



In Support of S.324 – An Act requiring a paper ballot
and H.600 – An Act to ensure secure voting equipment

Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) supports voting only on a paper ballot and use of voting systems that use paper ballots.

Resolutions requiring paper ballots were adopted at LWVUS conventions in 2004 and 2006. It states the League's position on "the Citizens' Right to Vote be interpreted to affirm that LWVUS supports only voting systems that are designed so that:

1. they employ a voter-verifiable paper ballot or other paper record, said paper being the official record of the voter's intent; and
2. the voter can verify, either by eye or with the aid of suitable devices for those who have impaired vision, that the paper ballot/record accurately reflects his or her intent; and
3. such verification takes place while the voter is still in the process of voting; and
4. the paper ballot/record is used for audits and recounts; and
5. the vote totals can be verified by an independent hand count of the paper ballot/record; and
6. routine audits of the paper ballot/record in randomly selected precincts can be conducted in every election, and the results published by the jurisdiction."

Paper ballots are readily recountable and necessary for an accurate audit of the vote. Paper ballots provide security, greater secrecy for the voter and the ability to verify the voter's intent. In addition, paper ballots save money and time. Voting stations are significantly less expensive than voting machines, allow many voters to complete their ballot at the same time, and the optical scanner takes only a few seconds to record each vote.

While we currently vote on paper ballots in Massachusetts, there is no existing statute to guarantee this practice will continue. Without such a law, we risk having this change. In fact, this nearly happened when Massachusetts was ordered to provide special voting equipment for the disabled, including paperless electronic machines for the blind. Our Secretary of State opted to rent (not purchase) different kinds of voting equipment for the disabled. These were tested in a statewide election. All but one system, a ballot marking device, were found to be inadequate in serving the needs of disabled voters. The ballot marking device works with paper ballots and enables voters with disabilities to vote without assistance and is now in use in many election jurisdictions in Massachusetts..

Furthermore, the passage of a bill to require a paper ballot will not cause any changes in current voting practices and will not entail any additional costs.