

Etopia Media Voting News

June 24, 2004

Honorable Carl Levin  
U.S. Senator  
269 Russell Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Levin,

I've been covering SERVE (Secure Electronic Registration and Voting Experiment) since November, 2003. I produced a web page called "Everything You Could Possibly Want to Know about Secure Electronic Registration and Voting Experiment (SERVE)," available at: <http://63.206.28.66/pages/serve1.html>.

Then I produced more than 70 articles about SERVE for the *Latest Voting News*, at: <http://63.206.28.66/>, including many exclusive interviews with principals in the story.

When the program was cancelled at the end of January, 2004, I wrote to Major Sandra Burr at the Pentagon and asked if there was any money left over, since the project had been created to allow Internet voting in the November, 2004, election, when it would have, theoretically, allowed 100,000 members of the armed services to vote in their own local elections over the Internet.

Major Burr told me there was no money left over. I wrote back asking how they had planned to fund the program for nine more months without any money. She never answered me.

I filed a FOIA request to get more information. After about three months, I got a CD and an inch of paper, both almost completely useless, but saying that the program was supposed to terminate on March 31, 2005. It also listed the major contractors for SERVE, as follows:

Accenture	\$24,000,000
BearingPoint	\$605,000
Caltech	\$1,400,000
CSC/Dyncorp	\$530,000
Total	\$26,535,000

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I contacted each of these organizations and asked about their SERVE funding, with particular reference to the consequences of the program's January, 2004, early demise. (There have been no replies from any of them, yet.) Doing so seemed like preparing for an audit of the program, so I contacted the GAO to see if they'd already done one. They told me they hadn't, and also told me that they would do so if requested by the chair or ranking member of either the House or Senate Armed Services Committee.

Which is why I'm writing to you now, to ask if you could request that the GAO look into the financial situation at SERVE, with particular reference to the seeming anomaly of a program running out of money, and being cancelled, nine months before the date when it was supposed to be used.

There may be a simple, innocent, reason for this, involving some basic fact that I haven't been able to elicit from the Department of Defense, or which they have inadvertently or deliberately withheld. If so, there's no story and no need for an audit.

But if there's a problem here, and it's being covered up, it seems only reasonable to get a full accounting of the financial details of this program, especially since, as I write this, the Senate is considering a Defense Authorization bill which contains a provision (S. 2400, Sec. 1065. Delay of electronic voting demonstration project) which would revive SERVE, while postponing its implementation for two {or possibly four} years. The House version of this bill calls for terminating the program. For details about the SERVE revival, go to: <http://www.etopiamedia.net/empnn/pages/emvn/emvn2.html>.

If you need further specific references to additional material regarding other possible irregularities in this underreported program, I'd be glad to provide them to you.

In any event, the information included here should be sufficient to allow you to determine if a GAO audit of SERVE finances is appropriate. I look forward to hearing from you about this.

Incidentally, I have also done a lot of reporting on the Election Assistance Commission. Right now, in another audit-like investigation, I am trying to find out specifics about the recent disbursement of over \$800 million in HAVA money to the states for election technology and procedures upgrades. I am particularly trying to find out if the states who are getting this money have met the specified standards required of them in exchange for getting it.

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So far, the EAC has been a model of bureaucratic ineptitude in answering any of my questions. Again, there may be simple, innocent answers to these questions. Or there may not be. With the EAC as disorganized as it is, there could be an election funding crisis on a scale to dwarf Florida 2000 brewing. Maybe you could talk to a colleague on the relevant committee about asking GAO to perform an audit on EAC before the problems there escalate further.

Regards,

Marc Strassman

Reporter

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