

Cobb County to pilot hand-marked paper ballots in November

On August 15, 2019, Judge Amy Totenberg ordered that the Georgia Secretary of State must conduct a pilot in at least one jurisdiction this November using hand-marked paper ballots and scanners. Cobb County has volunteered to conduct this pilot during the municipal elections on November 5, 2019 and during any December 3 runoffs.

All in-person voting conducted at advance voting locations and the sixteen election day polls will be handled in the same way. Austell, Kennesaw, Powder Springs and Smyrna City voters will be given a pre-printed paper ballot at the polling place, similar to the ones currently used for absentee ballots. Voters will hand-mark the ballot in a privacy booth by filling in the ovals next to their selections and then place the ballot into one of the new digital scanners supplied by Dominion Voting Systems. As the ballots exit the scanner they will fall into a secure ballot box, so that they can be used in any recounts or audits after election day. To assist disabled voters who may have difficulty hand-marking a paper ballot, each voting location will also have one of the new electronic ballot marking devices (BMDs). The BMD units have features to assist sight-impaired voters. Ballots printed from the BMDs will also be scanned at the precinct by the voter. Voters in these city elections should find this process to be simple and straightforward as they participate in this pilot.

We're looking forward to having an auditable paper record starting with this November, so that the public can have a high level of confidence in the results. We expect to use hand-marked pre-printed ballots just for this pilot. The Georgia Secretary of State will cover the cost of printing the ballots, so the cities and county will not incur any extra expense. In the March 24, 2020 primary, voters throughout Cobb County will be marking their ballot choices on one of the 2,000 BMD tablets and placing the verified paper printout into the polling place scanner.



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