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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

COMMITTEES

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PA ATHLETIC OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE,
CHAIRMAN

June 11, 2018

Representative Stan Saylor
Representative Joe Markosek
Appropriations Committee
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Chairman Saylor and Markosek:

We are writing in support of an appropriation for the purpose of purchasing new voting machines throughout the Commonwealth. We are concerned that Pennsylvania uses outdated electronic voting machines which are already beyond their expected lifespan. Most of our voting machines have no paper trail to recount or audit, so voters cannot verify that their votes were recorded accurately. Each election brings more reports of problems and machine errors. In the recent primary election, some voters in Dauphin and York counties left the polls without voting due to machine failures. Elections are fundamental to American democracy, and citizens rely on legislators for leadership and assurance that their votes are counted accurately.

The estimated cost of replacing all of Pennsylvania's voting machines ranges from $90 million to $150 million. Higher estimates might be based on the assumption that all voters need to vote directly on a machine. However, election security experts contend that the most secure, accurate and verifiable voting systems consist of voter-marked paper ballots, which are scanned and tallied by optical scanner voting machines, and which are backed by post-election audits. This type of paper ballot voting system would only require one optical scanner and one accessible ballot marker per precinct, which would provide universal accessibility for all voters. Such a voting system would result in costs closer to the $90 million estimate statewide. Election security advocates across Pennsylvania and the U.S are urging elected officials to provide funding for auditable, secure voting machines. Citizens for Better Elections and Save Bucks Votes are two citizen advocacy groups that have asked us to support funding.

Over 80% of U.S. voters use some form of paper record while voting, yet fewer than 17% of Pennsylvania voters enjoy that same protection. The Department of Homeland Security has designated elections as "critical infrastructure", and recommended upgrading to voter-verified paper ballots to protect national security. The JSGC recently released a report "Voting Technology in Pennsylvania", in response to SR394. The

report recommended that voting systems produce a permanent paper record for each vote, and that the General Assembly provide funds to assist counties in upgrading their voting systems. It is incumbent upon us to be a part of the process to upgrade our voting machines.

The federal omnibus bill allocated $13.5 million to Pennsylvania to improve election security. Counties cannot afford to pay the remaining costs on their own and need significant help from the General Assembly. We recommend an appropriation of $30 million from the general fund in the 2018-2019 budget year and $30 million in the 2019-2020 budget year.

The need for new voting machines with a paper trail has become urgent and it deserves our immediate attention. Thank you for your consideration of this appropriation.

Respectfully,
Bucks County Representatives