

PRESS RELEASE

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UTAHNS CAST A DIFFERENT KIND OF BALLOT

It's not an election day, yet many Utahns filled the State Capitol to cast ballots on electronic voting machines. They were participating in Lieutenant Governor Olene S. Walker's Voting Systems Vendor Show, an interactive display of the high-tech systems that will replace the punch card, a system currently used by 23 of Utah's 29 counties, by 2006.

"We're not just playing with equipment," says the Lieutenant Governor, who is the State's chief elections officer, "We're making an historical decision. The changeover from punch card to electronic voting equipment is going to affect every voter in the state. It's important for everyone to become involved in the decision-making process."

The voters were joined by legislators, county and municipal clerks, and advocates for voters with disabilities, all of whom visited the show to test equipment and voice their opinions.

"This is an exciting time," said Bill Gibson, Director of Utah Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, who is also a member of the State Plan Committee on Election Reform. "For some blind voters, this will mean casting a ballot without assistance for the first time in their life. That's something that many people might take for granted, but for us it's monumental."

The Vendor Show was organized by Walker in response to the Help America Vote Act. Passed by Congress in 2002, the reform package outlines measures to improve voting systems, replace punch card ballots, educate voters, and develop a statewide voter registration database. If fully funded, offers to pay states up to \$4,000 for each punch card precinct replaced. There are 1900 precincts in Utah.