

# Keystone Votes

## THE COALITION FOR MODERN ELECTIONS

August 13, 2018

### Updating Pennsylvania's Election System

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#### Introduction:

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, implementation of commonsense and proven reforms, and updates to database technology and implementation of electronic poll books. As a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, our aim is to educate and inform elected leaders and stakeholders about the need to secure and modernize Pennsylvania's election system as well as advocate for reforms to achieve these goals.

#### Position Statement:

*"Regardless of political affiliation, all of us want the same thing: safe, secure, modern elections. To accomplish that, investment in both hardware and software is essential. That means new voting systems, electronic poll books, and updates to database technology. The total cost to replace voting systems statewide is \$125 million. Because election security is a critical priority, the General Assembly must appropriate funding now to help counties finance upgrades and test systems before the 2020 elections. Recognizing the unique nature of each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, local election directors and county leaders should decide what kind of voting systems work best for them with only one caveat: Electronic voting systems must incorporate a voter-marked paper ballot that is marked either by hand or by a device that is retained for audits or recounts."*

#### Background:

Nothing is more fundamental to the way our government operates than demonstrating to the public that their votes are being captured and counted as intended, that the outcomes are correct, and that our elections are safe and secure. And there is growing bipartisan consensus to do exactly that --- not only legislatively, but also among the advocacy community, elected county leaders and professional election directors, all of whom agree that \$125 million is needed to help counties statewide upgrade systems. Moreover, the Pennsylvania Department of State has taken a leadership role to enhance voting security and ensure the integrity of elections process.

In December 2017, a nonpartisan 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."

In January 2018, the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania [issued 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. ... We will need state and federal assistance to continue to uphold our responsibility for a fair and accessible voting system."

In April 2018, the Pennsylvania Department of State 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 were made available to help counties make the switch. More funding will be needed but this appropriation is an important first step. The Pennsylvania Department of State has made innovation and cost efficiency paramount to its work.

All of this is playing out as citizens are concerned about the security of elections. The federal government in September 2017 told election officials in at least 21 states, including Pennsylvania, that hackers targeted their systems before the 2016 presidential election. U.S. intelligence officials predict new attempts to penetrate election infrastructure in 2018 and 2020. While our system in Pennsylvania works well, there is more we can do to enhance security --- and it starts with updating aging election systems.

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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.

At the same time, 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 adequate funds to help counties finance upgrade and begin the modernization process. Clearly, the need is well established.

We understand the fiscal challenges our state faces. Because election security is such a critical priority, the General Assembly must appropriate funding now to help counties finance upgrades to ensure voting remains fair, accurate, accessible and secure.

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