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New Poll Shows Maryland Voters Favor Funding a Switch to Paper Ballots by More Than 2 to 1

Gonzales Survey Results Reveal 3 to 1 Support Among Some Demographic Groups

As the state legislature prepares for a special budget session to begin next week, a new poll released today shows overwhelming support among Maryland voters for funding the switch away from paperless electronic voting machines.

Conducted by Gonzales Research & Marketing Strategies last week, the telephone survey found that 64% of voters statewide think that Governor O'Malley should fund the change from touch-screen voting machines to a system that uses paper ballots counted by optical scanners.

Survey participants were asked: "Last spring Maryland's General Assembly voted unanimously to switch from touch screen voting machines to a less expensive system that uses paper ballots counted by optical scanners. This would ensure that votes are recorded as voters intend, and make recounts possible. The change will happen in 2010, but only if funded in next year's budget. Do you think the Governor should, or should not, provide funding for this change?"

The survey revealed particularly strong support in some demographic groups, with 75% of Independents, 74% of Democrats, and 71% of African Americans favoring funding the switch. A majority of voters in every region of the state endorse the change.

"Election expenses have soared to nearly 10 times their cost before we began using the touch-screen voting machines," stated SAVE our Votes Co-Director, Rebecca Wilson. "This move to a less expensive, more reliable voting system is fiscally responsible as well as highly popular. It's just common sense."

Maryland's switch to paper ballots is part of a national trend as election day problems and one prestigious study after another confirm the risks of paperless electronic voting. Florida will change to optical scanners statewide by 2008 after touch-screen machines lost 18,000 votes last fall in a hotly contested congressional race that was decided by less than 400 votes. California has decertified most of its touch-screen voting machines and will use them only under stringent restrictions next year. New Mexico switched in 2006, and a recent study by the CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project showed high satisfaction with the change among both voters and election workers.

The survey was paid for by SAVE our Votes, a nonpartisan, nonprofit, grassroots organization working for Secure, Accessible, Verifiable Elections in Maryland. The survey results are posted in full at www.saveourvotes.org