

Federal standards recommended to halt voter fraud

By Makebra M. Anderson
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WASHINGTON (NNPA) — The patchwork of local and state voting laws should be replaced with a single federal standard that would make it easier to detect and reduce voter fraud, community leaders say.

“It has been almost impossible to monitor the voting process the way the system is set up. People were turned away from polls, electronic machines didn’t carry the vote as people wanted it to be carried and numbers didn’t meet the reality of the number of voters that came out,” said Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX.). “This is not about Kerry or Bush. It’s about the birthright of Americans to vote — a constitutional right.

Lee’s remarks were made at a hearing on Capitol Hill called by Congressman John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.). The hearing was held last week to look into allegations of voter fraud in Ohio, a battleground state that determined the eventual winner.

“We have to find out where the fraud and misconduct has taken place and who did it, so we know how to repair it. We’re in phase one. Finding out what went wrong and where our laws need to be built up,” said Conyers. “One of the things that have come up is the need for one piece of equipment for every state.”

In the November elections, registered voters used five different types of voting machines. Polls either used direct-response electronic voting systems (DREs), optical scan systems, punch cards, lever machines or paper ballots.

DREs display candidates on a screen and prompts voters to make their selection using a touch-screen or push button. The lever machine displays candidates on a printed strip located next to a lever and voters pull down the lever to make their selection. When using the optical scan system, voters indicate their selection using small markers next to the candidate’s name — similar to a standardized test. Paper ballots are pieces of paper where voters make their choice by marking a box next to the candidates name and submitting their ballot into a sealed box. When using a punch card, voters make their selection by punching holes next to their candidate.

The government is unsure how much it would cost to develop a unified system.

“In 1965, through the en-

ergy and struggle of the civil rights movement, for the first time in America, a statement was made on people’s right to vote,” said Jackson Lee. “We have not addressed the question of voting for almost 40 years. It is a crucial time for a wake up call. America has failed its voting population.”

With different types of voting systems and so many complaints about the voting

process, Hilary Shelton, Washington director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), says a unified system would make voting easier.

“I think it would be very helpful to have a unified system, but the task is working out which system it would be,” he said. “When you talk about national positions and federal positions like who is

going to sit in the Senate, House or White House, it just makes good sense to allow us to apply national standard across the board.”

To date, only 37 states have adopted the Federal Election Commission’s (FEC) voting system standards that require testing to ensure that voting systems are accurate, reliable and secure.

According to the FEC,

“voting system standards are documented agreements containing technical specifications to be used consistently as guidelines to ensure that automated voting systems (both those that use a paper ballot and all electronic systems) are accurate, reliable, and secure. The standards include functional criteria (things that any voting equipment must do) along with technical requirements for:

hardware, software, security, quality assurance, and documentation.”

The voting rights standards specify what the voting equipment should do, but not how it should do it.

“We can’t seem to get a system befitting of the world’s most powerful nation and that has to be the responsibility of the national government. Everyone must (See Fraud, Page 6)



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