

No "Rigged Election" Worries in Ohio?

Contrary to recent statements, Ohio voters do not need to be concerned that their ballots will not be counted as the voter intended, because Ohio laws and procedures protect the integrity of the ballot. Three things protect your vote: VVPAT, EAP, and Ohio's "Noah's Ark" system of election administration.

VVPAT. For the last 10 years, Ohio law has required that every ballot must have a Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) a paper record that can be hand-counted and audited. All votes are cast either on (A) a paper ballot that can be scanned electronically or counted by hand or on (B) an electronic touch-screen machine that has a visible paper record that the voter can check to assure that it records the vote as cast and that can be hand-counted in a recount or audit.

EAP. For more than 6 years, based on the settlement of a lawsuit by the League of Women Voters of Ohio, every county board of elections is required to prepare an Election Administration Plan (EAP) before every general election, detailing exactly how they have prepared for every aspect of the election, from personnel to facilities to supplies to security. These are reviewed after each election so that any problems can be corrected before the next election. It also allows the public to see how each county has planned for the election and recommend changes.

Ark. Unlike most other states, Ohio requires that all aspects of elections be administered by a Republican and a Democrat working together – 2-by-2, just like Noah's Ark – making it one of the most secure, if not the most secure system in the nation. This is most evident on Election Day, when each polling place is staffed by an equal number of Democratic and Republican poll workers. But it also applies to the staff of the board of elections all the way to the Director and Deputy Director having to be of opposite political parties and the Board Members must be 2 Republicans and 2 Democrats.

The security of your ballot is assured by this 2-by-2 requirement, because it means one party cannot “rig” the election if both parties have to sign off on everything. At the end of Election Day, the bipartisan poll workers count the votes

in their polling place, sign the results, and post them where the public can read them. Then all the ballots and records are delivered by a Democrat and a Republican together driving them to the board of elections.

The ballots and records are stored in a room that is secured with two locks, one held by the Director and the other by the Deputy Director, so no one can have access to the room without the other. This bipartisan procedure is also followed when the official count takes place 10 days after Election Day, when validated provisional ballots and absentee ballots are included in the final tally, and when there is any recount or audit.

Volunteer. Any Ohio voter who is still concerned about the integrity of the election can check it out by calling (513 632-7000) your county board of elections and volunteering to be a poll worker on Election Day. Go to the training session, then work 15+ hours on Election Day (you will be paid), and observe the protections that are built into the system

VOTE. Here is what you can do. Do not allow anyone to discourage you from voting. Check with your county board of elections (<http://boe.hamilton-co.org/>) that your registration is up to date with your current address, make sure you know the location of your polling place, or vote by mail or early in person at your board of elections. Remember to take your identification on Election Day. The League of Women Voters urges every citizen to make your voice heard - VOTE.

Peg Rosenfield, Elections Specialist, League of Women Voters of Ohio