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SF voting security group urges recount of ballots in swing states

By John Wildermuth Updated 7:49 pm, Monday, November 28, 2016

IMAGE 1 OF 27

Poll worker Cathy Machacek waves over voters to the electronic ballot box at the Department of Public Works garage in Slinger, Wis., on election day. A San Francisco group wants votes recounted in Wisconsin, North Carolina, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

A voting security group, active in San Francisco for more than a decade, called Monday for a full recount, audit and investigation into the election results of four swing states that helped carry GOP businessman **Donald Trump** to victory in the Nov. 8 presidential election.

"An overwhelming majority of computer scientists have concluded the current voting systems are insecure," **Brent Turner**, a board member of the **National Association** of Voting Officials, told a small crowd in front of San Francisco City Hall. "We believe there is enough evidence of manipulation to preclude certification of the election results until a thorough recount ... has occurred."

Video: Trump Among Those Saying Voter Fraud Occurred In California NDN embed

In a letter last week, the group said that it found a "large and unprecedented discrepancy" between exit polls and final results in Wisconsin, North Carolina, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

While Turner admitted there is no hard evidence of major voting fraud in those states or anywhere else in the country, he argued that reports of efforts by foreign countries, most notably Russia, to influence the results of the election, combined with what he said was the vulnerability of voting machines run with corporate "proprietary" software, are reason enough to delay certifying the election results until a recount, combined with a forensic audit of the results, can be completed.

Jill Stein, the **Green Party** presidential candidate, already has paid for a recount in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania and plans to file Wednesday in Michigan. Democrat **Hillary Clinton**'s campaign will cooperate with the recount effort, although campaign officials have said they have seen no evidence of fraud.

Turner's group, which is based in San Francisco, is using the uproar over Trump's surprise victory to push for its long-sought goal of replacing California's voting machines, now purchased from private companies, with publicly owned open-source voting systems.

Since private companies don't make their software available for public inspection, it's impossible to know whether bugs or back doors have been inserted into the voting software, open-source advocates say.

It would be different with a public open-source system, where the code would be available for public review.

"If you can see the bugs, you can fight the bugs," Turner said. "You can use transparency as an asset."

But it's easier to talk about open-source software than it is to put it into use. In the entire United States, only Los Angeles and Travis County, Texas, have moved toward developing open-source systems for their elections, said **John Arntz**, San Francisco's elections director.

The Travis County effort so far hasn't made it past the proposal stage, he said, and the Los Angeles effort, which began in 2009, isn't scheduled for use until 2020 at the earliest.

While San Francisco has put aside money to begin planning for an open-source software system, "it will be years before one could be up and running," Arntz said.

In the meantime, Arntz is asking to extend the current agreement with Dominion Voting of Denver to provide the city's voting system for two more years.

Dominion is the only company in the nation with a voting system that can handle San Francisco's ranked-choice voting, Arntz said. Any open-source system would have to be custom-built to deal with the city's needs.

John Wildermuth *is a* ***San Francisco Chronicle*** *staff writer. Email:* ***jwildermuth@sfchronicle.com***

Twitter: ***@jfwildermuth***