



Maryland Deserves Verifiable Elections in 2010

The Sooner Maryland Purchases a Reliable, Secure Paper-Ballot Voting System, the Sooner We Can Start Saving Money

Maryland law requires the state to adopt a proven, verifiable, and secure paper ballot optical-scan voting system by 2010. The state would be fiscally irresponsible not to comply with this sensible law.

The state's current paperless touch-screen voting system cannot recover from equipment malfunctions or errors and provides no way to conduct a recount in close races. Other states have abandoned this dangerous method of voting after election-day disasters have left election results in doubt.

If we follow the example of other states that use optical-scan voting systems, the savings in operating costs would offset the cost of purchasing the new system — and within a few years, we could save millions.

Governor Martin O'Malley cut the funding for the purchase of a new optical-scan voting system because of Maryland's severe fiscal crisis. But Maryland voters overwhelmingly favor a paper record of their votes and are counting on their elected officials to restore integrity to Maryland's elections in time for next fall — as mandated in state law.

The State Board of Elections will need supplemental funding to conduct next fall's elections — even if we continue to operate the current paperless touch-screen voting system.

Paper ballot-based optical scan voting systems require 1/5 the amount of equipment of our touch-screen system, so the operating and maintenance costs are significantly less. In a few years time, Maryland could experience cost savings if it made the switch!

In late Fall 2009, the State Board of Elections (SBE) told the Governor that if we purchased a new optical scan voting system, we would need to purchase new voting booths for \$360 each, for a total of \$5.3M, and new carts for a total of \$3M. However, more practical privacy voting screens could be purchased for \$7 each, and we could use the same carts we already have on hand rather than purchasing new ones.

Despite the dire fiscal crisis facing Maryland, the SBE told the Governor that we needed to purchase a Cadillac optical scan voting system. But if SBE had followed the example of other states that have already made the switch, we could avoid unnecessary costly equipment and supplies and there would be no need to delay implementation.

Maryland's Department of Legislative Services (DLS) estimated that the contract for services to support the existing touch-screens will cost \$13 million in FY 2011. (The costs for operations & maintenance for the 2006 Gubernatorial elections was \$13.3 million, and early voting will add new expenses to this year's elections.) SAVEourVotes' cost analysis, based on available cost estimates from DLS and the SBE, as well as from other states, shows how Maryland could realize tremendous savings by switching to a simpler optical-scan voting system. (See www.saveourvotes.org for our analyses and more information about the risks posed by relying on paperless touch-screen voting machines.)

The sooner we buy the new voting system, the sooner we can start saving money. The purchase and implementation of a new verifiable voting system should not be delayed.