

**REMARKS OF THE HON. ROBERT W. NEY, CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION**

**Senate Rules and Administration Committee
June 28, 2001**

Testimony on Election Reform

Chairman Dodd and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present my views on election reform to you. Since becoming Chairman of the House Administration Committee in late January of this year, we have held several hearings on election reform, gathered testimony from experts, and worked diligently toward producing bipartisan election reform legislation. Our work was not motivated by partisan politics; it was motivated by our desire to find a solution to a complex problem. The House Administration Committee and I are fortunate to have Steny Hoyer as our ranking member, a man who is motivated to find solutions, not to merely score partisan political points. His approach and contributions have made our bipartisan efforts possible. We must all work together to help remedy the voting inefficiencies that continue to face our election system, and thereby restore public confidence in our election process. The status quo is simply not acceptable, certainly not in the world's greatest democracy.

Countless local, state, and federal groups have made a variety of observations and recommendations designed to help this Congress develop legislation to improve the election system. Although these reports come to us

Let me share with you what we heard from some state and local officials:

- Kansas Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh sharing what Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker told him, "The pencil on a string works very well in Burdick, Kansas, Ron. Don't change it."
- Conny B. McCormack, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk of Los Angeles County, "State and local governments need to retain the flexibility of choice among various types of vote counting equipment. One size does not fit all. We need diversity and innovation."

State and local governments have managed elections for over two hundred years... Let's keep it that way.

Our second principle of agreement is that punch cards must go. Punch cards have the potential for a higher error rate than other modern voting technology. Because of high error rates, the public has lost confidence in the voting machines. During the 2000 election, Fulton County, Georgia registered a 6.25% spoilage rate, and Cook County, Illinois threw out 5% of their punch card ballots. Consequently, Representative Hoyer and I agree that we should offer the states and local jurisdictions grants to replace punch card machines with more accurate and reliable technology. Punch card machines belong in the Smithsonian, not a United States voting booth.

Our third principle is that the federal government can play an important

election reform bill that embodies the principles I have outlined.

Thank you again for the chance to testify, and I ask for unanimous consent that my statement in its entirety be submitted for the record.