



**Testimony for the
Subcommittee on Public Safety and Administration
of the House Appropriations Committee**

February 27, 2008

**Maryland State Board of Elections
Operating Budget Hearing**

Funding for HB 18/SB 392, Chapter Laws 547

Election Law - Voting Systems - Voter-Verifiable Paper Records

Mr. Chairman and Esteemed Committee Members,

We urge you to retain the funding for the switch to an optical scan voting system which Gov. O'Malley has proposed in the 2009 budget. This important change will provide Maryland with a voting system that will allow our votes to be recounted, if necessary, from the original record of the voter's intent, and will be less expensive to own and operate than our current voting system.

We also encourage you to adopt the recommendations of the Dept. of Legislative Services:

1. **Restricting the use of funds budgeted for the voting system services contract** will ensure sufficient funds to conduct the 2008 General Election without spending more than necessary for that purpose.
2. **Providing legislative oversight of the procurement process** will help ensure that the right questions are asked before we make a major investment. Although the law specifies an optical scan voting system with ballot-marking machines, several products exist on the market to fulfill this requirement including new models that have not yet been battle-tested. Prices for the same product vary widely from one contract to another and depend largely upon the contract terms and the negotiating prowess of the purchaser. Recovering any residual value remaining in our current system may be able to help defray the cost of a new system. Incorporating explicit performance standards into the contract for the equipment will ensure vendor accountability for product reliability and the correction of any problems that may surface after the systems are deployed.
3. **Deleting funds for upgrades to the current system** will allow those funds to be available for the purchase of the new system.
4. **Purchasing the new system with a 5-year capital lease** instead of a 3-year lease will allow the operating cost savings of the new system to help offset the purchase costs.

We urge you to fund this important transition to a more secure, less expensive voting system.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Rebecca Wilson, Co-Director
SAVE Our Votes