

An Open Letter to the Heard County Board of Elections

Heard County Citizens for Voting Integrity

Thank you for allowing us the time to comment on the voting equipment in Heard 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 Heard 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 Heard County could save \$-6,700 in initial purchase costs by selecting precinct-based optical scanners combined with ballot markers. A cost projection indicates that Heard County will save \$-14,502 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 Heard 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 Heard 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,

Heard 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>

- ES&S price sheet available at the NCACC web site:
<http://www.ncacc.org/documents/equipmentpricing-ess.pdf>

| 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 |