



November 22, 2020

Chairman Brad Raffensperger
Georgia State Election Board
Atlanta, Georgia
Via email (rgermany@sos.ga.gov)

Re: November 23, 2020 SEB meeting—January 5, 2021 election

Dear Secretary Raffensperger and State Election Board Members:

We write to seek your decision to conduct the upcoming January 5, 2021 election using hand marked paper ballots, scanned with optical scanners followed by simple and thorough post-election audits conducted with uniform standards and complete transparency.

Early voting begins in three weeks. Election directors and staff have been working non-stop since early October and are facing a recount in coming days followed by the December 5 election (in some counties) and preparations for the January election. They have performed admirably under the toughest of pandemic and work conditions and are exhausted. The toll on people and on local budgets has been unprecedented. Substituting hand marked paper ballots (identical to those used as mail ballots) for use in polling places would greatly lessen the counties' extreme workload and financial costs.

The uniform three race ballot that will be used across the state in January makes identical hand marked paper ballots far simpler, easier and less expensive to use than touchscreen BMDs. The Board has the authority to find that the use of touchscreen BMDs is "impracticable" in the January election given the pandemic, the massive complexity and labor resources involved in BMD use, and the time pressures of the unprecedented intense election activities.

BMDs inarguably require exponentially more local resources than hand marked paper ballots as 70,000 BMD components must be programmed, tested in Logic and Accuracy Testing, transported to and from polling places, secured, tested upon poll opening, cleaned, maintained, with social distancing precautions. BMD require extensive poll worker training. The complexity of the system requires Dominion technicians in the polling places and the tabulation rooms. The use of BMDs in January will result in hundreds of thousands of hours of unnecessary poll worker and staff work, when more secure, simple hand marked paper ballots could be used instead at far less cost and risk of error.

Your Emergency Paper Ballot Rule requires that printed hand marked paper ballots be available for at least 10% of a precinct's voters, and that poll workers be trained in their use. 700,000 printed ballots can be used rather than discarded. We suggest that you declare that paper ballots be the primary method of voting, with one BMD per polling place. There is an important additional benefit-- fewer labor hours required for training, testing, and handling the complex BMD equipment reduces the COVID risk for volunteers, staff and poll workers.

It is true that these identical ballots still must be tracked at precinct level, but we believe protocols are in place to minimize the instances of incorrect ballot issuance in early voting locations; even so, a worker's polling place ballot issuance error would only result in wrong precinct coding, not a vote count error.

We are confident that counties would support this streamlining of their procedures during the high-pressure January election and are in need of the resulting financial savings.

There are multiple Election Code provisions that would apply to this immediate set of circumstances that would permit your adoption of hand marked ballots in lieu of the BMD system for January 5. We urge you to adopt the use of hand marked ballots to provide ballot inventory control, the anti-fraud protections, the simplicity and auditability that are simply not available with BMDs.

We are happy to talk with you at any time about any details behind our proposal.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Marks
Executive Director
Coalition for Good Governance
Marilyn@USCGG.org
704 292 9802