

UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY:

Paper Ballots and Ballot Marking Devices vs. the ExpressVote XL

All voters should be able to vote privately and independently, including voters with a wide variety of disabilities and challenges. No single voting method now exists that can meet all accessibility needs. *Universal accessibility* means allowing voters to choose the method that is most accessible for them. Having both hand-marked paper ballots and one ballot marking device in every division is more universally accessible.

- Better for the many voters who are less comfortable with technology
- Voters with language and reading challenges can take their time at private booths
- More accessible for voters with screen sensitivities (e.g., concussions, autism)
- Deaf and elderly voters may prefer paper
- More private and accessible for voters who use wheelchairs
- Shorter lines are better for voters with physical limitations

The [Help America Vote Act](#) requires *equity*, not *equality*. All citizens don't have to vote the same way, but all citizens must be able to vote. For a good illustration of the difference between equality and equity, see <http://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity>.

Providing touchscreens for all voters would not enfranchise more voters than hand-marked paper ballots with a ballot marking device in each polling place. It would disenfranchise and harm many voters — voters both with and without disabilities.

The ExpressVote XL is even less accessible to voters with disabilities than other touchscreens. The Pennsylvania [certification report](#) lists major accessibility flaws that make it an unacceptable choice for voters with vision, hearing, cognitive, and mobility challenges. The ExpressVote XL received harsher reviews from the accessibility test group than any other voting machine. Most concerning: None of the participants were able to verify their paper ballot and every participant had at least one problem. Examples:

Can't verify ballots: “None of the participants were able to verify their paper ballot on the XL.”

Inconsistent navigation and poor instructions: “Every participant had at least one problem, despite relatively high election knowledge and digital experience, suggesting that the issue would be more severe for voters without these personal resources to help them understand what it happening.”

Confusing selection/deselection when using straight party voting: “In some cases, this led voters to cast a ballot without knowing all of the candidates that had been selected.”

Does not read party affiliations in the audio ballot: “This made it impossible to complete tasks based on party, including confirming straight party selections.”

Blind participants were not sure what was happening during the ballot printing process: “They did not know where the ballot was or what to do next.”

Many problems with the screen design: “On the XL, selecting “Large Text” changes the XL screen to a contest-by-contest display, but does not make the text size very much larger. This forces low vision users who simply need slightly larger text into using the audio ballot. One participant with very low vision put his face so close to the screen that he accidentally made selections with his nose.”