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2>State Voter System Software Can't Do Required Checks

Wisconsin State Journal :: LOCAL :: B1

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

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With the state's Feb. 19 presidential primary elections less than three months away, a much-delayed voter registration system still can't do federally required checks to help prevent voting by dead people and felons, a state official said Monday.

The head of the state's soon-to-dissolve Elections Board isn't satisfied with that and wants to resolve a dispute with the computer system's contractor soon so the problem isn't passed on to a new elections and ethics board, Elections Board spokesman Kyle Richmond said Monday.

The Elections Board will likely meet for the last time on Wednesday and the board's chairman, Robert Kasieta, and its executive director, Kevin Kennedy, want a solution before the new Government Accountability Board takes over, Richmond said.

"We're still not where we are wanting to be, particularly in the area of the (felons and vital records) interfaces," Richmond said of the voter system. "This isn't something that the Elections Board members want to leave for the (Accountability Board) members to clean up."

Richmond declined to say if that means reaching an agreement with the contractor, Accenture, suing the company or some other option. But he said the state has already had to pay \$1 million in added project costs to another consultant plus more salaries to state workers because of the delays.

The federal government required states to implement statewide systems to register voters by January 2006. Wisconsin started using the Accenture system last year for some of the functions it was designed for, but nearly two years after the federal deadline, the system has not been completed, in spite of the \$23.4 million in mostly federal money that has been spent on Accenture, other consultants and state workers.

Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Madison, said he believes the Elections Board might be near taking action.

"At this point we have a piece of software that doesn't work and a company that's refusing to make it work and as far as I'm concerned, that's an impasse that can only be solved by suing Accenture and getting the state's money back," Pocan said.

Accenture spokesman Jim McAvoy said in a statement that the company remains in discussions with the board and is "hopeful for a positive outcome." The Elections Board is refusing to pay an additional \$2 million to Accenture until the board considers the project finished, but Accenture has said the system is done and has been used in

past elections. The company has already received around \$9 million.

Kasieta did not respond to requests for comment. Elections Board member David Anstaett said only that the board is "looking at all our options." Elections Board member John Savage of Milwaukee, the former chairman, said a lawsuit against Accenture would leave a different problem for the Government Accountability Board, which will take full effect 31 days after filling its remaining two highest positions.

"I personally would be reluctant to start a lawsuit at our last meeting," Savage said.

Other board members either could not be reached for comment or declined comment.

Right now the Accenture system can't check voter lists electronically against lists of felons and dead people, though the state can help local clerks do the checks with a paper method, Richmond said. The system also has had trouble printing mailing labels for absentee ballots in larger cities such as Madison and Milwaukee, he said. \\ Problems with voter system The news: A statewide voter system still isn't fully functioning and the state's presidential primary is less than three months away.

The fix: The state Elections Board wants to solve the problem before a new board takes its place.

The catch: One Elections Board member said he'd be reluctant to sue the computer system contractor right before that board dissolves.

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