



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Kimball W. Brace: (202) 789-2004
kbrace@electiondataservices.com
Monday, October 2, 2006

Almost 55 Million, or One-Third of the Nation's Voters, Will Face New Voting Equipment in 2006 Election

*84 Million Voters Now Reside in Jurisdictions Using Optical Scan Equipment.
66 Million Are in Jurisdictions Using Electronic (DRE) Equipment.*

Nearly one-third of the nation's registered voters will face new voting equipment this November, compared to the November 2004 election two years ago. Since the turbulent presidential election of 2000 and the resulting enactment of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), jurisdictions with 63% of the nation's registered voters have changed their voting systems, marking the largest shift in voting equipment in this nation's history.

These are just two of the findings of a study released today by Election Data Services Inc., a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm that specializes in election administration and redistricting issues. President Kimball Brace noted that the nearly 30-year old company had been keeping track of voting equipment usage since 1980. The study focused on voting equipment used by county election jurisdictions nationwide. Other findings showed:

- Voting system changes this year were dominated by smaller jurisdictions, where resources to help the conversion are more limited.
- Fifty-six percent (56%) of the counties, with 48.9% of the nation's registered voters, will be using Optical Scan equipment.
- Thirty-six percent (36%) of the counties, with 38.4% of the registered voters, will be using Electronic equipment.
- Early registration data from the primary elections and later shows a decline of nearly 4.3 million voters (a 2.5% drop) from the 2004 general election.
- Caution on use of absentee ballots: History has shown that more errors occur don't have a chance to correct the ballot.

Despite efforts to replace Lever and Punch Card voting equipment by the 2006 elections, some 12 million registered voters reside in counties that still use Lever machines or Punch Card ballots. The study also found that almost half of all registered voters (84 million voters, or 48.9%) now reside in jurisdictions that use Optically Scanned paper ballots. This occurs in nearly 56.2% of the nation's counties, indicating smaller jurisdictions lean towards the use of Optical Scan equipment. Thirty-eight percent (38.4%) of voters (65.9 million) are in jurisdictions that use direct recording Electronic (DRE) voting equipment. Lever machines account for some 6.8% of registered voters; Punch Cards and hand-counted Papers ballots, for about 0.4%.

Voting Equipment for November 2006 Election

Type of Voting Equipment	Counties		Registered Voters	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Punch Cards	13	0.42	414,027	0.24
Lever Machines	62	1.99	11,627,385	6.83
Hand-Counted Paper Ballots	57	1.83	330,912	0.19
Optically Scanned Paper Ballots	1,752	56.19	84,026,447	48.94
Electronic (DRE) Equipment	1,142	36.63	65,959,464	38.42
Mixed (Multiple Types)	92	2.95	9,341,055	5.44
TOTAL	3,118	100.00	171,699,290	100.00

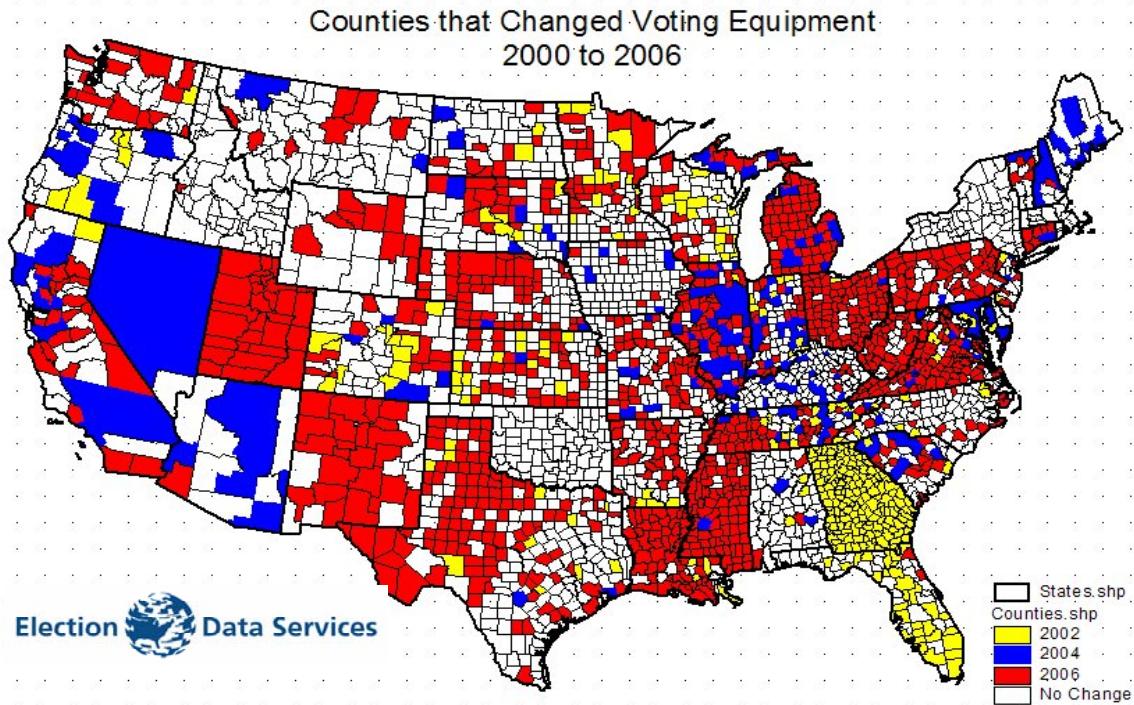
Most of the voters in the jurisdictions still using older equipment are in the state of **New York**, where all 62 counties continue to use Lever machines. In **Connecticut**, where elections are conducted by townships, only 25 of the state's 169 towns made the switch from Lever machines to Optical Scan equipment for the 2006 elections. Punch Cards, on the other hand, have been eliminated, except in thirteen (13) **Idaho** counties.

Voting Equipment Changes

The study found that about 34% of counties have acquired new voting equipment over the past two years, and that about 32% of registered voters in the country will be using new voting equipment this November. The smaller proportion of registered voters to counties is an indication that the purchases for this election have primarily been among smaller-sized jurisdictions. Brace noted that these jurisdictions are less likely to have the financial resources to handle the conversion process. "History shows us that the greatest likelihood of election errors occurs the first time a jurisdiction changes voting systems," Brace said. The following table shows voting equipment changes by counties and their effect on registered voters since November 2000. Those changes are also shown on the map below.

Voting Equipment Changes Since November 2000

Time Period/Election Cycle	Counties		Registered Voters	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Nov–2000 to Nov–2002	388	12.3%	21,388,975	13.5%
Nov–2002 to Nov–2004	324	10.3%	32,811,731	19.2%
Nov–2004 to Nov–2006	1,078	34.2%	54,569,357	31.9%
TOTAL	1,790	56.7%	108,770,063	63.4%



Voting Equipment Changes

The number of jurisdictions using DREs and Optical Scanning devices has, of course, increased with the HAVA goal for the replacement of Lever and Punch Card equipment by 2006. A HAVA requirement, that each voting precinct have at least one accessible voting system, seems also to have reduced the number of jurisdictions using hand-counted Paper ballots.

From November 2000 to November 2006, the number of counties using Optical Scan equipment increased from 1,279 to 1,752, while the number of counties using Electronic equipment increased from 309 to 1,142. Counties using hand-counted Paper ballots *only* declined from 370 in 2000 to only 57 in 2006. But the Mixed category includes counties in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Wisconsin where parts of counties (i.e., townships) still use hand-counted Paper ballots. Other townships in those counties use Optically Scanned paper ballots.

Voting Equipment Changes by Equipment Type — Counties

Type of Voting Equipment	Number of Counties			
	Nov-2000	Nov-2002	Nov-2004	Nov-2006
Punch Cards	572	459	330	13
Lever Machines	434	288	264	62
Hand-Counted Paper Ballots	370	304	298	57
Optically Scanned Paper Ballots	1,279	1,360	1,443	1,752
Electronic (DRE) Equipment	309	547	631	1,142
Mixed (Multiple Types)	149	156	148	92
TOTAL	3,113	3,114	3,114	3,118

More important, perhaps, is to look how the changes have affected registered voters. From November 2000 to November 2006, the number of registered voters who resided in counties using Optical Scan equipment increased from 46.7 million (29.5% of all voters) to 84.0 million (48.9%). The number of voters in counties using Electronic equipment increased from 19.7 million (12.4%) to 65.9 million (38.4%), while the number of voters in counties using hand-counted Paper ballots declined from 2.0 million (1.3%) to 0.3 million (0.2%).

Voting Equipment Changes by Equipment Type — Registered Voters

Type of Voting Equipment	Percent of Registered Voters			
	Nov–2000	Nov–2002	Nov–2004	Nov–2006
Punch Cards	30.7	23.1	12.4	0.2
Lever Machines	17.2	14.9	13.2	6.8
Hand-Counted Paper Ballots	1.3	0.8	0.6	0.2
Optically Scanned Paper Ballots	29.5	31.0	35.6	48.9
Electronic (DRE) Equipment	12.4	22.0	29.2	38.4
Mixed (Multiple Types)	8.9	8.2	8.9	5.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Election Data Services' first voting equipment study in 1980 found that 40.7% of the nation's counties used hand counted Paper ballots. However, because they were primarily smaller jurisdictions, only 10.5% of the registered voters in the country voted on Paper. That same year, 36.7% of the counties used Lever machines, which amounted to 42.9% of the registered voters. Punch Cards could be found in 17.4% of the nation's counties, but because they were mainly the large jurisdictions, they accounted for 29.3% of the registered voters. A chart attached to this release provides a full history of voting equipment usage in the United States. Tables with data for previous election years are also attached.

Voter Registration for 2006

As part of the voting equipment study, Election Data Services also collected updated voter registration totals from all 50 states. Depending on availability, the data was either for the state's primary election or is more current. The study showed that nearly 171.6 million are registered for the upcoming election, but this is down nearly 4.3 million (or 2.5%) from the 2004 general election. Only 10 states showed an increase in registration, while 40 states and the District of Columbia reported declines. The largest percent decrease was the District of Columbia (-19.6%), while the biggest numeric change occurred in California, which lost more than 978,000 registered voters.

History has shown that off-year elections do experience a decline in registration totals from the previous presidential election. However, 2006 is the first election after the merger of county-level registration databases into the statewide systems, as required by HAVA. It is too early to tell whether the decline is part of the normal electoral pattern or whether the decline reflects the clean up of the voter rolls to eliminate duplicate registrations.

Absentee Voting Caution

Both political parties have been pushing absentee balloting this election and previous studies have found greater shares of the total vote coming from absentee and early voting. Brace, however, noted that without checking mechanisms, greater errors are possible with absentee voting. Previous studies have shown error rates up to five times greater when ballots were not checked for errors that include over-voting or stray marks.

About the Study

Election Data Services conducts voting equipment studies before the November general elections every two years. The first study was conducted in 1980 for the Federal Election Commission (FEC); the studies have been conducted independently since 1986. The studies classify voting equipment according to the following categories: (1) Punch Cards, (2) mechanical Lever machines, (3) hand-counted Paper ballots, (4) Optical Scan equipment, (5) Electronic equipment, and (6) Mixed—multiple types of equipment. The primary data resource is a nationwide Election Administration Database that covers some 8,000 county and township-level election jurisdictions. The Voting Equipment section of that database is periodically updated from surveys, news articles, interviews, and inventories compiled by state election directors. With each study, Election Data Services also produces a nationwide map that depicts voting equipment usage at the county level. The map is color-coded by equipment type and includes summary data for counties and registered voters. Maps from previous voting equipment studies dating back to 1980 are compiled on a Voting Equipment History Poster that depicts trends in voting equipment usage.

Election Data Services is a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm that specializes in redistricting, election administration, and the analysis of census and political data. The company provides strategic assistance for voting equipment acquisitions and feasibility studies, needs assessments, and systems requirements analyses for election organizations developing new voter registration systems. Recent studies developed computer network options for statewide voter registration systems and models for integrating local voter registration systems into a statewide network. The firm also conducted the first major study on election administration for the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC). President Brace has served as an expert witness in over 65 redistricting and election administration court cases in the past 30 years, including testimony on voting equipment in Florida's *Bush vs. Gore* court case in 2000.