

Lawsuit targets new touch-voting machines

By Christian Morrow
Special to Sentinel-Voice
PITTSBURGH (NNPA) — It did not take Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato long to attempt to inoculate the county from a recent law suit filed to halt the deployment of new touch-screen voting machines for use in the May 16 primary. The law suit, filed in federal court April 12, charges the county, the state, and federal officials with jeopardizing citizen's right to vote by forcing them to use machines that have failed in several

elections in the last four years. The lawsuit also charges the machines are discriminatory because voters who cannot use their hands due to an accident or handicap cannot use them or the paper-ballot backup. Within hours of the filing, Onorato announced the county had negotiated the addition of "sip and puff" technology additions for at least one machine in every precinct. In all, Onorato said 2,628 touch screen voting machines—two for every

precinct in the county—and a central-count optical scan machine will be in place for the May 16 primary. The county will have a total of 4,700 machines in place for the Nov. 7 general election. Onorato also answered charges about the machines' accuracy, saying manufacturer Election Systems & Software has also agreed to upgrade the machines to include voter-verified paper audit trail technology when it is approved by the Pennsylvania General Assembly

and certified by the Department of State. "Allegheny County is the only county in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that has negotiated a 'sip and puff' upgrade for its new voting machines," he said. "The disability community brought this issue to our attention, and I am proud that we have been able to address their concerns. As soon as the Commonwealth certifies the technology, voters in Allegheny County will be able to vote without assistance." The issue of the machines' reliability, however, remains an issue. Two years after the "hanging chad" nightmare in Florida's 2000 presidential contest, the ES&S machines—which were to fix the problem, failed to work properly. Since then, said lead defendant Celeste Taylor, the machines have also failed in other states.

The ability of the county to train poll workers and voters in the proper use of these machines in the short time remaining before the primary election is also being challenged. "Voters need a system they can trust," said Taylor. "There is no way that training and voter education can be completed in the five weeks remaining before Election Day. So voters will be denied their right to vote. Even Dan Onorato has admitted this, along with another member of the County Board of Elections John DeFazio—saying it will be a "catastrophe" and "a mess." As for voter training, Onorato was scheduled to unveil a voter-outreach initiative at 10 a.m. April 19. On the machines' reliability and all other law suit-related mat-

ters, he said it was a state issue and deferred to Commonwealth Secretary Pedro Cortes because the suit would affect 53 out of the commonwealth's 67 counties that purchased similar machines. On April 11, Cortes' office issued a press release announcing the "Ready. Set. Vote." interactive voter education program designed to give those with Internet access practice with electronic voting through "cultural elections" at www.votespa.com. Cortes also said the state will buy print and broadcast advertising to educate voters, and will conduct outreach campaigns into minority communities throughout the state.

Christian Morrow writes for the New Pittsburgh Courier.

Your Horoscope Says...

April 27 - May 3

ARIES

You'll radiate with confidence and enthusiasm this week. Important people will be impressed. Make sure you spend time in their presence. The week promises success in making new starts with old contacts. Refresh yourself by socializing just for fun. Soul Affirmation: My spirit makes all things new.

Lucky Numbers: 31, 39, 42

TAURUS

An unexpected piece of excellent advice comes from an old friend. Heed well what is said. Follow your intuition concerning matters at work. Your gut feelings are wiser than your brain this week. Trust your feelings more than your thoughts.

Soul Affirmation: I let my instincts light my way this week.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 45, 55

GEMINI

This is a good time for personal inventory. Dust off old ideas. They will shine brighter than any new ideas this week. You are primed for success in an agreement about a money matter.

Soul Affirmation: I find many things about myself that I really love.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 20, 28

CANCER

Socially, your positive vibes can take you a long way this week. Your intuition serves you well in business. A new move is favored. Open yourself up to financial flow. It's coming.

Soul Affirmation: I open myself up to the wealth of the universe.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 44, 48

LEO

Your home can be your best profit center this week. Expand your concept of what profit is. Boost your attention to your lover's personal needs. Invest time in being considerate. Put other people first this week.

Soul Affirmation: By rewarding others I reward myself.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 21, 29

VIRGO

Begin working to improve the quality of life in your community. Don't hang back. Do it. Joy comes from what you give this week. This week your charm will open doors that were previously closed.

Soul Affirmation: I look for the good in all that comes to me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 41, 52, 55

LIBRA

Be open and honest in your dealings with a co-worker. Deception will double back on you, if you try it. This is a bad week for being sly. Your true intentions show on your face. Be thorough and don't cut corners.

Soul Affirmation: I let my words reveal the not-so-hidden truth about my being.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 29, 30

SCORPIO

The boss is depending on you at work this week. The reward is buried in the gifts you give to whomever crosses your path. Don't look for payment for the good you do. Time will send it surging out at you.

Soul Affirmation: I give thanks for the chance to give.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 26, 35

SAGITTARIUS

You've always had the ability to take the slow and easy route to getting things done. This week is an excellent week for practicing that method to the maximum. Friends are not going to help you with the problem you face, but go slow and easy and you can handle it alone.

Soul Affirmation: Slow and easy is the best way for me to travel this week.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 24, 31

CAPRICORN

Use your tried and true formula for a successful week. Remember the things that worked for you in the past. Now is not the time to try anything new. Forget about a minor irritation that comes from someone you love.

Soul Affirmation: I find comfort in the familiar.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 26, 29

AQUARIUS

Give yourself a chance to grow, and not by eating more. Eating good is alright but for true growth expand your horizons. Look at life a little bit differently. Take a walk on the other side of the question.

Soul Affirmation: I look to distant horizons to find truth this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 23, 31

PISCES

Just start talking. What you need to say next will come to you. You've got some explaining to do and silence will get you nowhere. Love can be yours at this time but you're going to have to use your gift for gab to get it.

Soul Affirmation: Charm is my middle name this week.

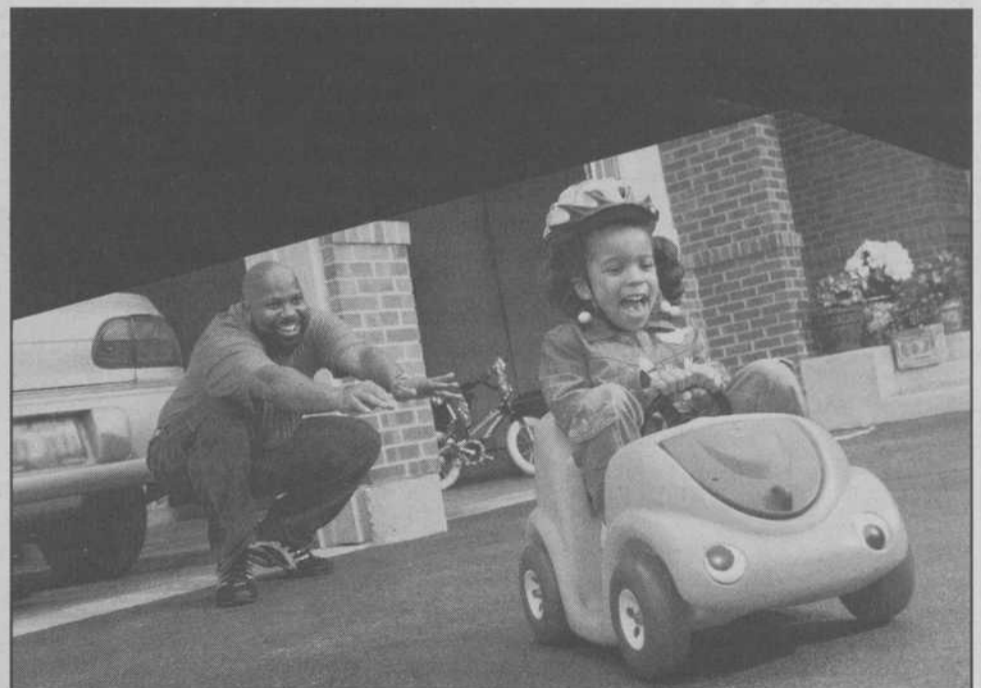
Lucky Numbers: 17, 26, 29

Wilson

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Because he has had a second chance at life, Wilson is even more driven to help others.

"I think God has a plan, there is a reason why I am still here," says Wilson. "And I have an obligation to figure that out and to make it happen. That thing I'm supposed to be here for is to make my contributions at stopping this epidemic in Black America. Everyday that I'm still here my God is saying, 'There is still work for you to do.'"



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