



FAQs: Upcoming Changes to PA Voting Systems

What can we expect in Pennsylvania on voting system upgrades?

In February 2018, the Department of State issued a directive to all counties stating that any new equipment bought from now on must have a voter-verifiable paper trail. The Department and the EAC (U.S. Election Assistance Commission) are currently evaluating voting systems and will certify those systems that meet state and federal standards. Additionally, in April, the Department released an Invitation for Bids (IFB) for voter-verifiable paper trail voting systems, for vendors to submit proposals for systems from which counties may choose. The Department also issued further direction that counties must have new voting systems with paper ballots selected by the end of 2019.

Why did the Department issue the directive now?

Cybersecurity and resilience are of utmost importance to all of us who administer elections. The Department wants to ensure that Pennsylvania voters are using the most secure, auditable and resilient voting machines available. While most of the discussion and media coverage about aging voting equipment focuses on security, our requirement to replace current voting systems with systems that employ a paper ballot is as much about resilience as it is about security.

By virtually everyone's standards, our current systems are reaching the end of their usable life, and they are built on operating systems that are no longer supported or soon will not be supported by the manufacturer. Over the last year, experts across the country and world have issued strong warnings about the risks and vulnerabilities we face from both cyber threats and aging systems, and are urging states to take action as quickly as possible, replacing older voting machines with paper ballot voting systems and conducting robust post-election audits. Pennsylvania's efforts are consistent with the rest of the nation, and we expect the great majority of states across the country to replace their systems by 2020 as well.

What is the definition of a "voter-verifiable paper record?"

Every voting system will provide a paper ballot record, which allows each voter to verify the votes they have cast. The ballot will be scanned and retained by the voting system and can be used in an audit. No voter walks out with a receipt or written indication of their votes.

Will the Department require voters to hand-mark paper ballots?

Some of the systems provide the option to hand-mark paper ballots, but the Department will not mandate that counties use a certain type of system, so long as the systems meet current federal and state standards. Counties know their voters and are the best people to gauge the needs of those voters when considering a new system purchase.

Are you going to decertify the systems currently in use, and if so, when?

Yes. While we have not yet decertified the voting systems, the Department is strongly considering decertifying the voting systems currently in use before the 2020 primary. We have not selected a

decertification deadline yet because we are taking into account that a county may need to schedule a special election just before or after the Dec. 31, 2019, deadline we announced, and we don't want them to be left without the necessary certified equipment to administer the election.

What is the estimated statewide cost to replace all voting systems?

Voting systems were last replaced statewide in the mid-2000s with financial assistance made available under the Help America Vote Act of 2002. The cost in Pennsylvania was \$147 million. If we were to outright purchase updated voting machines throughout the commonwealth, we estimate this would cost in the range of \$95 million to \$153 million. Because the final figure will depend on numerous factors, including negotiated discounts, lease terms, financing options and other factors, it is premature to assume any specific figure at this time.

How will the counties pay for the new equipment?

There are multiple ways to fund voting system upgrades, and we are just beginning to explore the options. Other states and their counties have leased their voting equipment over 6-8 years, purchased it outright, or used low-interest loans, grants, bonds, and appropriations to cover the cost. The administration is committed to exploring every option for funding and financing, including grant opportunities, creative financing options, state, federal, and local appropriations, opportunities for partnerships, bonds and more.

The federal government has appropriated a start to the funding of these machines: Pennsylvania will be receiving \$13.5 million from Congress' recent appropriation of \$380 million for election security under the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2018. The state will contribute a 5% match as required, bringing Pennsylvania's total to \$14.15 million. We expect this system replacement initiative to be a cost-share between federal, state, and local dollars, and will explore funding options from every possible source.

Why are you not aiming to have new systems in place for the 2018 November election?

Setting a target date in 2019 allows the counties to plan for and budget for the new systems and train their poll workers, and it allows the Department time to explore all available funding options and effectively prepare and assist the counties. Acquiring voting systems is a major financial and administrative responsibility. Asking counties to make this commitment in the middle of their budget year with such a short time period before the 2018 election would be burdensome and infeasible.

Do you have confidence in the security of the current machines? How can we protect our vote in the meantime?

We have confidence in the counties' ability to administer secure elections given the robust cyber and other security measures that are in place to protect the integrity of our elections. The Department continues to employ extensive measures and partner with federal and state law enforcement agencies to stay one step ahead of any threats to our security and infrastructure, including comprehensive monitoring and assessment of risk, fortification of physical and cyber security, training and resources to counties and partners, and increasing communications at all levels.

Do any of the voting machines currently certified and in use in PA provide a paper trail? Will counties be able to keep those systems?

Several counties do utilize some form of paper ballots, but unfortunately these systems will still need to be replaced due to the age of the software and lack of available upgrades.