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Theresa LePore
Palm Beach County Elections Supervisor
Palm Beach County Governmental Center
301 North Olive Avenue, Room 105
West Palm Beach, FL 33401--4795
Fax: 355-4006

Dear Ms. LePore:

During the limited manual recount on Saturday, I expressed my concerns about the fact that you and the other reviewers of the ballots were making your judgments collaboratively (i.e., sitting at a table together) rather than individually (i.e., making independent judgments, then subsequently convening to consider disputed ballots). I am writing to reiterate this concern as you finalize the methods for the county-wide recount.

The basic problem with collaborative judgments is that persuasiveness as well as perceptiveness plays a role in decisions. But in this instance, there is an even more important reason for making initial judgments individually. Because individual ratings can be systematically compared, we can measure the accuracy of the judgment process, and so directly address concerns regarding the fairness and validity of a manual recount.

While I am willing to serve your committee in any way needed, given the gravity of the matter I would urge you to consult with one or more of our country's leading experts in evaluation and psychological measurement. Two of these experts are I spoke with both of these men yesterday, and, with their permission, provide you with their contact information below. The three of us all understand that the manual recount of votes will be a massive task, and that there are temporal pressures as well as concerns about the multiple handling of ballots. But we all feel that the judgments

of people inspecting the ballots - including your temporary workers as well as those of your own committee - should be made and logged independently.

I understand that the concerns expressed here might seem esoteric, but surely a lesson from this election is that small things matter. I believe that the integrity of your office, and possibly the perceived legitimacy of our next president, depend on your proceeding thoughtfully.

The human eye and the human mind are great measurement tools, and so a manual recount can, if carefully done, be more accurate than a machine tally. But you will need to show this to our community and our country and, it seems, to the courts as well. Please take advantage of our willingness to help your office in whatever way possible.

In continuing appreciation of your public service,

Kevin Lanning,
Associate Professor, Psychology.