

County Commissioners Association Supports Blackwell Plan To Use Optical Scan Machines

COLUMBUS – Citing reliability, flexibility and exceptional value, Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell today announced that paper-based precinct count optical scan voting devices will be offered to county boards of elections as the state's primary voting system. Deployment of the devices, which are compliant with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), will provide Ohioans with a uniform statewide voting system for future elections.

"Precinct count optical scan voting devices will allow more citizens to vote in an expedited manner while providing accurate, dependable, and paper auditable results," Blackwell said. "We have a tight election reform deployment schedule, too few allocated federal and state dollars and not one electronic voting device certified under Ohio's standards and rules. Precinct count technology just makes sense considering the flexibility it provides to financially constrained counties."

The County Commissioners Association of Ohio believes the use of optical scan voting devices is the only prudent and fiscally responsible way for election reform to continue in Ohio.

"County Commissioners are having a difficult time balancing budgets at the local level. Given the limited federal and state dollars that are available to meet the requirements of the Help America Vote Act, it appears that the proposal to use optical scan voting is the only way Ohio can comply with federal law without counties being required to pay for part of the cost for installing new voting devices," said Larry Long, Executive Director of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio.

Previously, the secretary of state provided county boards of elections with the option of selecting between electronic voting devices and precinct count optical scan systems. However, the cost of deploying electronic voting systems with legislatively mandated voter verified paper audit trails (VVPAT) far exceeds federal and state available and anticipated funding in light of significant increases in Ohio's voter registration rolls. Ohio has nearly eight million registered voters – an increase of approximately 900,000 voters since January 2004. Prior funding and deployment models were based on one electronic voting device per 200 registered voters. Ohio has received a total of \$132 million in election reform funding.

In addition, the precinct count optical scan systems will simplify the countywide distribution of voting machines. Currently, county election officials using electronic voting devices rely heavily on complicated voter turnout formulas to determine machine placement. The optical scan systems eliminate the requirement of matching actual machines to voter turnout models because voters mark paper ballots, which are then inserted into electronic ballot readers. The ballot readers alert voters of over votes and electronically tabulate the ballot at the precinct as required by HAVA. The actual paper ballot is then available for auditing and recount purposes.

Vendors qualified to offer Ohio counties the precinct count optical scan voting devices include Diebold Elections Systems and Election Systems and Software. Both vendors previously bid and agreed to contract terms with the state of Ohio. Diebold Elections Systems will offer its AccuVote-OS at \$4,572 per unit and ES&S will offer its Model 100 at \$5,499 per unit.

[Click here to find a chart demonstrating available funding and cost comparisons.](#)

-30-

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