

An Open Letter to the Gordon County Board of Elections

Gordon County Citizens for Voting Integrity

Thank you for allowing us the time to comment on the voting equipment in Gordon 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 Gordon 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 Gordon County could save \$166,395 in initial purchase costs by selecting precinct-based optical scanners combined with ballot markers. A cost projection indicates that Gordon County will save \$169,678 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 Gordon 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 Gordon 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,

Gordon 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 Gordon Cost Comparison

Precinct	Voters	DRE		Optical Scan		Cost Savings
		Machines	Cost	Machines	Cost	
Calhoun City 849-b	5,030	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 16 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$57,115	1 AutoMARK(s) 2 M100 Scanner(s)	\$14,940	\$42,175
Fairmount 874	998	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
Gordon County 849-a	4,249	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 14 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$50,525	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$40,580
Lily Pond 856	1,153	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
Oakman 1235	717	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
Oostanaula 1064	476	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
Pine Chapel 1063	737	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
Plainville 1055	1,351	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 4 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$17,575	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$7,630
Ranger 1057	497	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
Red Bud 973	1,596	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 5 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$20,870	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$10,925
Resaca 980	944	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
Sonoraville 1056	3,465	1 Audio iVotronic(s) 11 Plain iVotronic(s) 1 iVotronic Print Pack(s)	\$40,640	1 AutoMARK(s) 1 M100 Scanner(s)	\$9,945	\$30,695
Sugar Valley 1054	1,022	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

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