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DRAFT MINUTES

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ADVANCED COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
Meeting Jointly

Tuesday, December 17, 2013
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The Joint Interim Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology; Senate Interim Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs; and the House Interim Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs met jointly on Tuesday, December 17, 2013, at 1:30 PM in Room A, of the Multi-Agency Complex.

Senator Bill Sample called the meeting to order. Representative Mary Lou Slinkard presided.

Committee Members in Attendance
The following legislators attended: Senators Bill Sample, Chair; Eddie Joe Williams, Chair; Jake Files, Jimmy Hickey, Gary Stubblefield, and Larry Teague. Representatives Mary Lou Slinkard, Chair; Andrea Lea, Chair; Duncan Baird, Nate Bell, Ann Clemmer, Jim Dotson, Fonda Hawthorne, Debra Hobbs, Joe Jett, Sheilla Lampkin, Greg Leding, Andy Mayberry, Josh Miller, Jim Nickels, Betty Overbey, John Payton, and Warwick Sabin.

Other Legislators in Attendance
Representatives Jeremy Gillam, Stephanie Malone, Reginald Murdock, Micah Neal, Nate Steel, and Jeff Wardlaw.

Consideration to Approve Minutes of October 29, 2013 [Exhibit B]
Senator Chesterfield made a motion to approve the minutes. Without objection, the motion was approved by the Committee.

Election Technology Update   [Attachment 1]
Mr. Craig Seibert, Regional Sales Manager, Election Systems & Software (ES&S); Mr. Steve Pearson, Vice President of Voting Systems, ES&S; and Ms. Jessie Blackman, PollBook Product Manager, ES&S; presented a PowerPoint entitled, "Bridge to the Future."

Mr. Seibert explained, Arkansas's Act 1389 allows counties to implement electronic voting centers, which provide convenience and flexibility for voters. As voting trends moved towards increased absentee voting; poll workers' responsibilities became more complex, the voting process became more complicated, and election expenses increased. These conditions make electronic voting an attractive solution.

In response to new demands and challenges from customers, ES&S organized a group of 15+ employees who focus on bringing new technologies into the voting world. The group explores parallel conditions between the airline and voting industries to streamline information and develop integrated solutions for voting issues.

Ms. Blackman explained ES&S has 18,000+ ExpressPoll vote center products in the field, including two statewide implementations in Maryland and Georgia. The technology utilizes an electronic poll book, an area-wide network, and eliminates the restriction of polling sites being precinct based. The vote center concept allows registered voters to vote at any in-state polling site. Challenges within the system involve knowing who already voted, who has not voted, and ensuring voters receive the correct ballot. Electronic poll books simplify these issues.

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According to Mr. Seibert, electronic voting is an easy process. Voters go to any poll site, receive an "authority to vote" slip with their ballot; hand the slip to a poll worker who selects the appropriate ballot on the iVotronic machine. Then, the voter casts his vote. ES&S continually updates its system to facilitate the process for handicapped voters.

Ms. Blackman explained methods within the ES&S system that ensure the equipment counts votes only once. ES&S has no records of incident regarding voter fraud using their system. She noted, passwords, audit adjustments, and high security standards are ways the company maintains integrity.

In response to questions by Representative Bell, Ms. Blackman explained, poll sites in rural areas without access to wireless internet or cellular telephone service can easily participate in electronic voting. Poll workers at these sites simply take their voting machine to a central station, at the close of voting, and sync information with other stations. Smart updates automatically ensure equipment has the most recent version of the necessary software, along with required updates.

Update on Development of Guidelines and Rules for the Vote Centers
Mr. Rob Hammonds, Director of Elections, Secretary of State's Office (SOS), stated Act 1389 charges the SOS office with designing and building rules and regulations for Arkansas voting centers. He expects to release the final draft of the written process of implementing voting centers for public comment very soon. Currently, ES&S handles all voter registration and tabulation in Arkansas. According to Mr. Hammonds, voting centers are a good way to eliminate expensive paper ballot-style elections and increase efficiency, flexibility, and accuracy in elections.

Panel Discussion: Impact of the Vote Centers – Association of County Clerks
Ms. Sherri Bell, County Clerk, Columbia County; Ms. Crystal Graddy, County Clerk, Boone County; and Ms. Terri Harris, County Clerk, Polk County.

Ms. Graddy explained Boone County utilized electronic voting centers during the last general election. They consolidated polling sites to eliminate those in areas with no wireless or cellular service. The system was convenient, and programming all machines with the same information was easier than the previous process. They provided voters insisting on paper ballots with provisional ballots at voting centers and the courthouse. All feedback is positive and supports continuing electronic voting centers in Boone County. Ms. Graddy noted a significant cost savings for Boone County by eliminating printing paper ballots.

Ms. Bell said Columbia, Union, and Ouachita counties use electronic voting machines from Harp Enterprises. Currently, these counties do not have voting centers, but they expect to implement them soon. According to Ms. Bell, these counties agree voting centers save money; and offer greater flexibility and convenience to voters.

Ms. Harris echoed Ms. Bell's comments regarding the efficiency of voting centers and said Polk County is interested in using them in future elections.

Mr. Seibert, Mr. Pearson, and Ms. Blackman demonstrated the voting and tabulation processes using the ExpressPoll and DS-200 tabulation machines. This equipment utilizes thermal printing, barcodes, and scanners to make a voter's experience efficient, simple, and positive. The system has capabilities to zoom and contrast the screen; and notifies a voter if they under vote.

With no further business, the committees adjourned at 3:05 PM.