UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

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UAA issues phase two report of the Alaska Election Security Study
Commissioned report examines system and makes recommendations

ANCHORAGE, AK – This past fall UAA researchers launched a study commissioned by Alaska's Lt. Governor's office that set out to examine our state's election security. In December, the first of two reports was released; the phase one report summarized election security studies conducted in other states and provided a preliminary assessment of Alaska's election system. The phase two report, which was just released, evaluated Alaska's election system in detail and recommended ways to strengthen both the technology and the election procedures.

Though a number of recommendations for improving the security of Alaska's election system were offered in the phase two report, Alaska's current election system is in good shape.

Recommendations for improving Alaska's election security were divided into two categories: things that could be changed prior to the 2008 election and things that could be changed after the election. The rationale behind separating the recommendations was timeline and feasibility of implementing changes.

Changes recommended prior to 2008 election include:
- Verify the accuracy of voting technology before and after the election by comparing code in voting machines with the correct registered code;
- Install new software that allows election officials to create a more-secure password authentication system for touch-screen machines;
- Change passwords on all voting technology throughout system;
- Use tamper-evident seals on voting equipment;
- Add election-security information to poll workers' training manual;
- Increase vigilance about security procedures in absentee polling locations; and
- Purchase state-owned voting machines for use in North Slope Borough, rather than borrowing borough-owned machines.

Changes recommended after the 2008 election include:

- Upgrade ballot tabulation system software and other technology to new, improved platform;
- Establish long-term security goals and a method for measuring progress;
- Improve functionality and logic and accuracy testing processes;
- Develop and implement a standard plan for tracking and changing passwords;

- Improve system for tracking the number and location of voting machines, through barcodes or other inventory-control measures;
- Strengthen storage facilities for voting machines and other system components with deadbolt locks, alarms, ceiling grids, self-locking doors and other features to prevent forced entry;
- Buy more-secure shipping containers for optical scanners;
- Recruit and train more poll workers; and
- Consider partnerships with other institutions to do ongoing evaluation and implementation of changes in election security technology.

The biggest recommendation was for the state to upgrade the ballot tabulation system software to a new version recently developed by Premier Election Solutions. This new version corrects a number of vulnerabilities identified in other technical studies. The Division of Elections cannot implement the new software for 2008 as it has yet to be certified by the federal Election Assistance Commission. Researchers also recommended improving the way voting equipment is transported, tracked and stored.

For a copy of the complete report visit
http://www.elections.alaska.gov/election_security.php

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