

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCAIN  
CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION  
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING  
ON ELECTION REFORM AND VOTING TECHNOLOGY  
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- C Good morning. Today's hearing is our second hearing on the issue of election reform. In the Committee's last hearing on this issue, we analyzed the problems of our existing national voting system, especially the problems highlighted by the Year 2000 election. In this hearing, we will examine solutions to these problems, and how to restore the American public's confidence in our election system.
- C I would first like to highlight the importance of Congressional action. As many newspapers have begun to point out, time is running out for Congress to enact meaningful legislation to make reforms before the 2002 elections. Concerns about the accuracy of our voting system are especially pernicious, because they undermine the public's confidence in our whole political system. Nothing is more sacred to our democracy than a person's right to vote. I found it remarkable when President Carter recently said that "the Carter Center has standards for participation as a monitor of an election, and the United States of America would not qualify at all."
- C It is promising that the states are beginning to write their own legislation to reform their election systems. In the 2001 legislative session, 1,505 election reform bills have been introduced in state legislatures across the country. Thirty-one states have considered or are considering legislation to upgrade or make uniform their voting systems. Most notably, Georgia and Florida recently passed legislation to comprehensively reform their election systems.
- C One important challenge to the federal and state governments is to ensure that these reforms are based on rigorous standards that will solve the problems of the Year 2000 election. As we will hear later in this hearing, a recent study from MIT and Caltech highlights this problem by showing that the most reliable voting technology use paper ballots, followed by obsolete lever machines and more recent optical scanners. Surprisingly, the high-tech Direct Recording Electronic devices were found to be less reliable than all types of voting machines other than punch card machines.
- C This study further emphasizes the need to match the efficiency of new technology with the reliability of the more traditional paper ballots and lever machines. Senator Hollings, Senator

Cleland, and I have introduced S. 368, the American Voting Standards and Technology Act, to meet this challenge. The bill would direct the National Institute of Standards and Technology, or NIST, to develop voluntary voting system practices, and accredit laboratories on a voluntary basis to test vote casting and counting devices. For over a hundred years, NIST has been known for its ability to solve a myriad of technical problems and establish voluntary standards. Its expertise can be used today to reform current election practices.

C Senator Hollings, Senator Cleland, and I do not profess to have all of the solutions to this issue. We look forward today to hearing the results of initiatives and reports by the states and independent commissions. Any final legislation will have to include input from these groups to ensure a comprehensive solution.

C I welcome all of our witnesses here today.