



Tennessee Republican Party

July 14, 2009

The Honorable Gary Odom
House Minority Leader
Tennessee General Assembly
Suite 18A Legislative Plaza
Nashville, TN 37243

Minority Leader Odom:

I am writing with a matter that greatly concerns our state and the integrity of our elections. Your recent comments and those of your fellow Democrats in leadership on the implementation of the Voter Confidence Act are disruptive to the integrity of the voting process.

As citizens of this great state we encourage you to temper your comments and work with the Secretary of State and other legislative leaders to find a solution to fulfill the requirement of the law. Additionally, we urge you to look beyond Nashville to consider the burden that will be placed upon rural counties (presently struggling to balance their local budgets) that will be obligated to pay for a series of new costs associated with paper ballots under this law.

While the Tennessee Republican Party has no role in the decision making process regarding new voting machines, as citizens we believe Tennesseans deserve the best machines that meet the legislative criteria. The statements of Secretary of State Tre Hargett last week and his previous testimony to the General Assembly make it clear: there are not currently any optical scan machines certified by the safest and most secure standards of the federal Voluntary Voting System Guidelines.

It appears that politics are playing more of a role in your party's actions than those of concrete public policy. It is doubtful you would be raising such an issue if you had not lost your legislative majority and retained a Democrat as Secretary of State and a Democrat majority on the State and County Election Commissions. Your leadership in overseeing these losses for your fellow party members certainly appears to be intensifying your misleading attacks towards the current Secretary of State and is unproductive in moving our state forward.

We find it curious that the Democrat Party is now questioning the integrity of Tennessee elections. The track record of the Tennessee Democrat Party and its legislative members on election integrity is questionable at best. We would like to remind you of the dubious tactics and events that have surrounded the Democrat Party in recent Tennessee elections.

For example in 2006 Tennessee Democrats defended the questionable voting practices that led to the election of Ophelia Ford in a 2005 special election. Senate Democrat Leader Jim Kyle and State Senator Roy Herron both voted to uphold the election of Ophelia Ford that was tainted with voting irregularities.

Even more shameful were the actions of Tennessee Democrats when they overturned the certified election results of Senator Rosalind Kurita from August 2008. Your party chose to undermine the integrity of the election process and seek revenge because Senator Kurita dared to vote her conscience and defied the demands of Democrat Leadership in the election of the Lt. Governor in 2007.

If you are truly concerned with the integrity of elections, we challenge you and your Democrat colleagues in the House and Senate to drop your opposition to legislation that has not advanced in the General Assembly. We believe that these proposed election rules will improve the standards whereby Tennesseans vote in our elections.

- HB.1838 – Requiring the county registrar to verify proof of citizenship for voter registration and identify verification when voting.
- HB.0779 – Requiring the State Coordinator of Elections to promulgate rules to make it easier for overseas Military voters to return their absentee ballots.
- HB.0639 – Requiring a voter to present photo ID to vote, and allowing voters without proper ID to cast provisional ballots.

Mr. Odom, we fundamentally disagree with the Tennessee Democrat Party's marching orders to elect more Democrats at any cost. Sir, some costs are too high. The integrity of our elections is paramount to the foundation of our Representative Democracy and the Republic as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. You can count on us to hold you accountable when you advocate poor public policy that does not benefit all of Tennessee's citizens.

Sincerely,



Chris Devaney
Chairman

Tennessee Republican Party

CC: Senators Jim Kyle & Roy Herron
House & Senate Republican Leadership