

SAVEourVotes

SECURE•ACCESSIBLE•VERIFIABLE ELECTIONS FOR MARYLAND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 23, 2007

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VOTING RIGHTS ADVOCATES APPLAUD MD. HOUSE PASSAGE OF REAL VOTER-VERIFIED PAPER TRAIL, URGE SENATE TO DO THE SAME

On March 21, the Maryland House unanimously passed, for the second year in a row, legislation to meet voters' demands to replace the state's current unreliable electronic voting system with a secure system that provides for a voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) and optical scanning. Unfortunately, the Senate's now considering amending its version (SB 392) to remove all the protections the House bill requires.

"Polls show two of every three Maryland voters are troubled and want a paper trail," said Shelley Fudge of Save Our Votes. "The House deserves high praise for again listening to the voters. Now the voters are counting on our Senators to do the same."

As introduced by Sen. Edward Kasemeyer with an impressive 37 co-sponsors, SB-392 had virtually the same vital provisions as HB-18 (sponsored by Del. Sheila Hixson and passed unanimously March 21). But the EHEA Committee is considering amendments to remove those very requirements that proponents and experts, including Dr. Avi Rubin of Johns Hopkins, have testified are absolutely necessary to detect and recover from vote fraud, security breaches, and technical failures. Such incidents have shaken voters' confidence and plagued recent elections in Maryland and the nation. For example, the U.S. Congress seat remains undecided for Sarasota, Fla., where 18,000 votes were not recorded in November 2006.

"The proposed amendments to the Senate bill do not require voter verification, paper ballots, or audits," said Robert Ferraro of Save Our Votes. "That completely defeats the purpose of a voter-verified paper audit trail bill, and makes it not worth the paper it's printed on."

While opponents of the VVPAT requirements blame the states budget crisis, lack of funding is not a real obstacle because replacing our touch-screen voting machines with a paper ballot and optical scan system would save the state millions each year from the beginning, according to Rebecca Wilson of Save Our Votes. "Studies of comparable purchases in other states have shown that Maryland would save \$3-5 million annually in operating expenses," she said. "A \$20-million purchase financed over five years would cost \$4 million each year. If the purchase cost were split 50/50 with counties, as with our current system, the state's annual share would be about \$2 million. So Maryland would save \$1-3 million each of the first five years and \$4-5 million thereafter on annual election expenditures -- savings that would ease the state's fiscal pressures."

Save Our Votes and other election integrity advocates urge Senators to support the original intent of SB 392, pass legislation similar to the House bill, and restore election integrity in Maryland.

Recommended References:

*Reports, news articles, detailed cost information, list of election integrity organizations and more at www.SAVEourVotes.org