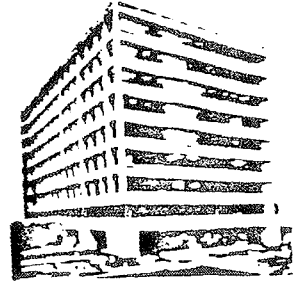




*Anita Rodeheaver*  
COUNTY CLERK  
HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

408



August 21, 1981

Honorable County Judge & Commissioners' Court  
Harris County, Texas  
Administration Building  
Houston, Texas 77002

Gentlemen:

The following report and recommendation is a result of a study made with reference to the voting system presently in use in Harris County.

Working with Mr. Gary Greenhalgh, Director of the Clearing House, Federal Election Commission, Washington, D. C., we visited four counties in California (Los Angeles; Orange, San Diego and Riverside).

There are presently five manufacturers of electronic voting systems:

- (1) Data Vote - Not certified for use in Texas.
- (2) AVM - Certification authorized, but not presently in use in Texas. Electronic — sold as absentee system only and not proven.
- (3) Val Tec - Mark sense would require multiple cards.
- (4) Air Mac - Mark sense would require multiple cards.
- (5) CES - This system is presently used in 42 states and 35 counties in Texas. Has a proven record of 12 years of systems support serving 1,290 precincts representing 1,773,000 registered voters in Texas in the November 1980 General Election.

I have seen and studied each system. As noted above, one system has not been approved for use in Texas. Two would require the use of multiple cards and were actually designed for counties with a registration of 250,000 or less.

Having seen the California systems, I then traveled to Chicago. Both the city of Chicago and Cook County use electronic voting with precinct ballot counters rather than a central counting system. All elections are held separately, with each entity having its own elections division, even though Chicago is the county seat of Cook County.

In each of the places we visited we were met with the same situation we now face in Harris County, an outgrowth of the system in use. Due to ballot size if we can make the 1982 election with our present system, which I do not believe we can, there is no way we will be able to handle the 1984 election.

We have been using Computer Elections System votomatic voting in Harris County since 1972 for absentee voting; therefore, I do not feel we are facing quite the traumatic change that we saw in some of the other counties.

From the studies which have been furnished to me, it has been proven both on the West Coast, in Maryland, Detroit, and in Cook County that punch card voting has increased voter participation considerably. More devices are available in less space, thereby eliminating lines. It has further been proven that election costs have been greatly reduced -- storage and delivery, personnel and printing.

For each county wide election it has been estimated that approximately \$70,000 will be saved in machine delivery and between \$100,000 and \$150,000 in printing costs. One of the major factors to Harris County would be the immediate savings to Harris County in excess of \$80,000, including utilities, per year for warehouse space now leased, plus, the use of present county owned warehouses for other purposes. The Canino Road warehouse would provide adequate space for all equipment and assembly materials necessary. Approximately \$300,000 will be required for remodeling of the Canino Road warehouse. This will include an approximate 13,000 square foot area of controlled temperature (heat and air), 1400 metal pallets with permanent tie-downs for transporting votomatics, gravity fed conveyors for assembly and shelving.

Even though we are facing a major change and a lot of money I can, in good faith, make only the following recommendations to you for your consideration:

1. The Shoup voting machines should be sold, if possible, and Harris County be converted totally to electronic voting beginning with the 1982 Primaries. This would give some revenue to Harris County as opposed to a trade-in.
2. With the use of a central counting system consideration must be given to the method by which entities holding their own elections, i.e. school districts, water districts, incorporated cities, would tabulate their elections. It is recommended that 35 precinct ballot counters be included to be leased by the entities for tabulation of their own elections.
3. That consideration be given to the present equipment, 800 votomatics, 2 ballot tabulators, ballot card assembly, punches and other equipment already owned by Harris County.

Considering the electronic voting equipment Harris County presently owns, it is recommended that the Court authorize the addition of sufficient votomatics, card readers, Data General ballot tabulators and other related necessary equipment be added to the present system both for use in the County Clerk's

August 18, 1981

Office and the Voting Machine Department. The cost quoted makes allowances for at least 10 years of continued growth at the present rate. Due to the time factor involved, it is imperative that action on this request be taken immediately and that the equipment be acquired either by purchase or on a lease purchase agreement.

The approximate cost of this conversion will be \$2,995,000. The payment of which would only be made as equipment is delivered, some of which would be prior to the end of this year, the rest of which would be after January, 1982. This cost and recommendation is based on the use of a central counting system with tabulation done in the County Clerk's Office giving a completely controlled environment for the security of the ballot on all elections held by the county and with precinct ballot counters leased by the entities in connections with their elections. This will enable us to continue the efficient election return operation we presently have.

Respectfully submitted.

Very truly yours,



(Mrs.) Anita Rodeheaver  
County Clerk, Harris County, Texas

AR:vvp

cc: Joe F. Flack, County Auditor  
C. A. Zachry, Purchasing Agent