

SAVE Our Votes

SECURE • ACCESSIBLE • VERIFIABLE ELECTIONS FOR MARYLAND

February 18, 2008

Esteemed Senate Budget & Taxation Chairman Currie and Vice Chair Kasemeyer and Public Safety, Transportation, and Environment Subcommittee Chairman DeGrange, Vice Chair Jones, and Senators Edwards, Kramer, Munson, Robey, and Zirkin,

On behalf of the members of SAVE Our Votes, I 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. We worked side by side with other organizations last year, including MaryPIRG, ACLU, Sierra Club, Common Cause, People for the American Way, Progressive Maryland, and many others, to pass last year's SB392/HB18 for the following reasons:

1. **Maryland needs a voting system that can recover from election day failures.** As a growing number of experts have documented, if a computer glitch or malicious software code in our current voting machines leads to vote switching, loss of votes, or any other malfunction, there is no reliable way to detect those problems or to recover the lost votes. Although Maryland has been fortunate so far to have escaped such a catastrophe, many other jurisdictions across the country have not been so lucky. Eighteen thousand votes were lost in 2006 in Sarasota County, Florida in a race that was decided by less than 400 votes.
2. **Maryland needs a voting system that is recountable and auditable.** With our current voting machines, we were unable to perform meaningful recounts in some 2006 legislative races decided by a close margin of votes. With an optical scan voting system, voters mark the paper ballot by hand (or with a ballot marking machine for those with disabilities or language barriers), then feed them into a scanner that can read and tabulate votes. The original record of the voter's intent is available for manual inspection in a recount or audit to ensure that the choices were captured correctly.
3. **An optical scan voting system is easier and less expensive to operate, store and maintain,** so taxpayers will save money each year in operating costs. Far fewer machines are required to accomplish the task of voting, so election workers will find their jobs and training needs simplified.

We urge you to retain the funding the governor has proposed in his budget for this important transition to a more reliable, less expensive voting system by 2010.

Thank you,

Rebecca Wilson, Co-Director
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