



# ISSUE: Georgia's Voting Equipment, COVID-19, and Improved Elections

## BACKGROUND

In 2018, the General Assembly passed legislation which replaced Georgia's dated voting equipment. ACCG commends the state for also providing the funding to purchase and deploy new voting machines statewide.

## COUNTY INTEREST

Georgia's counties are ultimately responsible for funding and conducting elections for federal, state and county offices and referendums in the state. Counties have learned valuable lessons from having implemented the state's new voting system; conducting elections during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic; and the effects both have had on proper social distancing, securing adequate polling personnel and locations, effectively administering an expanded absentee ballot voting process, and conducting successful elections overall. This experience has shown that election processes can continue to be improved.

## STATUS

Each legislative session, numerous bills are introduced to alter and/or improve upon the state's evolving election process. ACCG has been very active in making recommendations on such legislation and will continue to do so to ensure an enhanced and fair voting experience that is economically and administratively feasible for counties and local taxpayers. The association also encourages the state to continue working with, and providing funding to, counties to adequately train local election officials and the public on the use of the new technology; keep the equipment's software, warranties and maintenance updated; and ensure the machines' replacement, when necessary.

## TALKING POINTS

Following the recommendations of an [ACCG 2020 Elections Subcommittee](#), the association supports changes in state law to:

- Provide counties the flexibility to reduce the 1/250 ratio (voting machine per registered voter, per precinct) during non-general elections, recognizing that not every election is the same.
- Remove references to old direct-recording electronic (DRE) voting equipment, which is no longer used.
- Synchronize federal and state registration deadlines for Georgia's primary runoff election.
- Allow voters the option to provide a photocopy of their ID with their absentee ballot, as a backup, in order to prevent their absentee ballot from being rejected due to a signature mismatch.
- Allow persons to serve as poll workers outside of the county in which they live or are employed, so long as safeguards are incorporated to help ensure that this does not have the unintended consequence of draining other counties' poll worker recruitment pools.

## TALKING POINTS (CONT.)

- Revise the deadline by which counties must receive/accept absentee ballot applications in order to better ensure that voters' absentee ballots will be processed, mailed, completed and returned by the voter, received and counted.
- Authorize counties to begin scanning absentee ballots on the third Monday prior to an election.
- Allow counties to have the option of employing absentee ballot drop boxes for future elections.
- Authorize counties to establish vote centers on election day.

