

Media Release

From Secretary of State Ruth Johnson



Secretary Johnson announces next-generation voting equipment

-- For immediate release --

Clerks now will choose which system works best locally



Secretary of State Ruth Johnson today announced the approval of contracts for new next-generation voting equipment that all Michigan voters will use over at least the next decade.

The State Administrative Board today approved 10-year contracts with three vendors for optical-scan voting systems that read and tabulate paper ballots marked by voters. Each of Michigan's 83 county clerks now will consult with the city and township clerks in their county to select one of the three vendors.

"The new equipment offers voters all the speed and convenience of the latest ballot-scanning and election-night reporting technology while at the same time featuring a good, old-fashioned paper ballot that we can always go back and look at if we need to," said Johnson, the state's chief elections official.

The three election equipment and software vendors that had contracts approved today are Dominion Voting Systems, Election Systems and Software and Hart InterCivic, which all have systems that are being successfully used in other states.

"Michigan's voting equipment has served us well over the past 12 years, but it is nearing the end of its expected lifespan and needs to be retired," Johnson said. "I thank local clerks for their feedback as we discussed how to replace our aging equipment as well as the support of lawmakers and the governor."

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The new equipment, which includes ballot tabulators, accessible devices for use by voters with disabilities and election-management and reporting software, could be in use as early as the August 2017 primary local elections, depending on how quickly clerks are ready to implement them. All cities and townships across the state will have the new equipment by August 2018, which is the next scheduled statewide election.

The new systems all use digital optical scan technology, which includes notable improvements and increased ease of use for voters and election administrators. The systems allow for electronic storage of ballot images, a feature that will be useful during post-election audits. Improvements in the election management system software will save county and local clerks time and money in preparing for elections and providing election results. The options available for voters with disabilities are also greatly improved, and contractors will be required to continually assess and improve the systems, based on feedback. The contracts also cover service and maintenance.

A team of Michigan Bureau of Elections staff, local election officials and purchasing agents from the Secretary of State's Office and the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget reviewed the proposals and equipment before recommending approval of a contract with three vendors. Elections staff sought extensive feedback about the systems from local election officials and advocates for Michigan voters with disabilities.

The new equipment will be paid for with \$30 million in federal Help America Vote Act money that the Secretary of State's Office has saved for more than a decade, and with \$10 million approved by the Legislature with the support of Gov. Snyder. This funding will cover most of the up-front cost for the new systems. Cities and townships will pay for the remaining cost, which will vary, depending on which vendor is selected, and for extended service and maintenance, which will begin in the 6th year of the contract period.

The equipment voters used in 2016 was rolled out in 2004 and 2005 when Michigan began using optical-scan voting systems statewide. Michigan is one of the only states with a substantial amount of federal funds still available to assist with the purchase of the next-generation voting systems.

For media questions, please call [Fred Woodhams](tel:517-373-2520) at 517-373-2520.

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