DENISE MERRILL
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

- PRESS RELEASE -

MERRILL ANNOUNCES AWARDING OF $230,000 FEDERAL GRANT TO IMPROVE TESTING OF ELECTION MACHINES, POST ELECTION AUDIT PROCESS

CONNECTICUT ONE OF ONLY FOUR STATES TO SECURE FEDERAL FUNDING; WILL BE USED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UCONN DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Denise Merrill today announced that Connecticut is one of only four states to win a grant of $230,000 from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, a federal body established as a result of the Help America Vote Act of 2002. The federal grants were awarded to states that presented proposals to improve the pre- and post-election testing of electronic voting machines and auditing of machine counts to ensure the integrity of election results. The other states to win full grants were California, Colorado, and New York. Connecticut won a full federal grant of $230,000 for a proposed partnership with the University of Connecticut Voting Technology Research (VOTER) Center to develop software designed to establish an automation process for post election audits that will save municipalities time and money if their polling places are selected for a post election count of the optical scan machines. Automation of the post-election audit process will also improve the reliability and accuracy of this vital check and balance to the machine counts on Election Day.

"We are very pleased that Connecticut has been recognized by the federal Election Assistance Commission for our well thought-out proposal," said Secretary Merrill, Connecticut's chief elections official. "This grant will fund important research and development at the University of Connecticut that we believe will greatly benefit the voters of our state and our partners who administer elections at the local level. It is always important, especially in tight budget times, to maximize federal resources and put those resources to good use. Testing of our optical scanners and post-election audits are critical to ensuring the integrity of our elections, and the projects launched by this grant will only make that process more secure, reliable, and easier for the municipalities of our state."

"This grant is a strong recognition at the federal level of the partnership between the state and independent election researchers at UConn," said University of Connecticut Computer Science Professor Alexander Shvartsman, director of the VOTER Center. "We look forward to strengthening the effectiveness of the post election audits and continuing our partnership with the Secretary of the State's office."

The grant award will also fund research and development of testing protocols to extend battery life of the optical scanners used in Connecticut elections and thereby reduce the prevalence of so-called "junk data" found on memory cards programmed for each election. Junk data can render memory cards unusable for an election and create logistical problems for local election officials, as well as increase security risks related to the integrity of the ballot counts on Election Day.

Jeannie Layson, Communications Director for the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, said, "Pre-election and post-election activities are crucial to prevent problems and to ensure that votes are counted accurately. The Connecticut Secretary of State's Office is partnering with the University of Connecticut to put forth a comprehensive and a unique approach to pre- and post-election activities that would help contribute to accurate and secure elections for years to come. They plan to explore the reliability and reduce the dependence on memory cards used in optical scan voting machines and to develop an audit station prototype. The state's grant proposal demonstrates a commitment to thoroughly prepare for and verify election results, and Connecticut voters will be the ultimate benefactors."

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