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Governor Asked to Appoint Secretary of State Who Is Independent of Major Parties and Voting Machine Lobbyist

ATLANTA, GA – A voting rights group announced today that it has sent a letter to Governor Sonny Perdue, stating what may be critical qualifications for the new Secretary of State (SOS) he will appoint. The group, Voters Organized for Trusted Election Results in Georgia, is a diverse, non-partisan, technology neutral, coalition of Georgia voters and organizations. They contend that the new secretary “should be independent of both major political parties” and “have no direct or indirect ties with the voting machine vendor lobbyist, Massey and Bowers.” They believe that the lobbyist “has been allowed to exercise undue influence and control over the office of the Secretary of State for the last 8 years to benefit the vendor.”

The letter cites examples for both the current and previous secretaries. It explains that in 2002 despite numerous warnings, SOS Cathy Cox, entered into an agreement to purchase \$54 million in voting equipment from Diebold Election Systems while her former boss, Lewis Massey was a lobbyist for the vendor. The group also contends that the equipment did not have an independent audit trail of each vote cast as required by law at the time. Since then, the equipment has been the subject of intense national scrutiny and ridicule. Diebold recently spun off the division, renamed it Premier Election Systems and is attempting to sell it to ES&S.

In addition, the group’s letter, posted on the VoterGA.org home page, mentions how current Secretary of State, Karen Handel, has flip flopped on the need for voter verification, audit capabilities and true recounts after being elected as Secretary of State in 2006 with help from Michael Bowers of Massey and Bowers. She appointed former Massey & Bowers partner, Rob Simms, as her deputy.

Gov. Perdue must appoint a new secretary to fill out the remaining term of Sec. Handel, who resigned last Tuesday to run fulltime for Governor. She announced her resignation immediately after the media was informed that three citizens had filed complaints against her Inspector General’s office for improperly investigating cases involving voting equipment defects or controversies.

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