

# Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Newsletter

## Your Questions Answered

*"For the first time in our country's history, our federal government has made a financial investment in our democracy. Our most precious civil right is our right to vote. We must improve the integrity and public confidence in our election process. The Help America Vote Act is changing the way Connecticut and the nation conducts elections. I hope this first, in a series of newsletters, proves helpful and answers some of your HAVA related questions."*

*Susan Bysiewicz  
Secretary of the State*

### What is the status of the purchase of new electronic voting machines in Connecticut?

HAVA, among other things, requires that states ensure that voters with disabilities can vote privately and independently. In order to meet that requirement, the Secretary of the State's Office plans to purchase one electronic voting machine for each of Connecticut's current 769 polling places in time for the November 2005 municipal elections. An RFP (request for proposal) is expected to be completed, and available for bidders, later this fall. As approved by the HAVA State Planning Committee, towns will be able to apply for additional electronic voting machines, through the Secretary of the State's Office, on a first come first served basis after the 2005 election, for use in 2006.

Mechanical lever voting has been used almost exclusively in Connecticut for over 50 years, but lever machines are no longer manufactured and do not meet new federal standards. Six Connecticut towns currently utilize Optical Scan machines (East Lyme, Wilton, Westbrook, Fairfield, Westport, Vernon).



### Will the new voting machines be accessible to voters with disabilities?

Yes. All of these machines will be accessible to voters with disabilities as required under the Help America Vote Act. The State of Connecticut's Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities supports the purchase of these new electronic voting machines and is working with the Secretary of the State's Office to ensure that voters with disabilities have a voice in the process.

When will electronic voting machines first be used?

Our goal is for towns to have their first experience with electronic voting machines for the **November 2005** municipal election. At this time there should be one electronic voting machine at each polling place.

How much funding did Connecticut receive from the federal government to purchase new voting machines?

The Secretary of the State's Office received \$32.7 million in federal funding under the Help America Vote Act. This funding will enable Connecticut to meet federal mandates for all states including:

- . ensuring that voters with disabilities can vote privately and independently
- . purchasing voting machines that produce a paper audit trail
- . voter education
- . a statewide centralized voter database

Will the new electronic machines have a voter verified receipt?

There has been much debate on the state and federal level regarding whether or not electronic voting machines should have a voter verified receipt so that voters can verify their vote. In fact, the Connecticut General Assembly debated legislation during the 2004 legislative session that would require all electronic voting machines purchased in Connecticut to have a voter verified receipt. The bill, however, did not survive the short legislative session but will likely be back again in some form next year.

The Secretary of the State's Office has been studying the pros and cons of this issue and monitoring the experiences other states have had with voter verified receipts. It is Secretary Bysiewicz' *personal belief* that a voter verified receipt is a good means to provide voters with the confidence that their vote has been accurately recorded. However, the federal Election Assistance Commission and Congress will be providing guidance to the states on this issue. The Secretary of the State's Office will review those guidelines and possible new federal mandates. In addition, the ability of voters with disabilities to utilize a voter verified receipt must be resolved.

Any RFP in Connecticut will place vendors on alert that the new electronic voting machines must meet all federal or state voter verified receipt mandates. However, we should not consider paper a panacea to election difficulties. Historically, most problems with elections involved paper, such as Florida's chads where election officials had to interpret the intent of voters.

**For Your Information:**

Board of Canvass  
Wednesday  
November 24, 2004

Meeting of the  
Presidential Electors for  
the State of Connecticut  
Monday  
December 13, 2004



**For more information about the Help America Vote Act contact:**

**Marisa Morello**  
**HAVA Project Manager**  
**(860) 509-6267**

[Marisa.Morello@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Marisa.Morello@po.state.ct.us)  
State of Connecticut  
Office of the Secretary  
of the State  
30 Trinity Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
or visit our website at  
[www.sots.state.ct.us](http://www.sots.state.ct.us)