

2019 County Government PRIORITIES

Election Equipment and Voting Systems

As the level of government responsible for assuring the integrity of the election process, counties must be at the forefront of any effort to replace election equipment so that they can maintain their strict security standards as well as voter confidence.

Counties have a significant responsibility in assuring elections remain fair and secure at every step of the process, from verifying voter registrations to training poll workers to counting and certifying election results. It also includes the responsibility for selection and purchase of voting equipment, which falls exclusively to county government.

Counties have the utmost confidence that our voting systems are secure and that every Pennsylvanian's vote will be properly counted. But there is general consensus that election equipment—although still accurate and secure—is nearing the end of its useful life, and thus counties had already prioritized the need to work with the state and federal government for assistance in replacing that equipment over the next few years.

Counties would have preferred to move forward with reasonable timelines based on funding, market, equipment availability and training needs. However, in settling a federal lawsuit stemming from the 2016 presidential campaign, the Pennsylvania Department of State has agreed to require all voting machines have a voter-verifiable paper trail by the April 2020 primary. State, federal and county government will need to work closely together to assure that counties have access to a full marketplace of voting equipment that is compliant with state and federal certification requirements and is available to meet timing and deployment needs.

At the same time, administration has indicated it will seek state funding for at least 50 percent of the cost of new systems, or about \$75 million of an estimated \$150 million statewide cost. The funding would be in addition to federal funds of \$14.15 million already available to the counties.

A chief objective under this priority is obtaining full funding for voting systems, noting that every dollar that does not come from federal or state funding will be a local property tax dollar. Replacement costs can quickly add up depending on which equipment each county chooses, with nearly 24,000 voting machines operated by the state's 67 counties. The latest computerized machines typically cost between \$2,500 and \$3,000 each, plus central counting systems, supplies, programming and maintenance agreements.

A strong partnership is needed for counties to meet the needs of Pennsylvania's voters and the settlement agreement requirements, and to continue to fulfill their responsibility to maintain a fair and accessible voting system for all.



COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Full state funding for voting systems to reduce the burden on county property taxpayers.
- A state-county partnership in planning to meet the requirements for voter-verified paper trail systems in place by April 2020.



THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

For more information on **election equipment and voting systems**, contact **Doug Hill** at (717) 736-4715 or dhill@pacounties.org.