



July 27, 2016

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

As the November general election approaches, we understand that the State Board of Elections will present a request for additional voting equipment to ensure an efficient and fair election. The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) requests that in receiving and acting on this request, you honor the 15-year precedent that such equipment be a split funding responsibility between the State and counties.

During a briefing before a Senate Committee in June, and more recently before the MACo Legislative Committee in July, the State Board of Elections staff laid out the needs for additional scanners and related equipment across each jurisdiction. These needs have been identified in the last few weeks through an assessment with each county's election board, and even while using cost-effective short-term leases, apparently total several hundred thousand dollars.

At the MACo presentation, staff from the State Board indicated that since there was no funding in the current state budget for additional equipment, the request for further equipment would be borne fully by county governments.

We hope that you and your budget staff can intervene in this pending decision, and submit this item to the Board of Public Works with a combination of state and local funds, consistent with the split in place since 2001.

In 2001, on the heels of the well-documented national election and passage of the federal Help America Vote Act, Maryland passed legislation establishing a statewide uniform voting system, to be certified by the State Board of Elections. (*See HB 1457 of 2001*) This move, ultimately to touch-screen systems, proved very costly to both State and county taxpayers – with ultimate costs exceeding original estimates by tens of millions of dollars. The General Assembly later enacted legislation to move toward the paper ballot-based systems being unveiled for 2016.

In HB 1475, the State clearly created an even split of funding responsibility for voting machines and related systems – from Section 4 of that bill:

[E]ach county shall pay its share of one-half of the State's cost of acquiring and operating the uniform statewide voting systems for voting in polling places and for absentee voting provided for under this Act, including the cost of maintenance, storage, printing of ballots, technical support and programming, related supplies and materials, and software licensing fees.

In the years since its passage, the one-half funding split has been honored for a wide range of equipment purchases, with state budgets including equal amounts of state general funds and special funds (reimbursable by county invoicing). MACo believes that the equipment request before the State clearly merits the same consideration.

MACo as an organization stands ready to work with you, the State Board of Elections, and your Administration to bring about a mutually beneficial solution that reaches the needed level of service and respects county budgets and process. We encourage your support in continuing the longstanding split of funding responsibility for elections, and your support for the pending budget request including appropriate state general funds.

Best regards,

Michael Sanderson
Executive Director
Maryland Association of Counties

CC: David Brinkley, Secretary, Maryland Department of Budget and Management
Linda Lamone, State Administrator of Elections
The Honorable Peter V.R. Franchot, Comptroller of Maryland
The Honorable Nancy K. Kopp, Treasurer of Maryland
The Honorable John Barr, President, Maryland Association of Counties;
Commissioner, Washington County