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BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Electronic Poll Books Debut at Early Vote Center

(Columbus) A pilot project with a goal of saving time, money and paper is underway at the Franklin County Board of Elections. Three companies, Election Systems and Software of Omaha, Neb., and two St. Louis, Mo. firms, Election Administrators and KNOiNK, are asking Franklin County to replace paper poll books with their products -computer tablets known as electronic or e-poll books.

Poll workers at the early vote center are using ten iPADS supplied byKNOiNK this week and will work with products from the other companies in the weeks that follow.

The state budget has made $12.7 million available for counties to purchase e-poll books and will cover part of the cost based on the number of voters registered. The board of elections has received bids to buy 1,200 e-poll books and could receive as much as $1.3 million in state money to help pay for them. Franklin County is spending roughly $60,000 on paper poll books in countywide elections.

"We think e-poll books will make voter check-ins faster and more accurate and will pay for themselves over time by cutting what we spend on personnel and paper," board of elections Director Bill Anthony said. Anthony added that the technology has been certified by the Ohio Secretary of State and meets the most stringent federal standards for computer security.

"We'll be going to the county commissioners in the near future to request the money and select a vendor for this. Our share, once the state subsidy is applied, should make the final cost affordable," added Deputy Director David Payne.

The electronic version promises to modernize elections in a number of ways. Poll workers would not need to search through reams of paper to find a voter's registration. They could scan a driver's license or type a name to instantly search registration records in the county or statewide. The records would tell them if someone was eligible to vote or where to send them if they showed up in the wrong precinct. E-poll books also would eliminate the need to print and scan the paper poll books after each election to show who voted. The job takes weeks and requires dozens of part-time employees in Franklin County. The process could be reduced to hours with e-poll books.

Three e-poll books will be used in Franklin County on Election Day. Their locations will have traditional poll books as a backup. Officials hope to have the technology ready for every polling place for the 2016 presidential election.

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