

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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G.A.B. Approves New Voting Equipment

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board today approved the use of new electronic voting equipment in Wisconsin.

The Board approved Election Systems & Software's (ES&S) Unity 3.2.0.0 Voting System, which is comprised of a polling-place optical scanner for paper ballots, a high-speed optical scanner for centralized paper-ballot counting, and an auto-marking device to assist voters with disabilities cast paper ballots.

In July, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission certified that the ES&S Unity system meets the 2002 Voting System Standards established by the U.S. EAC. State law requires that voting equipment be approved by the G.A.B. before it can be used in Wisconsin.

Prior to its approval, the ES&S voting equipment and materials were reviewed by G.A.B. staff and the Election Administration Council, an advisory panel of local election officials and community advocates. The vendor set up and demonstrated a series of mock elections: a partisan primary, a mock general election with both a presidential and gubernatorial vote, and a mock nonpartisan election combined with a presidential preference vote.

At its November meeting, the Board delayed action on ES&S' application until questions could be answered about the DS200 polling-place optical scanner's method of alerting voters who have overvoted, meaning they voted for more than one candidate in a race, or they crossed party lines in a partisan primary. At the meeting, some members of the public expressed concern that the scanner's information screen was confusing, and that voters with incorrectly-marked ballots might press the wrong button, which could result in their votes not being counted. Staff subsequently determined that the polling-place optical scanners could be programmed to reject all overvotes, which would require a voter to remake the ballot before it could be counted by the scanner. The Board included a requirement that all DS200 scanners be programmed to reject all overvotes automatically.

The ES&S Unity 3.2.0.0 Voting System approved Thursday is not approved for use with earlier ES&S voting systems, meaning municipalities will have to replace all of their equipment if they purchase the new ES&S Unity system.

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The Government Accountability Board is responsible for administration and enforcement of campaign finance, elections, ethics and lobbying laws in Wisconsin. The board is made up of six non-partisan, former judges and is supported by an agency of non-partisan staff members. Additional information about the mission of the Government Accountability Board is available by telephone at **608-266-8005**, by electronic mail at gab@wi.gov, or through the Internet at <http://gab.wi.gov>.