State of Alaska Election Security Project
Division of Elections
Implementation of Preliminary Recommendations

The Division of Elections is pleased to announce that preliminary election security recommendations provided by the University of Alaska, Anchorage through the State of Alaska Election Security Project have and will continue to be implemented.

While the completion of Phase 2 Scope of Work is not scheduled to be completed until the end of April 2008, the Division has already started preparing election equipment for the 2008 election cycle. When the work of Phase 2 started in January, the Division requested the University's project team to provide preliminary recommendations prior to the completion of Phase 2. "2008 is going to be an extremely busy year for the Division. With all the critical election preparation functions Division staff must go through, we wanted to make sure there would be enough time to implement election security recommendations for 2008," said Gail Fenumiai, Director of Elections. The preliminary recommendations provided the Division with enough time to make improvements.

In addition to security features and procedures Alaska's system already utilizes, such as voting equipment with a voter-verifiable paper trail and a hand-count verification of 5% of ballots cast in randomly selected precincts, the preliminary recommendations provided by the University will add a level of security to the voting equipment and processes used by the Division. "The Division and our staff are dedicated to conducting impartial, secure and accurate elections. The numerous recounts conducted in Alaska have verified the accuracy of our systems. With the implementation of the recommended security enhancements, I believe our voters can go into the voting booth knowing not only is their vote being accurately counted, but knowing that it is also secure," said Shelly Growden, Election Systems Manager for the Division.

Implementation of the following preliminary recommendations has been initiated by the Division of Elections:

1. Do not implement the Premier Election Solutions Assure 1.2 platform for the 2008 election cycle. This version of the ballot tabulation system was not federally certified by the United States Election Assistance Commission in time to effectively coordinate and implement for 2008. The upgrade of equipment to the Assure 1.2 software is planned for 2009 as part of a multi-phase, multi-year systematic, continuous improvement process.
2. Upgrade all relevant equipment with Premier Election Solutions Key Card Tool. This upgrade will provide a significant enhancement to existing system security through the use of improved password management and security keys. The upgrade to Key Card Tool will be coordinated with functionality testing on each piece of equipment for the 2008 Primary and General elections.
3. Maintain the existing process of selective chain-of-custody mailing for touch screen voting unit memory cards, separate from the equipment, in tamper evident packaging.
4. Purchase optical scan equipment for use in State and Federal elections in the North Slope Borough communities. Previously, the Division used municipal owned equipment.

5. Implement a sacrificial and pristine architecture for the host ballot tabulation system in Juneau as well as dedicated, pristine optical scan machine for optical scan memory card programming.
6. Remove the bar code from the touch screen's voter-verifiable paper trail.
7. Installation of a key safe for the storage of physical access keys and Key Card Tool encryption keys and passwords.

The Division will continue to work on implementing recommendations provided by the University in an effort to increase the security and confidence in Alaska's election systems and processes.