Marion County Election Board
VOTER EXPERIENCE PROJECT

PUBLIC MEETING

What is the VEP?

NEED
PURPOSE
TWO PHASES

Need
• Aging Fleet of Voting Equipment
  ○ Purchased in 2002; 2000 model technology
  ○ Replacement parts becoming difficult to find
  ○ Equipment showing signs of age:
    • Tabulation software license expires 12/2014
    • Machine service contract expires 12/2014

Before the county makes an investment in new technology, we must have a community conversation about how to meet future voting needs

Purpose
• Explore how and where we vote
• Analyze the costs and benefits of the types of voting equipment available now and in the future
• Inform the Election Board’s decision-making when it’s appropriate to purchase new voting equipment
  ○ Type of equipment purchased impacts the way we vote

Two Project Phases
• Phase 1: Study Group
  ○ Small group of political party leaders, poll workers, elected officials, city-county partners and advocacy organizations will be immersed in the way elections are conducted under these two models and report their findings to the Election Board
• Phase 2: Community Input
  ○ Use the study group’s report to host a series of community conversations to allow all Marion County residents weigh-in on this important issue

Phase 1: Study Group

MEMBERS MODULES REPORT
Study Group Members
- 18-members representing:
  - Marion County Democratic Party
  - Marion County Republican Party
  - Marion County Libertarian Party
  - Marion County Board of Voter Registration
  - Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council
  - Marion County Office of Finance & Management
  - Marion County Information Services Agency
  - Greater Indianapolis NAACP
  - League of Women Voters of Indianapolis
  - Central Indiana Council on Aging
- Technical assistance from Ball State University’s Bowen Center on Public Affairs

Meeting Topics
- Group met from April through July covering these topics:
  - Election Fundamentals
  - Poll Workers & General Procedures
  - Polling Sites & Accessibility
  - Voting Technology, Part I (Current Voting System)
  - Voting Technology, Part II (Other Technology Options)
  - Election Administrator Roundtable & Cost Discussion

Study Group Report
- Three general sections
  - Introductory and background subsections
  - Substantive summary of Study Group review meetings
  - Study Group feedback
- Report available online at indy.gov/VEP

Background: Current Voting System
- Two machines
  - Optical Scan Ballot Reader (M100)
    - Voter fills out paper ballot with ink
    - Ballot is ‘fed’ into the reader for tabulation
  - Touchscreen Machine (iVotronic)
    - Voter makes selection by touching the screen or using buttons
    - Voter confirms selections and casts ballot electronically
    - No hard copy paper trail
    - Results are stored on two pieces of external memory and an internal card
    - Voted ballot images can be printed, if necessary
- When booting up, machines are connected by an external component
  - Marion County is the only jurisdiction in the country to use the PEB reader in this way to marry the equipment
  - PEB is the Personalized Electronic Ballot or a special card that is used to initialize the electronic voting equipment
  - PEB reader connects the electronic voting equipment to the paper ballot machine
  - Necessary step to generate printed reports:
    - Zero tape – printed before polls open to ensure no ballots have been cast on either piece of equipment
    - Results tape – printed after polls open to provide a hard copy report of the results for the precinct
Background: Current Voting System

At the polling location:
- 1 M100 optical scan reader for each precinct
  - Precinct is smallest unit in an election
  - Everyone lives in a precinct, which defines who you vote for and where you go to vote
- At least 1 iVotronic touchscreen machine for each polling location
  - Polling locations are where you vote on Election Day
  - Some polling locations have only one precinct reporting to it, though most have at least two precincts reporting to it

Poll Worker Challenges:
- Physical set-up of machine can be cumbersome
- Machine ‘boot-up’ is difficult
  - Machines must be opened in proper order
  - If opened incorrectly, must ask voters to store ballots in secure bin until machine tech arrives
- Limited ability for poll workers to troubleshoot equipment problems
  - Requests for machine help are one of the top calls to the poll worker hotline on Election Day

Voter Challenges:
- System looks complicated
  - Two different voting machines are not integrated and can be confusing
  - Not ‘sleek’
- Audio-enabled ballot difficult to use

Election Administration Challenges:
- Little flexibility
  - Must have iVotronic touchscreen paired with M100 optical scan reader to meet Help America Vote Act (HAVA) standards for all voters to have access to a confidential voting experience

Overall Report Themes
- Voting must be accessible and convenient
- Voting equipment and associated costs must be effective
  - Both short- and long-term
- Technology should be used to improve the process
- Overall voting process should be fundamentally fair and non-discriminatory
- Public must have confidence in the system

Future Voting System Needs
- Ease of Use
  - Drastically simplify and improve voting machine initiation and shut down operations for poll workers
  - Simple instructions for voters to follow
  - Must be quick to tabulate a voter’s ballot
    - If system has paper ballot component, then optical scan component should meet or exceed current system’s speed
    - If using exclusively DRE equipment or a combination system using a touchscreen component, then county should purchase enough equipment to prevent long lines from forming
Future Voting System Needs

- Accessible (HAVA Compliant)
  - New HAVA compliant machine should be integrated seamlessly into the system as a whole
  - Current system awkwardly ties the two together
  - Speed and intuitiveness of the audio-enabled ballot should be improved
  - Technology should incorporate other accessible features

- Adaptable
  - New system should be flexible to work in a variety of voting environments such as:
    - Election Day voting at a single precinct, 'super' precinct, vote center, etc.
    - Early voting at the Clerk's office and other satellite locations
    - Absentee voting by mail or traveling board
    - Central count of absentee ballots
  - Preferable that machines be able to store ballot styles for and tabulate results from all of the county's precincts
  - Each precinct is assigned values for their election districts, which means the Election Board must code ballots specific to each precinct

Electronic v. Paper Voting Systems

- Electronic Voting Systems
  - Operate in a virtual, electronic environment where paper ballots are not used
  - Images are stored on the machine and can be printed if needed for review
  - Tend to be slower
    - Voters have to scroll through several pages of a ballot
    - Additional step to confirm choices on the machine before casting their ballot

- Optical Scan (Paper Ballot) Systems
  - Voter fills out paper ballot and feeds into reader
  - Not fully HAVA-compliant
    - Voter with a disability may not be able to vote independently

Paper Trail

- How do you achieve a paper trail on voting equipment?
  - Systems must provide feedback to voters how their vote was cast and allow administrators to audit results
  - Paper Ballot Systems
    - Simplest 'paper trail'
      - Voter marks choices and can review before casting their ballot
      - Administrators can retrieve paper ballots to compare against tabulated results

Electronic Systems

- Little more complicated
  - Voter makes their choices on the equipment and machine will display choices – either on the screen or on paper – for voter to independently verify before casting their 'virtual' ballot
  - Ballots are stored on internal memory, usually in several places to ensure proper back-up
  - Administrators can print ballot images, if needed for review
Paper Trail Consensus

Varying viewpoints from Study Group
- Many desire a new system to have verifiable and reviewable paper record of votes cast by each voter
  - Feel strongly this maintains ballot secrecy and voter confidentiality
- Others want to eliminate paper due to its functional redundancy, inflexibility, inefficiencies, and ongoing costs.
  - Recognized potential that voters have less comfort and faith in such a system, but predicted that voters’ comfort level would rise over time.

One area of Study Group consensus
- Not ready for exclusively electronic (no paper) at least at this point, however:
  - Electronic systems as a “front-end” voting input method was preferable given its greater accessibility for voters with disabilities
  - The ability to provide an individualized, secret, and cost effective paper record on the “back-end” was preferred

Purchase in 2014?

Study Group Consensus
- Current system is obsolete
- Will need replacement in near term
  - Before widespread problems begin to occur using the current aging system
  - Avoid continued investment in an obsolete system
- Depends largely on the ability of the county to fund the purchase

Discussion

Survey

Please take a moment to respond to the ten questions rating your preferences from 1 – strongly disagree
  2 – disagree
  3 – neutral
  4 – agree
  5 – strongly agree
- Demographic information is helpful, but optional to complete

Electronic v. Paper Ballot Systems

Which do you prefer? Why?
Paper Trail

- Is a hard copy paper trail important to you? Why or why not?

Technology, In General

- How do you see technology improving the way we vote?

Voting on Election Day or Before

- What do you prefer? Voting on Election Day or before during the early voting period? Why?

Thank You!

Thank you for participating! Learn more at indy.gov/vep