

Removing Barriers to Voter Verified Paper Ballots Ballot on Demand to Increase Flexibility of Paper Ballot Voting

April 4, 2007. By Joyce McCloy. Founder, N.C. Coalition for Verified Voting.

Governor Charlie Crist of Florida is pushing to replace touchscreen voting machines with optical scan systems. He proposes to utilize a unique on site ballot printing system to reduce the costs and logistics issues with ballot printing.

Crist said ballot on demand is a ballot producing system that can also be utilized for absentee voting.

"Ballot on demand allows for individual optical scan ballots to be printed when the voter arrives for early voting, thus eliminating the need for touch screens with voter verifiable paper audit trails," Crist said.
<http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7006843854>

As more states across the country switch to paper ballot voting systems, ballot on demand printers provide a promising solution to reducing expenses and decreasing logistical challenges of getting the right number of the right ballots to the right location. Ballot on demand systems print individual paper ballots at the voting site, as needed. This system could reduce ballot printing expenses and make distributing multiple ballot styles at early voting sites much easier to do.

Since very little is written about "ballot on demand" systems, some research was needed. I called one New Mexico County's election department that was known to use the system. Additionally, Paul Stokes, a voting advocate from New Mexico provided his research and in person observations. Finally, I contacted the actual vendor who supplies the ballot on demand services for New Mexico jurisdictions.

4/2/07 4:13 PM Eastern, from interview with Melanie Rivera who works at the San Miguel County Elections Office.

Ms. Rivera was very enthusiastic about the use of Ballot on Demand in San Miguel County. She advised that:

New Mexico doesn't use ES&S' ballot on demand, they use the services of Automated Election Services. Contact information can be found at
<http://www.electionpeople.com/>

How is Ballot on Demand Done?

Per Automated Election Services:

- The ballot on demand is done with computers programmed with all of the different ballot styles.
- HP printers that use toner cartridges are used to print the ballots.
- The counties pay for the use of the laptops, PCs or printers, instead of purchasing them.
- A county with about 10,000 voters per early voting site might need about 4 printers (estimate only)

How San Miguel County New Mexico uses ballot on demand, Per Melanie Rivera of the San Miguel Elections Department:

- San Miguel has about 22,000 registered voters,
- they have 3 early voting sites,
- they keep their early voting sites open about 3 weeks,
- they are required to report precinct data from early voting,
- they have one laptop computer and one HP printer at each early voting site, and
- they have 2 extra laptops at their county office in case one would break down at any early voting site.

Ms. Rivera said that AES' service was always available 24 hours a day and was excellent.

Read on....

Per Paul Stokes, e-voting expert and advocate from New Mexico:

“All New Mexico counties use M100s (ES&S optical scanners) and AutoMARKs

“Our M100s in New Mexico had a new software version to allow for use at early voting sites. This version can handle enough ballot styles to take care of our largest county, Bernalillo, with 450 precincts.”

At early voting sites using the ballot on demand, Paul advises that:
“The voter signs in, the ballot on demand system records a log of voters, the ballot for the precinct is printed, the voter goes to a booth and fills out the ballot, and then on to the opscan.

Bernalillo County, for one, did not use ballot on demand because the programming could not be done in time. According to the provider, Automated Election Services here in New Mexico, 19 of 33 counties leased and used their ballot on demand printer. The largest of these counties was probably Dona Ana, with 105 precincts. This ballot on demand system is a product of Automatic Election Services, and in addition to printing the ballots, it maintains the log of voters and prints an "application" for early voting that is signed by voters at the site. ES&S also has a ballot on demand product.

#

Final notes - AES is based in New Mexico but possibly a similar service could be provided elsewhere.

I know everyone has more questions, so I have requested an information booklet from AES (hope they send it).

For more questions, probably folks can call AES (or other ballot on demand vendors) directly.

Reported by Joyce McCloy - Founder, NC Coalition for Verified Voting,
www.ncvoter.net Email jmc27106@earthlink.net or phone 336.794.1240