

# LOCAL NEWS

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## Speaker: Electronic voting out of hand

### Conferees call for more system reforms

By **LAURA LUXOR**  
For *The Tennessean*

While many Americans are intrigued by the idea of electronic voting, the process is out of control, creating an unhealthy democracy, experts said at the National Election Reform Conference.

Jonathan Simon, Harvard Law School graduate and author of *While America Slept: The Theft of Election 2004 and the Death of American Democracy*, told an audience of about 200 Saturday that losing control of voting systems puts citizens at risk of losing control of their government.

Later that afternoon, the energy level rose as the crowd at Jefferson Missionary Baptist Church whooped and hollered in response to former National Green Party presidential candidate David Cobb.

"Privatization is ludicrous," Cobb boomed. "We are not gathering to save our democracy, we are gathering to create a 'real' democracy."

Despite the excitement, the fact that the public does not have legal access to ballot verification wore on the minds of all who attended the meeting. The conference was held in Nashville over the weekend to draw attention to rising concerns about election accountability.

Because of privatization, only the companies that own the electronic machines are able to know the outcomes, said Andy Stephenson, education director for Vote Trust USA.

In an interview earlier in the day, U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney, D-Ga., told a reporter that reforms are urgently needed and "the system is in serious danger of

### 'Voters Bill of Rights'

Larry English, an author from Mountain City, Tenn., who attended the National Election Reform Conference in Nashville this weekend, has conducted a major analysis of the 2000 presidential election. He proposes a "Voter's Bill of Rights" as a solution for election reform:

- Every eligible U.S. citizen shall have easy access to a voter registration process that can ensure the capability to vote.

- Every voter shall have a voting process that ensures his/her vote is recorded accurately

- Every voter shall have the right to validate his/her voting choices before his/her vote being recorded.

- Every voter shall have the right to verify that his/her vote has been included in the final vote tally of the races in which the individual voted.

— LAURA LUXOR

complete collapse."

It's in the best interest of voters and elected leaders to make sure that doesn't happen, McKinney said.

"Security is a real issue," Stephenson said. "There is no way for the voter to know whether the information displayed on the touch screen is the same as what's recorded in com-

puter memory."

Karyn Altman, a concerned voter from Florida, said that when she used the touch screen she had to touch her choice of presidential candidate three times before it actually "stuck."

"To this day I will never know if my vote was counted in the way that it was intended, and that is very disturbing." ■