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New Voting Machines, Funding for Upgrades First Steps in Enhancing Election Security in Pa.

HARRISBURG (April 12, 2018) – The Pennsylvania Department of State’s decision today to decertify voting machines that in some cases are almost 20 years old and to provide funding to help counties put in place voter-verifiable paper record voting systems before 2020 is an important step in making sure the commonwealth has a secure, modern election system.

“The security and integrity of our election system is a nonpartisan issue,” said Ray Murphy, state coordinator for Keystone Votes. “Nothing is more important in that effort than making sure our counties have the resources they need to upgrade hardware and software.”

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

The Department of State announced today that Pennsylvania counties must have voter-verifiable paper record voting systems selected no later than December 31, 2019, and preferably in place by the November 2019 general election. More than \$14.5 million in federal and state funds will be available initially to help counties make the switch.

As important as this initial funding is, additional resources --- perhaps tens of millions of dollars more --- will be needed to help all 67 counties update their voting machines. The governor has committed to working with the legislature to help fund these voting system upgrades. It will be essential for the General Assembly to appropriate money to cover the state’s portion of the upgrades in the spending plans it crafts in advance of 2020.

“There is bipartisan consensus that Pennsylvania needs to do more to help counties make upgrades,” said Micah Sims, executive director of Common Cause PA, a member of Keystone Votes. “The voting modernization advocates and community leaders who make up Keystone Votes look forward to working with election directors and county commissioners across Pennsylvania to help secure all the funds needed from the administration and members of the General Assembly to securely update voting systems.”

In December, a bipartisan report by the [Joint State Government Commission](#) emphasized the need for the state to provide funding, noting that counties “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, all 67 Pennsylvania counties [signed a letter](#) noting that “most voting equipment is at the end of its useful life and will need to be replaced in the next few years. ... We will need state and federal assistance to continue to uphold our responsibility for a fair and accessible voting system.”

In February, the governor [issued a directive](#) for counties, when replacing their electronic voting systems, 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. The announcement today begins to provide resources toward that effort.

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Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition comprising 39 advocacy and community organizations working to update Pennsylvania’s election system, has been urging the state to start working now on reforms that would modernize the state’s election system, help counties buy modern machines, and update technology to enhance security and accessibility before the 2018 elections. More at www.keystonevotes.org.