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Philadelphia Reviewing Voting Machine Options

Concerns being raised about recent push for hand-marked ballots that could affect access for individuals with disabilities

HARRISBURG (Jan. 11, 2019) – The Philadelphia City Commissioners held the first of [two public comment sessions](#) last night in response to a Pennsylvania Department of State directive for all counties to ensure a secure, modern election system by putting in place voter-verifiable paper record voting systems before the 2020 elections.

Right now, 83 percent of Pennsylvanians are voting on vulnerable machines, including paperless Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting systems, such as those used in Philadelphia. The city is proposing \$22 million dollars to buy a new, more secure voting system this year.

“This isn’t simply a decision about which machines to buy. This is a decision about making sure Philadelphia finally has secure, fully accessible machines that guarantee every vote counts and the outcome of every election is fair and accurate,” said Ray Murphy, state coordinator for Keystone Votes.

“And when we talk about accessibility, that means having everyone vote on a ballot device,” Murphy said. “Individuals with disabilities, especially those who are blind, will not be able to use a hand-marked ballot and scanner system, which some are pushing the commissioners to consider. Alternative ballot marking devices would be required for them. But historically, these are separate and usually unequal solutions because the majority of volunteer poll workers don't know how to use these alternative machines.”

The commissioners’ sessions on voting machines are open to the public. Both will be held in the public hearing courtroom on the Sixth Floor of the Spring Garden offices at 520 N. Columbus Blvd. **The first session was held at 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 10. The second session is set for 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 12.**

Keystone Votes, a nonpartisan coalition comprising 39 advocacy and community organizations working to update Pennsylvania's election system, has been pushing not only for new voting systems, but also for electronic poll books and updates to database technology. Safe, secure, modern elections require investments in both hardware and software.

The Department of State [issued a Feb. 9 directive](#) for counties, when replacing their electronic voting systems, to buy machines that leave a paper trail to ensure accuracy and safeguard against hacking. Gov. Tom Wolf recently committed to providing roughly half of the costs of replacements statewide when he proposes his budget on Feb. 5.

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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.