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## Waukesha County voting bedeviled

### Inoperable machines, incompatible computers hamper ballot counts

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Posted: Sept. 13, 2006

**Waukesha** - Computer glitches, inoperable equipment and other problems troubled Tuesday's primary balloting in Waukesha County, resulting in one candidate mistakenly being posted as winner of a race only later to be declared the loser.

*Advertisement* The problems also prevented the county from posting final results of races until the early morning hours of Wednesday, and kept the county from posting results online.

Across Wisconsin, Tuesday's primary marked the debut of 2,800 new handicap-accessible voting machines mandated in 2002 under the Help Americans Vote Act.

In Waukesha County, problems with touch-screen equipment were among a host of snafus.

Christine Lufter, who lost a Republican primary in the 97th Assembly District, said Wednesday that she would not likely challenge the outcome, although she was still trying to sort out what happened.

"There was obviously a huge problem," she said. "And why it affected the 97th race more than any other is confusing."

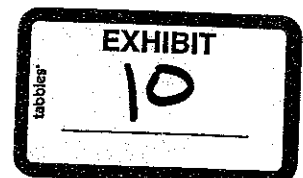
Computer monitors at the county clerk's office late Tuesday briefly showed Lufter winning her race, as county officials scrambled to correct flawed returns from the City of Waukesha.

Final results later showed Lufter losing to fellow Republican Bill Kramer by a significant margin.

County Clerk Kathy Nickolaus said some returns from the City of Waukesha inexplicably had data recorded in the wrong column, which momentarily skewed results.

Nickolaus and her staff resorted to correcting the city's results manually - a process that continued until 1 a.m., with staffers poring over a blizzard of numbers on computerized printouts.

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"The best thing to do is go back to paper," Nickolaus said of the tedious process. "And that's exactly what we did."

Waukesha City Clerk Thomas Neill said city officials had been unable to test the county's program for reporting results because they were busy readying their touch-screen voting machines. Those machines arrived just a week ago, Neill said, adding that the new equipment turned out to be inoperable Tuesday.

"There was a glitch that we didn't find out about until election day," he said of the touch-screen machines.

### **Rift over voting technology**

The new technology had already created a rift in Waukesha County, with most municipalities favoring one manufacturer but others preferring another.

Because Menomonee Falls and Mukwonago use a different brand of equipment than the rest of the county, those two municipalities were unable to file Tuesday's returns electronically with the county. That, in turn, contributed to a slower-than-usual reporting of countywide results.

"The two systems don't work together," Mukwonago Village Clerk Bernard Kahl said.

Noting that technology in the past has been uniform countywide, Kahl added: "I feel that we took a step backward."

Menomonee Falls Village Clerk Kathy Karalewitz agreed that elections ran more smoothly in the past when everyone used the same machinery.

But, she said, "I was not going to let anybody tell me what equipment I was going to buy."

The two villages are using Election Systems & Software of Omaha, Neb., as a vendor, while the rest of the county uses Sequoia Voting Systems of Oakland, Calif.

Kahl and Karalewitz both reported no significant problems with their touch-screen voting machines Tuesday, although voter use of the new equipment was minimal in both communities.

Nickolaus, who had warned about problems earlier this year if the rift persisted, said she was not aware of any community other than the City of Waukesha that found its Sequoia equipment inoperable.

### **No results online**

She said the lack of uniformity in technology throughout the country contributed to still another problem Tuesday: an inability to post election returns on the county's official Web site.

Nickolaus said she has new software that will combine results from the incompatible equipment, and she hopes to have that issue resolved by November. On Tuesday, however, she did not want to post incomplete results on the Web site that excluded Menomonee Falls and Mukwonago.

"We wouldn't have a full picture," she said.

The lack of online election returns was a jolt to some county officials.

County Supervisor Bonnie Morris of Dousman said she was at a Tuesday night victory party for district attorney candidate Brad Schimel before she realized the county's Web site was inactive.

Morris said she planned to question Nickolaus about the situation.

"I was very, very upset about it," Morris said. "This is something that we as taxpayers have paid for."

*Annyssa Johnson of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report*

From the Sept. 14, 2006 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
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