

**COUNTING ELECTORAL VOTES--JOINT SESSION OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE
HELD PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
1 (HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES--JANUARY 6, 2005) --
(House of Representatives - January 06, 2005)**

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[Page: H84]

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding.

Honorable colleagues, the numerous irregularities that occurred with the electronic voting machines in Ohio on November 2 of last year point to an unresolved national crisis: The lack of a unified standard for all voters and all ballots cast in a Federal election. Congress must establish this standard, with a verifiable paper or audit trail. It is the only way to ensure the integrity of the Federal election process.

Reports of voter intimidation, inadequate and malfunctioning voting machines, incompetent election judges, and lines at polling

[Page: H105]

places in urban areas that lasted for many hours were widespread.

These irregularities were compounded by the irresponsible conduct of the allegedly unbiased top election official who openly became a partisan advocate for his party's Presidential nominee.

The Ohio Secretary of State has refused to assist us in the search for the truth. He has shown no interest in determining whether the glitches were the result of mistakes, negligence, or intentional misconduct.

Numerous voters have reported that when they attempted to cast a vote for Kerry-Edwards, the electronic voting machine registered the vote as a ballot for Bush-Cheney. While it is difficult to quantify the number of votes that were altered or affected by the irregularities that have been reported, a single vote not counted, as it was intended . . . is a discredit to our democracy. I am not suggesting that these irregularities changed the outcome of the election. But I am insisting that we act to ensure that the sacred right of every voter, to have his or her vote counted, as the voter intended, is protected by adopting a uniform Federal standard.

In order to protect the voting rights of the citizens of Ohio, and to be true to the oath that we all swore to earlier this week, it is our responsibility as Members of Congress to review the serious irregularities that occurred in Ohio to ensure that this significant disenfranchisement of voters never happens again. It is imperative that we give voters complete confidence that their votes will be accurately counted by reforming our election laws to address all of the irregularities that have come to light. I encourage my colleagues to join me in preserving our democracy.