

News FROM **Representative Tom Petri**

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Statement of Rep. Tom Petri on H.R. 550, The Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act

I am pleased to be a cosponsor of Rep. Rush Holt's Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act, H.R. 550.

The 2000 presidential election clearly demonstrated the need to guarantee clear, accurate and prompt results on election day. Since then, we have moved forward in the effort to replace antiquated voting machines which have been found to have confusing formats and ballots susceptible to "hanging chads," but some of the new computer systems being brought in to replace older technologies raise new concerns.

It is typical for computer vendors to insist that their systems are reliable and, when properly handled, secure from malicious invasion. Common experience with home and business computers, however, shows that computers can crash due to software or hardware failure, suffer power surges and outages, and be hacked by programmers intent on altering the information inside.

Accordingly, for me it's a "no-brainer" that electronic voting machines should produce paper trails so that ballots can be counted by hand if necessary. Due to the importance of elections, we simply cannot be expected to take on faith any vote total that an election system displays on a computer screen.

Most Americans have confidence in the honesty of our elections, but enough questions are raised after close votes to make it necessary to root out the potential for questionable results, whether by error or fraud. H.R. 550 will help and deserves our support.