



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW TECHNOLOGY STREAMLINES ELECTION DAY PROCESS

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County voters will encounter new technology when heading to the polls this Primary Election Day.

The Fayette County Election Bureau recently leased 110 KNOWiNK Total Vote Poll Pads using grant funds received from Pennsylvania Act 88. The touch-screen iPad tablets use special KNOWiNK software to replace the need for traditional poll books.

Election Bureau Director Marybeth Kuznik said the technology, which is currently used in more than 1,700 jurisdictions across 36 states, will make the Election Day process much smoother for both poll workers and voters.

“Three different groups benefit from having the Poll Pads. It will be easier for our poll workers to check in voters; easier for voters to check their registration and ensure their information is up to date; and easier for our office staff to complete their records after Election Day,” Kuznik said. “They’re actually really fun to use and sign in with. We’re excited for everyone to try them out next week.”

Upon arriving at the polls, voters will have their registration information pulled from the county’s electronic database. Once their identity is confirmed, voters will receive a printed receipt that they can then present to a poll worker in exchange for their ballot. Poll workers then keep those receipts, providing election officials with an additional record of all who cast their ballots in person.

The Poll Pads also allow poll workers to identify inactive voters; make the provisional ballot process easier; direct voters to the correct polling place, if needed; and much more.

Kuznik said it’s important for constituents to know that the Poll Pads are not connected to the internet, but they are connected to each other via database. The Poll Pads will also eliminate the need for larger precincts to alphabetically divide voters into multiple check-in lines, she added.

“The Poll Pads can be flipped around at any time for the voter to see the screen and sign for their receipt. Everything on the screen is big and visible, so they can check for accuracy,” she said. “If you’ve ever used a tablet or smart phone or gone to a coffee shop or other business where you’ve checked out on an electronic kiosk, it’s an extremely similar experience.”

Each of Fayette County’s 77 precincts will receive at least one Poll Pad. Additionally, all precincts will still have a traditional pollbook on hand for emergency backup use only.

“Other than the poll worker looking up their names electronically, the voter’s experience will be very much the same as using the paper poll book,” Kuznik said. “This is our first Election using the Poll Pads, so it might be a little slow at first, but it will still be faster than using the poll books.”

KNOWiNK prepared Fayette County to begin using the Poll Pads earlier this year by hosting “Train the Trainer” classes for election bureau employees. Employees then added the Poll Pad training to their traditional poll worker training classes, and all precincts are now prepared to use the technology Tuesday.

“I was a poll worker myself for over 25 years and one of the most tedious jobs was searching through the poll book to find voters,” Kuznik said. “This new process will make things much easier for everyone.”

Those voting via mail-in or absentee ballot will also indirectly benefit from new technology housed at the Fayette County Election Bureau. State Act 88 grant funds were also recently used to purchase an Agilis Falcon mechanical ballot sorter from Runbeck Election Services.

All mail-in and absentee ballots returned to the election bureau are loaded into the machine and electronically scanned, before being sorted into groups that make it easier for election officials to process and place them with the correct precinct.

“It’s really streamlined our process for sorting mail-in and absentee ballots. It’s a lot faster and more accurate than doing it by hand, as we’ve done in the past,” Kuznik said. “When the ballots are opened on Election Day, our workers will know they’re in the right precinct and ready to be counted.”

The Agilis Falcon ballot sorter also keeps photographic records of every ballot scanned.

This year, 7,024 mail-in and absentee ballots were mailed to voters who applied to receive them. Kuznik said more than 4,000 ballots were returned and sorted by end-of-business Monday.

All mail-in and absentee ballots must arrive at the Election Bureau by 8 p.m. May 16. Voters may also drop ballots off at the Fayette County Election Bureau, 2 West Main St., Suite 111 in Uniontown while the polls are open – from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. – on Election Day.

Voters must drop off their own ballot and cannot deliver another person’s ballot without filling out the required paperwork for applicable exceptions. Kuznik said voters who “change their mind” after receiving a mail-in or absentee ballot can always go to the polls and vote in person.

To do so, the voter should bring their entire mail-in or absentee ballot, including the envelopes that come with it, to their polling place and surrender everything to the Judge of Elections. Voters who forget to bring all these materials with them will be able to vote via Provisional Ballot.

Kuznik said the election bureau is still seeking poll workers to serve as judges of elections, inspectors of elections and election clerks. To be appointed, poll workers must be registered voters in Fayette County and attend poll worker training.

“This is a good time to get involved and learn about the election process, especially for those interested in being part of the big, presidential election in 2024,” Kuznik said.

Anyone interested in serving should contact the Fayette County Election Bureau at 724-430-1289.

For downloadable election forms and much more, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org/230/Election-Bureau or the state's website, www.vote.pa.gov.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettcountypa.org.

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