

An Open Letter to the Burke County Board of Elections

Burke County Citizens for Voting Integrity

Thank you for allowing us the time to comment on the voting equipment in Burke County. Our democracy depends on the reliability, accuracy, accessibility, and transparency of the voting systems we use to choose our representatives. It is our opinion that Burke County will be best served by an optical scan system paired with disabled-accessible ballot marking devices. There are several good reasons to choose optical scanners over touchscreens, even those that have a voter-verified paper trail (VVPT). These include cost, reliability, and voter confidence.

First, optical scanners are a significantly less expensive voting system than touchscreens. We base this assertion on voter registration data from the Georgia State Board of Elections and an ES&S price sheet from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC).¹ **This should not be construed as an endorsement of ES&S.** However, this information allows us to make an apples-to-apples comparison of actual voting systems sold this year to a nearby state. This comparison shows that Burke County could save \$3,425 in initial purchase costs by selecting precinct-based optical scanners combined with ballot markers. A cost projection indicates that Burke County will save \$-12,933 over five years by selecting an optical scan-based system².

Second, optical scanners are the preferred voting system of the vast majority of independent computer scientists³. Additionally, optical scanners and ballot markers have the support of voters. The voters of Burke County recognize that the latest technologies are not always the best. The question we should ask ourselves is not “Is it new?” but “Will it work?” In particular, independent disabled voters in have expressed a clear preference for the AutoMARK ballot marker over the available touchscreen systems. Problems with the AutoMARK in other jurisdictions have been due to a single wire that came loose during improper handling during delivery. This problem – which is trivial to detect and fix – should not be used by opponents of election integrity as an opportunity to stall on much-needed improvements to the integrity of elections in Georgia.

Finally, we encourage Burke County to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Twenty-seven states have passed election integrity reform bills that restore confidence to the voting process by combining paper-based voting systems with mandatory audits. It was Ronald Reagan who said “Trust, but verify.” While many of us trust the Secretary of State and the Boards of Elections to do their job with professionalism and honesty, as citizens we feel it is our duty to independently verify the integrity of our democracy.

You have an opportunity to move Georgia in the right direction. Please consider these facts when discussing proper voting systems with our state government.

Sincerely,

Burke County Citizens for Voting Integrity

¹The NCACC data provides the uniform, state-wide prices of the hardware and software purchased by that state earlier this year. Since North Carolina is of comparable size and population to Georgia, we believe our State Board would be capable of negotiating a similar deal.

²A precinct-by-precinct cost breakdown is included as an appendix to this letter

³In 2004 the Association for Computing Machinery – one of the largest and most prestigious professional organizations for computer scientists – took a public policy position that supported strong engineering standards paired with voter-verified paper ballots. It was supported by over 95% of their members. See <https://www.myacm.org/opinion/poll.cfm>

A Burke Cost Comparison

Precinct	Voters	DRE		Optical Scan		Cost Savings
		Machines	Cost	Machines	Cost	
Alexander 0001	396	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 1 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$7,690	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$-2,255
Four Points 0002	1,182	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 3 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$14,280	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$4,335
Girard 0003	557	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 1 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$7,690	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$-2,255
Gough 0004	375	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 1 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$7,690	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$-2,255
Greenscut 0005	1,200	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 3 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$14,280	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$4,335
Keysville 0006	618	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 2 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$10,985	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$1,040
Midville 0007	457	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 1 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$7,690	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$-2,255
Munnerlyn 0008	241	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 0 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$4,395	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$-5,550
North Waynesbor 0014	1,958	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 6 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$24,165	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$14,220
Sardis 0009	815	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 2 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$10,985	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$1,040
Scotts Crossroa 0010	244	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 0 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$4,395	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$-5,550
South Waynesbor 0015	2,367	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 7 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$27,460	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$17,515
St. Clair 0012	302	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 1 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$7,690	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$-2,255

Voting Equipment and Software Licensing	
Audio-Enabled DRE	\$3,395
Standard DRE	\$3,395
AutoMARK	\$4,950
M100 Scanner	\$4,995
Support Software (with DREs)	\$74,780
Support Software (no DREs)	\$64,780

Auxillary Equipment	
iVotronic Printer Pack (one per precinct)	\$1,000
iVotronic Support Equipment	\$2,630
VVPAT Paper (one roll)	\$5.75
DRE Battery	\$163
M100 Battery	\$37
AutoMARK Battery	\$105
Hardware, counties with less than 10000 registered voters	\$3,743
Hardware, counties with less than 50000 registered voters	\$7,866
Hardware, counties with less than 100000 registered voters	\$18,064
Hardware, counties with more than 100000 registered voters	\$25,213

Maintenance Costs	
Support Software (with DREs)	\$14,100
Support Software (no DREs)	\$12,100
DRE, Year 1	\$0
DRE, Year 2	\$140
DRE, Year 3	\$146
DRE, Year 4	\$152
DRE, Year 5	\$158
AutoMARK, Year 1	\$0
AutoMARK, Year 2	\$310
AutoMARK, Year 3	\$322
AutoMARK, Year 4	\$335
AutoMARK, Year 5	\$348
M100, Year 1	\$0
M100, Year 2	\$225
M100, Year 3	\$234
M100, Year 4	\$243
M100, Year 5	\$253

Other Assumptions	
Elections per year	2
Year at which all batteries need replacing	5
Maximum turnout	70%
Voters who vote on election day (not early or absentee)	70% of turnout
Percent of extra paper ballots/rolls printed/purchased	10%
Registered voters per DRE	300
Registered voters per scanner	5000
Average cost, optical scan ballot (based on Durham County data, 2002 – 2004)	\$0.18