection of the paper trail. In every such case, the paper stopped advancing and the printer overprinted multiple lines of text to the same place on the paper." The report concludes that : "The loss of VVPAT records would be problematic during any recount . . . lost VVPAT records might constitute lost votes." During the test, Diebold machines "lost" 1.37% of the votes cast, enough to put the results of most elections in doubt.

On January 27th a representative from Fidlar Election Company, Diebold's distributor in Illinois, said that a fix had been tried, a plastic strip to line up the paper better, but apparently it didn't work. Despite this, the Board certified the touch-screen and printer based on Fidlar's promise that the problem would be fixed by the primary. Once again, it was Diebold saying, "Trust us." Haven't we heard that somewhere before?

Some in DuPage County are questioning expenditures for the new system which might cost up to $6 million in addition to the $4.4 million the County has spent in the last two years, including members of the DuPage County Board: "It seems we just bought a very expensive and state-of-the-art optical scan system," board member Brien Sheahan said. "I don't think much of spending millions of dollars more to get a new system when the current one is only a few years old."

Jean Kaczmarek, co-chair, Illinois Ballot Integrity Project, DuPage Chapter, agrees, "We've thrown questionable technology and loads of tax dollars at electronic voting while throwing common sense out the back door, leaving it wide open for hackers."

In the February, 2006 issue of "Election Focus," the DuPage County Election Commission describes the AccuVote-TSX in glowing terms, ". . . this system provides industry-leading security, accuracy and portability. . . "It is the first system in the electronic system industry to meet or exceed the stringent requirements of the Federal Election Commission's 2002 System Qualifications Standards." Well, OK, if you don't take into account that the Independent Testing Authorities (ITAs), funded primarily by the voting machine companies themselves, don't test for security - and neither does the Illinois State Board of Elections. In fact, even as the Board was discussing certification for Illinois on December 20th, the California Secretary of State's Office was sending Diebold a letter dated that same day stating:

"Unresolved significant security concerns exist with respect to the memory card used to program and configure the AccuVote-OS and the AccuVote-TSX components of this system because this component was not subjected to federal source code review and evaluation by the Independent Testing Authorities (ITA) who examined your system for federal qualification. It is the Secretary of State's position that the source code for the AccuBasic code on these cards, as well as for the AccuBasic interpreter that interprets this code, should have been federally reviewed."

On examination, it appears the security testing "Election Focus" talks about doesn't actually exist. An ITA report on the AccuVote-TSX says: "All software (including firmware) for all voting systems shall incorporate measures to prevent access by unauthorized persons, and prevent unauthorized operations which include modification of compiled or interpreted code, run-time alteration of flow control logic or data." While this item was declared: "Passed," the comment read, "Firmware not reviewed by software ITA."

Further on the same page: "The vendor shall provide a penetration analysis relevant to the operating status of the system, and its environment. It shall identify all entry points and the methods of attack to which each is vulnerable." The report: "Not Applicable," comment: "Penetration Analysis not reviewed by software ITA." So much for the "stringent requirements of the Federal Election Commission."

Lack of security testing has long been a concern of the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project, especially in light of the successful "hacking" of Diebold systems by Harri Hursti, international computer expert, who just last December demonstrated a successful penetration and "vote-flipping" of the Diebold AccuVote-OS optical scanner in Leon County (Talahassee), Florida. Convinced the system wasn't secure, the Leon County Board of Supervisors voted to cancel their contract with Diebold and buy another system.

Naperville resident, Rita Ibrahim, after following the controversy over the system has decided, "I don't believe that the [DuPage] Election Commission has answered all our concerns about these machines. I,

for one, will not use early voting in order to avoid these machines which have been demonstrated to have problems in previous elections in California, Florida, and Ohio. Computer experts have told us these machines will always be vulnerable to manipulation and there is no transparency in the programming so that the public could have confidence in elections."

It's this lack of transparency that worries citizen election integrity groups. Diebold says it's computer source code is "proprietary" and won't release it for examination by computer scientists or the public. Not knowing what's inside these machines bothers many people, including DuPage's Stephanie Hughes, "We have no way to verify that results are accurate other than our election officials saying, 'Trust us.' Unfortunately, they in turn are trusting private companies to count the votes. How do we know that the proprietary software isn't miscounting votes? How do we know the code on a memory card isn't malicious? How do we know the central tabulating system hasn't been compromised?"

When Dianne Felts, director of voting systems and standards of the State Board of Elections was quoted in a February 11, 2006 *Chicago Tribune* article as saying, "Shortcuts are being taken that shouldn't be taken," she wasn't kidding!

DuPage voters have put their trust in the County Election Commission – are they about to get "scrunched?" We'll find out on March 22nd.

The **Illinois Ballot Integrity Project** is a not-for-profit, non-partisan civic organization dedicated to the correction of election system deficiencies and ensuring fair, accurate, and completely transparent elections. IBIP believes that fundamental to election integrity is the inscribing of all votes (whether by hand or by machine) on durable paper ballots which are easily handled and verified by the individual voter. The voter's paper ballot should be the only official ballot for purposes of casting, tallying, counting, audit and recount.

The **Mission** of the **Illinois Ballot Integrity Project** is to inform and educate the public, media and government officials about important election integrity issues and to promote the adoption of legislation and policies designed to secure the democratic process.

###