Aging Voting Equipment Presents Concerns for Future Illinois Elections

- Outdated technology threatens to snarl future efforts for Illinois election administration
- Illinois is badly behind; at least 32 states have discussed plans to replace their voting machines, and 23 have already appropriated money to do so
- ICPR is collaborating with Illinois officials to speed the adoption of updated technology to ensure secure and accurate voting

How significantly did foreign influences affect American elections in 2016? Officials are still sorting it all out, but one thing is clear: American voting technology badly needs an overhaul.

To prevent future disruptions to elections due to aging equipment, Illinois...
should be proactive in assessing and addressing the need for new voting machines. ICPR is working with officials from across the state to begin this process.

The urgency and importance of this technical upgrade cannot be overestimated. On January 6, 2017, then-Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson designated election systems as "critical infrastructure," which refers to systems vital to the security and well-being of the United States. The designation came after the 2016 elections felt the impact of foreign interference. By the time the designation had been made, many states had already begun the process of updating and reinforcing their election equipment.

The need for new equipment has grown as a near-universal reality for election administrators across the country. The federal government provided states with more than $2 billion in 2002 through the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), with the goal of modernizing American voting machines after the 2000 Presidential election. Most states, including Illinois, purchased the majority of their current equipment between 2002 and 2006, meaning many machines are 10-15 years old today.

Many states are rising to the challenge with proactive plans to install new voting technology designed to thwart security breaches. Illinois can take cues from states whose voting equipment upgrades are well underway, and have presented promising models for funding and implementation.
Appropriating Funds in the State Budget
Some states have addressed their aging voting equipment by directly appropriating money from the state budget to purchase new machines. States positioned to do so typically have centralized statewide election authority in their Secretaries of State, who lead the procurement process for new voting machines.

For example, Ohio's Secretary of State, Jon Husted, lobbied the state legislature at the end of 2017 to pass a $118 million capital bill that his office could use to modernize its voting equipment by 2020. New Mexico successfully completed a similar process in 2014, when the Secretary of State's office finished a rollout of over 1,700 machines costing $12 million. Arkansas and Rhode Island are also in the process of using state funds to purchase and distribute new voting equipment.

Establishing Matching Funds for Jurisdictions
Instead of directly purchasing new machines, a few states are pursuing a process by which counties can receive matching funds for the money they spend updating their voting machines. In January 2017, Michigan's State Administrative Board approved up to $82.1 million for the procurement of
new voting equipment. That $82.1 million was pieced together from leftover HAVA funds ($30 million); a state election fund ($10 million); and local funds expected to be approved by counties.

California is trying to split the cost with counties in two ways. First, Governor Jerry Brown included $134 million for new voting equipment in his 2018 budget proposal, which would cover approximately half of the costs for all 58 counties to replace their voting machines. The California legislature also approved $450 million in bonds in 2017, which would create a matching program for counties purchasing new equipment. Neither plan has received final approval yet, as the budget needs legislative approval and the bonds would need to pass a referendum.

Leveraging Grant Programs and Creative Funding Plans

Simply paying for new voting equipment is not the only way to adopt a new election infrastructure. Several states, including Nevada, Missouri, and Minnesota, have established grant programs through their Secretaries of State. These programs allocate funds based on applications from individual election jurisdictions. Additionally, the Secretaries of State in Mississippi and Louisiana dedicate certain fee revenue from their offices to similar grant funds for new voting equipment.
Because of the importance of replacing aging machines, states who choose not to directly fund new equipment have designed programs that make it easier for local jurisdictions to replace their machines. **For instance, in Florida and Kansas, some counties are pooling resources to both request state funding and gain purchasing power as they collectively negotiate for equipment.**

**Planning for Future Elections in Illinois**

Many Illinois election administrators acknowledge the need for new voting equipment in the near future. **The Chicago Board of Election Commissioners has indicated "a pressing need to upgrade voting systems to ensure that equipment is easy for voters and poll workers to use, secure, and capable of enhanced auditing procedures."**

Already, a few election jurisdictions have begun working with their city and county governments to secure funding for updated equipment. However, the conversation around modernizing election infrastructure in Illinois has been largely restricted to the local level, despite the introduction of new statewide reforms such as Election Day Registration and Automatic Voter Registration.

**ICPR is pursuing legislation that would require the state of Illinois to take an inventory and assessment of current voting equipment, and consider the best path forward to address these aging systems.** By acknowledging this issue on a statewide level, Illinois can ensure that future elections will have the security, integrity, and accountability that voters deserve.

**Would you like to be listed as a supporter of this important initiative? Email outreach@ilcampaign.org to receive future updates on how you can be involved.**

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Experts will discuss how reporting policies and procedures can be improved to combat the issue of sexual harassment in Illinois government.

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Featured Speakers

Please join us for a special reception featuring remarks from Sen. Gayle Goldin of Rhode Island, and Kerry Lester, author of *No, My Place: Reflections on Sexual Harassment in Illinois Government and Politics.* Light refreshments will be served.

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Sen. Jil Tracy
(R) Co-Chair, Senate Sexual Harassment Task Force

Sen. Cristina Castro
(D) Member, Legislative Ethics Commission

Hon. Barbara Flynn Currie
(D) House Majority Leader & Chair, House Sexual Harassment Task Force

Tom Homer
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