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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JANUARY 16, 2008

CONTACT:
- Robert Ferraro 301-661-2989, Co-Director, SAVEourVotes.org (Columbia)

GOVERNOR O'MALLEY FUNDS VOTING SYSTEM CHANGE
New, Less Expensive System Will Allow for Recounts

Save Our Votes (SOV) sent its congratulations to Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley today for including in his proposed budget for the next fiscal year funds for the purchase of a new voting system based on paper ballots counted by optical scanners in each precinct.

The Governor has long advocated replacing the state's paperless touch-screen system. His action today is supported by nearly two-thirds of Maryland voters, according to a recent statewide public opinion poll by Gonzales Research. [www.saveourvotes.org/releases]

"We are delighted that the Governor and the General Assembly have responded to the voters and moved forcefully to replace our risky system with one that will be both secure and cost-effective," Robert Ferraro, co-director of SOV said today.

The new system will allow voters to ensure that their votes are recorded as they intend to cast them, and provide a means for independent recounts, capabilities which are not possible with the current voting system. This change will bring Maryland into line with the many other states that have recently abandoned touch-screen voting in favor of voter-marked paper ballots counted by optical scanners. Florida expects to have optical scanners in place statewide before this year's presidential election. California and Ohio have both enacted severe restrictions on the use of touch-screen voting machines after thorough reviews of their security and reliability.

SOV co-director Shelley Fudge said, "The new system will also provide special ballot-marking equipment in each precinct for voters unable to mark their ballots by hand."

SOV, a statewide grass-roots organization, has worked for the past two years with legislators, state officials and dozens of citizens' groups throughout the state to bring about this change in the state's voting system. In April of last year, the General Assembly voted unanimously to replace the touch-screen system. Governor O'Malley signed the bill in May, and all that remained was for funding to be provided to make the change in time for the 2010 general election.

"Today's action, when adopted by the General Assembly in April, will reverse the soaring operating costs that the state and counties have experienced since adopting the touch-screen system," Rebecca Wilson, a co-director of SOV pointed out. "So, beginning in 2010, Maryland voters will not only be voting on a more secure, voter-verified system, but one that will save the taxpayers millions of dollars each year." (See www.saveourvotes.org for an analysis of voting system costs.)

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