

Statement read aloud by Monroe County chief deputy clerk Laura Wert on Oct. 9, 2024 at the meeting of the board of county commissioners.

The Clerk has asked us to convey, on her behalf, her justification for preferring to use the vendor An Island over in-house produced election resources.

Concurrent with last summer's cybersecurity breach, the Clerk's Office had imminent election deadlines and her office (as well as other Clerks others within the state) was facing litigation should those deadlines not be met.

As she began to hear that Monroe County faced more than what was only described as a technological event--that, in fact, there had been a cybersecurity breach--having received no confirmation or follow-up from the Commissioners, the Clerk was left with no option but to reach out to state and federal agencies during that time to confirm the fact that there had, in fact, been a cybersecurity breach. She remains grateful for the guidance she received from those agencies, in real time, following the breach.

The professional guidance and best practices advice given to the Clerk, from both cybersecurity and election security experts, was to divorce anything connected to Monroe County elections from Monroe County Government technology. The Clerk had hoped to do this discreetly and respectfully and only disclose the disconnect should Monroe County face any issues as to the integrity or outcome of the election.

In what is likely to be the most scrutinized election of our lifetimes to date, it is going to be critical to leave no doubt about the integrity and results of Monroe County elections. Outstanding issues, in Monroe County, include the fact that the Commissioners have failed to either publicly validate or even acknowledge the Monroe County Clerk's concerns about cybersecurity and election security post-breach. State agencies have. Federal agencies have. Local

agencies have but Monroe County Government has not. The optics appear indicative of "Pay no attention to what is going on behind the curtain. You can trust Monroe County Government's technology—despite the recent cybersecurity breach." when the truth of the matter is that bad actors come back once vulnerabilities are discovered. They just look for different avenues to do so.

The Clerk wants to be publicly clear that her concerns about the use of Monroe County Government technology and her preference to implement the guidance she received from federal, state and local cybersecurity and election security experts are, in no way, the result of a lack of faith in the Monroe County Surveyor's product. In fact, she has met with him and his team at least twice (as recently as yesterday) and had the opportunity to view the product.

Instead, she is, primarily, concerned about the optics and timing of the implementation of the Surveyor's product following the County's cybersecurity breach...not to mention the unspoken and outstanding dilemma as to whose technology is being utilized to create the product being currently promoted by the Monroe County Government. The answer being Monroe County Government's technology.

Following last summer's cybersecurity breach, the Clerk made no public comments or statements to the media regarding the incident. At this time, less than one month from the Presidential election, given the gravity of the cybersecurity breach and the current national outcry about election fraud prior to Election Day, she wants Monroe County voters to have complete faith and trust in the upcoming and in future Monroe County elections, knowing that she did everything within the confines of her elected role to ensure that nothing related to elections was connected to Monroe County

Government technology given her trepidation. Simply stated, She can no longer say “That wouldn’t happen in Monroe County.” The Commissioners have publicly stated that they want to support the Clerk in her role of overseeing elections.

An Island's technology does not need to be connected to Monroe County Government's technology. Monroe County stands to not only benefit from a substantial grant to offset the setup costs but our understanding is that the vendor themselves is now offering an additional \$11,000 discount, over the span of the three year contract...for what has become an invaluable product, currently used by other Indiana Clerks, to help make elections smoother. This would allow the Clerk and all election workers to focus on more pressing matters as we work to facilitate the upcoming election.

The Clerk has respectfully heard the Commissioners concerns and been amenable to the recommendations to the contract as requested. In this particular instance, the contract has already been reviewed by the County Attorney, presented to the County Commissioners at both a Work Session and two previous Formal Meetings. She respectfully asks the Commissioners to hear her concerns and support her request for the betterment of Monroe County elections with the signing of the contract with An Island and without undue delay. Thank you.