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For immediate release
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SOE appeal to voters: Help us test the system!

Sarasota, June 11, 2008 – Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent said today she will conduct a mock election next month to test the functionality of the county's optical scan voting system that will be used in the fall elections and beyond.

All Sarasota residents are encouraged to help test the upgraded system by voting at one of the three SOE offices in Sarasota, Venice, and North Port between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Tuesday, July 8.

"The main objective is to give voters a chance to vote a ballot on the upgraded system before the two major fall elections and to ensure the system is accurate and reliable," Supervisor Dent said. "We will test components of the system leading up to and including ballot tabulation, and including tabulation of absentee ballots," she added.

Voters will be asked to sign in when they arrive at the polling place and will be given a mock election ballot to vote. Each voter will then feed the voted ballot through the optical scan tabulator at the polling place. An AutoMARK voter assist terminal will be available in all three polling locations to help voters with disabilities mark their ballots.

The mock election exercise is open to the public and will include a full canvass of votes, including absentee ballots, by the supervisor and county commission members and audit to ensure that the voting and tabulating equipment is operating properly.

Also on July 8, at the voting equipment facility at 1001 Sarasota Center Boulevard, SOE staff will be putting the remaining optical scan tabulators to the test by running a pre-marked test deck of 250 ballots through each one to confirm that they tabulate accurately. This test will begin at 8 a.m. and is open to the public, on a first-come, first-serve basis. Space is limited. The July 8 testing is in addition to the testing of all equipment that is conducted, as a matter of policy, prior to every election in Sarasota County.

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