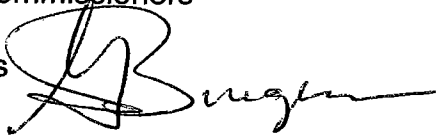


Memorandum



DATE: May 27, 2005

TO: Honorable Mayor Carlos Alvarez
Honorable Chairman Joe A. Martinez and Members
Board of County Commissioners

FROM: George M. Burgess 
County Manager

SUBJECT: Initial Report from Supervisor of Elections

Attached please find two initial reports from Supervisor of Elections Lester Sola in response to my April 4, 2005 charge memorandum to him requesting a comprehensive review of the Elections Department. I have just received these documents today and will be reviewing them with my staff in the coming weeks before making any specific recommendations. Since there has been much public interest in this matter and a standing records request for this document in particular, I am forwarding a copy to you at this time.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Assistant County Manager Alina Hudak or me directly. Thank you.

cc: Robert A. Ginsburg, County Attorney
Murray Greenberg, Deputy County Attorney
Alina T. Hudak, Assistant County Manager
Lester Sola, Supervisor of Elections
Miriam Singer, Director, Department of Procurement Management
Jennifer Glazer-Moon, Director, Office of Strategic Business Management
Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit and Management Services
June Randall, Deputy Director, Enterprise Technology Services Department
Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor
Christopher Mazzella, Inspector General
Hilda Fernandez, Director, Communications Department

Memorandum



Date: May 27, 2005

To: George M. Burgess
County Manager

From: Lester Sola
Supervisor of Elections

Subject: Desirability and feasibility of converting to an optical scan voting system

Executive Summary

In a memorandum dated April 4, 2005, you directed me to review various aspects of the Elections Department's operations, including our current voting equipment and the desirability and feasibility of converting from our touchscreen system to an optical scan voting system. Because of the depth which a response to that issue requires, I am addressing that directive exclusively in this report and will address the other issues under separate cover.

First, for the purpose of analyzing and discussing options, I do want to state that we currently have equipment that – despite well-documented costs and challenges – does function and does not face decertification. This differs from the situation following the 2000 Presidential Election, when the County had soon-to-be-decertified voting equipment and a state-imposed deadline to convert to a new system. **In response to recent issues regarding our equipment, we have already taken steps to improve the integrity of our elections, including the comparison of machine-by-machine audit data and precinct totals before election results are certified.** This step would now bring to light issues such as the one that occurred in Precinct 816 in November 2004 immediately. We have already implemented and utilized this measure in recent municipal elections, and we will continue to do so for every election we administer. We will also continue to review all of our procedures and identify further means by which we can quickly reconcile all of the different sources of data available to us, enabling us to detect any potential problem early in the process.

Upon receiving your directive, I contacted the Department of Procurement Management (DPM) and asked them to conduct a market study and cost analysis of election equipment that is available and certified for use in the state of Florida, while our Department focused on the impact that a conversion would have on our operation and other important factors, such as voter confidence. Based on this analysis, I am strongly recommending that we explore the possibility of proceeding with the procurement of an optical scan election system because of a combination of two crucial factors. A conversion is likely to both 1) improve voter confidence and 2) result in cost savings to the taxpayers of Miami-Dade County. In the event that we ultimately choose to procure an optical scan system, I am recommending that any procurement and integration of a new system be conducted methodically and deliberately to avert the kinds of challenges this county experienced because of the decertification and state-imposed deadline I described above during the last conversion in 2002. We should be mindful of that experience as we seek to obtain the best equipment at the best-possible cost for our taxpayers, while integrating it into the Department's operation on a timetable that allows us to truly improve our operation.

