

# Keystone Votes

## THE COALITION FOR MODERN ELECTIONS

June 1, 2018

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

When it comes to elections, all of us share the same goal: making sure that voting remains accurate, accessible, fair and secure. To that end, there is growing bipartisan consensus that Pennsylvania needs to do more to help counties buy new, modern and secure voting machines to replace those that in some cases are now almost 20 years old.

Keystone Votes is a nonpartisan coalition comprising 39 advocacy and community organizations that has been working for years to update Pennsylvania's election system. That includes support for new, secure, accessible and modern voting machines as well as updates to database technology and implementation of electronic poll books.

All of us are encouraged by recent actions to advance these objectives and grateful for the hard work put forth by members on both sides of the aisle of the General Assembly whose collaborative spirit proves that the security and integrity of our election system is an issue that transcends partisan politics.

As you may know, the Pennsylvania Department of State in April announced a decision to decertify certain aging voting machines and provide funding to help counties put in place voting systems with a voter-verifiable paper record before 2020. More than \$14.5 million in federal and state funds will be available initially to help counties make the switch. Although more funding will be needed to fully assist all 67 counties, this appropriation is an important first step. The administration already has committed to working with counties and the legislature to find ways to achieve future year cost-sharing arrangements using local, state and federal dollars, or through lease agreements, grant opportunities, loans, appropriations, or other options.

Keystone Votes shares this commitment and is ready to work with you. At the same time, we encourage you to act now. **With elections upon us, there is no better way for this General Assembly to show voters how committed its members are to election security than by providing additional funds in the 2018-19 budget to help counties finance upgrade and begin the modernization process.** The need is well established.

In December, an advisory committee to the Joint State Government Commission released a report, "[Voting Technology in Pennsylvania](#)," that emphasized the need for the state to provide that funding, noting that "jurisdictions would not be able to maintain their current electronic voting systems for much longer due to the age of the machines, the scarcity of parts, and the costs of repairs and maintenance." The report recommended systems with a voter-verifiable paper record and adequate security measures.

In January, all 67 Pennsylvania [counties signed on to a letter](#) outlining seven priorities for 2018, including voting system maintenance. The counties noted that “most voting equipment is at the end of its useful life and will need to be replaced in the next few years. These replacement costs can quickly add up, with nearly 40,000 voting machines operated by our counties and the latest computerized machines costing between \$2,500 and \$3,000 each --- not including programming, supplies and maintenance. ... We will need state and federal assistance to continue to uphold our responsibility for a fair and accessible voting system.”

In February, the Department of State issued a directive for counties, to buy machines that leave a paper trail to ensure accuracy and safeguard against hacking. The directive doesn't require counties to replace machines, but only to switch systems when they do. According to security experts, low-tech voting machines with a voter verifiable ballot and/or a paper ballot are keys to ensuring that our elections are secure and the results are accurate. As we noted earlier, the Department of State's latest action, in April, began the process of finding ways to fund the upgrades and modernization.

Let's be very clear: The state's current system works well, but there is more we can do. Nothing is more important in that effort than making sure our counties have the resources they need to upgrade hardware and software. We understand the fiscal challenges our state faces. We also believe that nothing is more fundamental to the way our government operates than demonstrating to the public that their votes indeed are being captured and counted as intended, that the outcomes are correct, and that our elections are secure.

On behalf of Keystone Votes, we appreciate the work that has been done to advance these issues and look forward to working with you to secure all the funds needed to securely update Pennsylvania's voting systems. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Ray Murphy  
Deputy Director  
Pennsylvania Voice