

## **Parker County eSlate Installation**

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### **Q: Why are we changing the way we vote? What's wrong with the punchcard system?**

A: The central count optical scan system has served Parker County well, but the federal government passed the Help America Vote Act on October 29, 2002. The Act mandates the availability of voting systems that are accessible to persons with disabilities, including those who are blind, in each polling site by early 2006. Furthermore, it prohibits the use of any system that does not permit the voter to view and change a vote at the polling place.

#### **Q: Why did Parker County choose the eSlate?**

A: The new Parker County eSlate Voting System has the three qualities that are essential in a voting system and to meet the new federal requirements. It is accurate, secure, and very accessible to all voters, even those who are blind, visually impaired or who have limited or no mobility.

#### **Q: How was the eSlate system chosen?**

A: The Parker County Clerk's Office reviewed all systems certified by the Texas Secretary of State. The Parker County Commissioners and the County Clerk believe this system will serve Parker County voters well for many years to come.

#### **Q: How much did the new system cost?**

A: Parker County has signed a contract for \$844,000 to cover the cost of the system. Federal funds dedicated to voting system replacement under the Help America Vote Act will reimburse the County for \$562,000 of that. This price includes all voting equipment and software for in-person voting and a new system for absentee voters. Hart will assist with implementation, long-term support, maintenance services, assistance with voter outreach and education, and comprehensive training for election staff and all poll workers.

#### **Q: Will voters have a chance to try out the new system before they vote on it?**

A: Yes. Voters will have a chance to take the new equipment for a test spin. The equipment will be available daily at the County Clerk's Office, located on the northwest corner across from the courthouse in Weatherford for those wanting to come try it out. Additionally, groups may contact County Clerk's Office to request a presentation for a meeting having at least 25 or more in attendance or to check out a "How to Vote Using the eSlate" video. You may also take the eSlate for a spin by going to <http://www.hartintercivic.com/flashdemo/eslatecontainer.html> or access the video or a slideshow about using the new system through our web site, <http://www.ParkerVotes.com>.

#### **Q: Is the new system based on a touch screen, like some ATMs?**

A: The voter uses a rotary wheel to navigate through the ballot and select his or her vote. This interface was chosen because it is more accurate and durable than touch screen systems, and voters with limited or no vision also find the system very easy to use. It also costs less to store and maintain, thus lowering the cost of the system over the life of its use.

#### **Q: I have never been able to vote without someone helping me. Will someone be there to help me with this new system?**

A: Yes. Someone will be there to help you, but the system is designed to help you vote without assistance. There is an audio ballot reader that can help if you have problems with your eyesight or difficulties reading the ballot for other reasons, and a special **HELP** button is available if you have a question.

**Q: How can we sure this system is working as it should be?**

A: Before any vote is cast, there is a process of testing the machines to be sure they are working as expected. This process, known as logic and accuracy testing, allows election officials to be sure votes are counted as they are cast.

**Q: How do I know that the way the electronic voting system recorded my vote is the same way I intended to cast my vote?**

A: After you have voted in the last contest on the ballot, a screen will appear listing all the choices you have made, and it will let you know if you missed voting in any race. Although you may change your selections at any time, you may also make corrections from the ballot summary screen to make sure your votes are counted the way you want them to be. When you are finished reviewing your ballot, press the **CAST BALLOT** button to put your ballot into the electronic ballot box.

**Q: Does the system have a paper trail?**

A: Yes. Following each election, election officials can print all cast vote records to paper should they chose to do so. At this time, however, the State of Texas does not require a voter verifiable paper trail that can be printed and viewed by the voter at the polling place. Should Texas lawmakers ever pass a law mandating such a requirement, Parker County, like all Texas jurisdictions, will comply. Our voting system will support this capacity should it be required.

Also know that election officials have always and will always ensure votes are recorded correctly, by testing the voting system programming and validating it before and after the election – in the presence of witnesses – to ensure that votes are counted and reported as they are cast, through a process known as logic and accuracy testing. There are many other security features – both in process and in equipment and software – built into the process.

**Q: What if a recount is necessary?**

A: If necessary, the new system can provide election officials with a paper Cast Vote Record. This Cast Vote Record provides a means of recounting votes and ensuring that results are accurate. If preferred, officials can compare the vote totals in the three separate vote storage locations to ensure they match.

**Q: How do I know my votes are private and that there is not a database in the computer somewhere that records how I have voted?**

A: There is no way for the system to tie your vote to you. When you vote, there is no identifying information recorded with your vote. You will be given a randomly generated four-digit access code tied that tells the eSlate which ballot races you should receive based on your precinct number. But the access code is not associated with your name. Therefore, it is impossible to trace your vote.

**Q: What if I change my mind or make a mistake after I have pressed the **ENTER** button?**

A: A voter can change any vote at any time until the **CAST BALLOT** button is pressed and you see the American flag waving on the screen. To change a vote, just use the wheel to highlight the candidate you want to vote for and then press the **ENTER** button. The earlier vote is erased, and the new vote is recorded.

**Q: What if I want to skip a contest?**

A: Then you may do so. It is your decision and right to choose not to vote in any race. Just use the wheel to scroll past the race you want to skip. After you have voted in the last contest on the ballot, a ballot summary screen will appear listing all the choices you have made and will let you know if you missed voting in any race. You will see a list of the votes you have cast, and any skipped races will be noted with *No Selection* highlighted in red. You can either go back and vote in the skipped race, or press the **CAST BALLOT** button to submit your ballot with no votes for the races in which you intend no vote.

**Q: What if I accidentally vote twice in a race? Will my vote be discarded?**

A: The system will not let you vote twice unless the contest is a “vote for two.” It is programmed to prevent “overvoting,” the term for when someone accidentally selects more than the permitted number of votes in a race. If you change your mind and select a different choice, the system automatically removes your former selection and marks your new one. If you want to erase your vote and make no other selection, just highlight your current selection and press **ENTER** to de-select that choice.

**Q: How do I know that my vote has been cast and counted?**

A: Whenever a voter presses the **CAST BALLOT** button and the waving American flag appears, the vote is cast and counted.

**Q: If the power fails or if there is some other computer failure will my vote be lost?**

A: No. Your vote cannot be lost once you have pressed **CAST BALLOT** and see the waving American flag. Your votes are stored in three separate places with non-volatile memory, and all data is protected and cannot be lost in the unlikely event that the system fails. The system also has a battery back-up that immediately engages if an electrical failure should occur. The batteries last for 18 hours of continuous use.

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