



STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

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Counties React to DOS Acting Secretary Torres Voting Equipment Directive

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The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) today reacted cautiously to the commonwealth's decision to require counties to enter contracts for new voting equipment by December 31, 2019 and ensure use of the equipment by the April 2020 primary elections.

The directive came in an April 12 memorandum from Department of State Acting Secretary Robert Torres. In the interim, the Department is retaining certification of counties' current election equipment, effectively affirming that current equipment remains secure. Instead the express intent is to bring equipment up to the latest standards for security and audit.

For several years, counties have been working toward upgrade and replacement of current election systems, most of which were deployed in 2006 under the Help America Vote Act. Counties recognized that while the current systems are safe, secure and accurate, changes in technology and operating systems require upgrade and replacement on a cyclical basis and offer opportunities to improve voter convenience and access. In addition, the Department had set a requirement earlier in the year that any equipment purchased after April 4 must include a paper audit capacity.

The single greatest impediment to system upgrades, though, is the lack of a funding source to meet the estimated \$125 million price tag. Counties had previously established support for state and federal funding to replace voting equipment as one of their top priorities for 2018.

In the memo, Sec. Torres gives the Commonwealth's commitment that it will work with the general assembly and counties to identify funding, and indicated that a full range of options are under consideration. In the interim, he indicated that the state's receipts under the HAVA provisions of the new federal omnibus budget bill, just over \$14 million, will be available for the procurement effort. Counties appreciate the Secretary's comment that "We want to bring about the system upgrades so Pennsylvania voters are voting on the most secure and auditable equipment as promptly and feasibly as possible, while also being supportive of the counties' need to plan and budget for the new systems."

Still, for counties, the ability to achieve funding is critical. With more than a decade of stagnant appropriations across the spectrum of programs counties provide on the Commonwealth's behalf, few counties have resources on hand to meet the expected cost. The progress toward funding over the next year and a half will determine county capacity to meet the state requirement without placing the burden on the property tax payer.

At the same time, counties support the work the Department has already undertaken to facilitate equipment upgrades, including advancing the equipment certification schedule and working with the Department of General Services on making contracts available through the state's COSTARS cooperative purchasing program. The Department has indicated interest in other reforms that could improve system efficiency and reduce elections administration costs.

In the interim, counties are careful to remind the public that the current equipment is secure, accurate, and reliable. Counties maintain a secure chain of custody for the equipment, and none of the equipment interfaces with the internet. For each election, each voting machine is subject

to calibration and to accuracy and logic testing, and sealed prior to deployment. The county also verifies operation once in the polling place, and performs post-election review.

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The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is the voice of county government; a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. CCAP members include county commissioners, council members, county executives, administrators, chief clerks and solicitors.

County governments are responsible for a wide variety of critical issues, including provision of human services (i.e., mental health, intellectual disabilities, juvenile justice, children and youth, long-term care, drug and alcohol services, housing) to people in need in our communities. In addition, counties are responsible for emergency management and 911 services, administration of the courts and corrections system, elections, maintenance of county bridges, and the county property assessment rolls, and are also involved in environmental and land use planning, protection of open space and community and economic development.

CCAP strengthens the counties' abilities to govern their own affairs and improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. It advocates for favorable state and federal legislation, programs and policies on behalf of counties. CCAP is committed to service excellence through education, information, insurance, technology and other programs that support effective county government. Founded in 1886, CCAP is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties.

For more information about Pennsylvania counties and CCAP, log on to www.pacounties.org and visit CCAP's Twitter page [@PACountiesGR](https://twitter.com/PACountiesGR).