

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2008

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

The Honorable Kurt Browning
Secretary of State
Florida Department of State
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

Dear Governor Crist and Secretary of State Browning:

We write to seek your assistance in addressing a variety of issues which have arisen during the first few days of early voting.

As you know, countless early voting sites throughout the state – many of which are located in minority and low-income areas – are experiencing enormous lines and wait times as long as five hours. There have also been countless reports of printers breaking down and technology limitations in the Secretary of State's office. These limitations have delayed communication between the statewide voter registration list and officials at polling locations who are trying to implement the new voter registration laws that you decided to begin implementing barely six weeks ago. Senator Nelson and other reports have also expressed concerns regarding access for persons with disabilities and the state's continued refusal to permit federal election monitors from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to enter into polling locations.

With a week and a half remaining in early voting, there are steps that the state should take immediately to ensure that every Floridian who wants to vote on and before November 4 has that opportunity with the least amount of stress and wait time. In addition to making it easier for Floridians to vote, these steps will also reduce the stress placed on early voting systems and increase the reliability of the system as a whole on Election Day. They include:

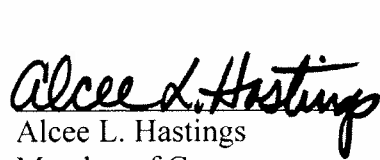
- **Extend the hours for early voting:** There is precedent in our state when governors have extended voting times for a variety of reasons. Given the historic turnout which we have already experience, the more people who have the chance to vote early will reduce the number of people who vote on Election Day and reduce the chance for long lines and mishaps. Extending early voting hours beyond the hours currently employed is one way to accomplish this.
- **Require that all counties in Florida allow for early voting every day between now and November 4, including Sunday:** As you know, some counties have chosen to limit early voting opportunities to weekdays and only one day each weekend. However, an overwhelming number of Floridians work during the week and often over the weekend. Limiting early voting to only one day each weekend makes it significantly more difficult for people to vote early and places significant stress on voting systems during those days. Additional early voting days will make it easier for people to vote at a time that is most convenient for them while reducing the wait time at early voting sites.


- **Assist in identifying and training additional poll workers:** One of the main bottlenecks at early voting sites throughout the state has been a shortage of trained election workers. This problem will only grow as we get closer to Election Day. We ask that the Secretary of State work to ensure that an adequate number of trained poll workers are available for early voting and especially on Election Day. Again, additional state funds may be needed to accomplish this. We urge you to make these funds available.
- **Provide more and enhanced voting equipment:** Additional voting equipment will undoubtedly assist in reducing wait times at early voting sites. We ask that you work to ensure that county election offices have sufficient quantities of ballot scanners, check-in machines to read voter identification, and for early voting, ballot-on-demand printers. The Secretary of State should ensure that all equipment is adequately tested and that poll workers using it have been adequately trained. In some cases, this may require additional state funds. We believe this would be an appropriate expense.
- **Enhance the Secretary of State's technology:** According to press reports and information that we have received from local elections officials, technology limitations within the Secretary of State's office have caused problems at polling locations. Officials who are trying to implement the state's new voter registration laws have been forced to wait for responses from a statewide voter registration system that was clearly not designed to handle this much traffic. This has contributed to longer lines and greater frustration. Something must be done to fix this problem.


Our goal as elected officials must be to make it as easy as possible for people to vote. Further, we must do whatever we can to reduce the overall stress on the voting system during early voting and on Election Day.


Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response and welcome the opportunity to work with you on this and many other issues.

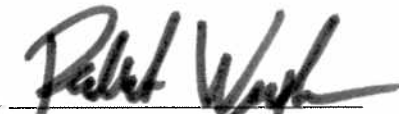
Sincerely,

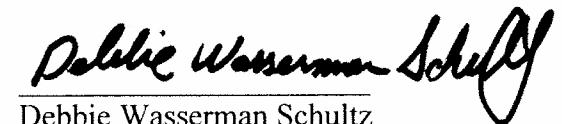

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

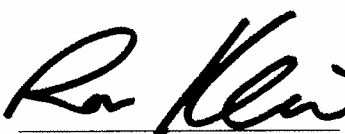

Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator

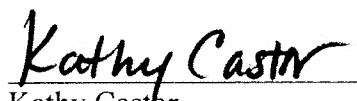

Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



Kendrick B. Meek
Member of Congress


Robert Wexler
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