



**Remarks for Senate State Government  
Committee on SB 48  
Tuesday, March 26, 2019**

**by Joe Kantz,  
Chairman of the Snyder County Board of Commissioners and  
Co-Chair of the CCAP Elections Reform Committee**

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Senators and Distinguished Guests,

Good morning. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this important discussion today. For many years, County Commissioners have been doing an incredible job of running Pennsylvania's elections for municipal, county, state and federal elections. I would argue that this is one of the most important responsibilities with which County Commissioners are tasked. In fact, I believe this is the reason the funding for new elections equipment is counties' number one priority this year.

When Governor Wolf's media release came out last April telling counties they would need to replace their elections equipment by the primary of 2020, many red flags went up. Why would we try to force this in a presidential primary? What is wrong with our current machines? Who is going to pay for it? These and many other questions became very real. Our finance directors and chief clerks began to set aside other important, necessary projects in order to come up with hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars to pay for this unfunded mandate.

You see, county commissioners work hard to balance multi-million dollar budgets every year, and in most cases, with little to no discretionary funds. We manage multiple departments and hundreds, even thousands, of county employees. Every time a new law is passed that deals with county government in our Commonwealth, it changes the way we are required to do business. The issue of new elections equipment is no different.

While I share the Governor's desire for a voter-verifiable, paper ballot, I know there is nothing wrong with our current voting system. In Snyder County and in at least 12 other counties in Pennsylvania, we already have a voter-verifiable paper trail. We also have machines that cannot be hacked. In Pennsylvania all certified voting systems, including the election management system and vote-tallying components, are never connected to or permitted on internet-facing networks. The Friday after each election, county election boards are required to do an audit to assure the accuracy of our voting machines. In my twelve years as Commissioner, Snyder County's hand count audit has always confirmed our machines' results 100% of the time. For this reason, I have complete confidence in our current equipment.

Still, my county, and many others find ourselves in the unfortunate position of having to borrow money we don't have to buy machines we shouldn't need in order to meet criteria in which we had no input. But as usual, we will find a way to make things happen in order to have elections equipment that is certified by the Department of State.

In order to help prevent a similar massive, unfunded mandate from happening in the future and to take away any potential for such a perceived political maneuver, I feel SB 48 is a great way to start to make a positive change. Respectfully, I would like to make one suggestion as well. I would suggest that this potential legislation include a provision that would require the Secretary of the Commonwealth to give counties no less than five years notice when any equipment is going to be decertified. Such advance notice would not only give the Voting System Decertification Commission time to study, plan, and prepare for such a replacement, but would also give the legislature and counties time to budget and find funding for such a replacement.

In the meantime, counties are faced with estimated replacement costs of \$150 million in the next 12 months, and the Governor's budget proposal suggests \$15 million this year. This is not sufficient to keep counties from having to raise property taxes and burden county tax payers with millions of dollars of debt. I implore you all to please help counties find more money to pay for what is arguably the most important responsibility of counties, the running of a secure election.

I thank you for the time to share my thoughts on this very important topic, and I welcome any questions you may have.