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Dear County Board of Elections Member:

As a member of your county board of elections, you will be asked within the next month to select voting machines for your county. Regardless of which vendor you choose to use when purchasing these machines, I urge you to purchase optical scan voting machines, rather than direct record machines.

As you probably know, during the last session the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 223. This bill requires all voting systems in the state to either employ a paper ballot or generate a paper record that the voter can use to verify their ballot prior to casting it. The bill also establishes a fund which will provide up to \$12,000 per precinct for use in acquiring these voting machines.

In my judgment, there are several reasons to prefer optical scan machines over direct record machines. First, a paper ballot is typically more user friendly for voters. It is less likely that voters will find voting to be difficult or intimidating when a paper ballot is used. Second, in the wake of Florida 2000, there is more distrust about the electoral process than at any time in my memory. Paper ballots enjoy the confidence of the electorate and will help to alleviate voter concerns. Finally, optical scan machines are less expensive than direct record machines and could be acquired for less than the amount allocated by the General Assembly. In fact, it is likely that your county government would have to appropriate additional funds to acquire direct record machines.

I hope that you and your county board will choose to purchase optical scan machines. I believe that the use of such machines is in the best interest of the electorate and, at this time, makes sound financial sense.

With Best Wishes,

JERRY MEEK
Chair