



**THE VOTE CENTER DILEMMA:
WHY MOVING FROM VOTE CENTERS TO PRECINCT VOTING IS BEST IF YOU CARE ABOUT
SAFE, SECURE, TRANSPARENT AND TRUSTWORTHY ELECTIONS
Third in a series**

In the previous installments, we looked at the across-the-board consumer loss of confidence from recent elections and why voters now want hand-marked paper ballots to blunt the risks of voting machines and various election processes. [Here](#) and [here](#). Both are tied to the fact that we vote in vote centers.

So, what are vote centers, how are they different from precincts and why should we be concerned?

In 2019, the Tennessee General Assembly began a pilot for “[convenience vote center voting](#),” where fewer vote centers would replace traditional precincts. That meant some structural differences in poll processes and voters could vote in any vote center in the county. Vote centers were meant to help election officials reduce costs. But after two years in this experiment, we’ve tracked a number of risky sacrifices that voters were never told about when the state forced us into vote centers.

CONVENIENCE has NOT equaled SECURITY or saved money.

Until 2020, we voted in precincts. The advantages included a small, finite number of voters that could vote in that location, with usually a unified, single ballot, [poll workers that knew you](#) and could recognize if someone was voting out of place, and no internet required as the registration process was all on paper. That process had worked perfectly for decades -- no problems, no glitches, no miscounts, no citizens crying out for another alternative.

But by the spring of 2020, Williamson and several other counties had been approved to test the vote center concept. By March 3, 2020, and with little fanfare or education, citizens were voting in vote centers. Voters were never asked if they wanted to make that change. [Here’s why they’ve proven to be a mistake.](#)

First, this move meant the number of county **voting locations would be drastically reduced**. Williamson County went from 43 precinct locations to 25 vote centers, 42% fewer voting locations. At the same time, our population was growing 12% and voter registrations increasing 19%.

You wonder why we’re seeing longer voting lines? And, in some cases, wait times have increased hours, forcing some voters to leave the polling place because they ran out of time to vote? That’s one consequence of vote centers... disenfranchisement. Three new planned vote centers will not solve this problem.

Second, those **vote centers have to have an internet connection** brought into each and every vote center to connect with the Election Office so voters can’t hop from center to center. [An electronic connection that’s a tempting target for hackers.](#)

Third, the Williamson County Election Commission (WCEC) says the internet connection is protected by a VPN, but today **VPNs are exceptionally weak, as studies affirm**. Meanwhile, companies are spending millions to [protect their data by any means, yet they're being hacked almost daily](#).

Fourth, recall our earlier documentation of **the vulnerabilities of machines versus hackers?** [Here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here](#) and [here](#), to document a few. The machines are bad enough that last week a federal judge ordered a January [trial of Georgia's voting system](#), which is [almost identical to the ES&S system we use now](#).

Fifth, **vote centers were supposed to increase voting participation, but [data from the Tennessee Secretary of State shows that hasn't happened](#)**. Check out the November election of 2004 in Williamson County. That was the highest voter participation election since 2000. [And the county voted in precincts!](#) Every other election before and since has had lower turnout.

When they could easily move us back to precinct voting to accommodate hand-marked paper ballots (HMPBs), the WCEC [refuses to do so, keeping us in vote centers](#).

Sixth, **HMPBs won't work in a vote center environment** because if hand-marked paper ballots are ADDED and vote centers RETAINED, all 25 centers in the county will need to have enough paper ballots on hand to address all races from throughout the county. That could mean supplies of 100 or more HMPBs in each center. A chain-of-custody and cost nightmare. WCEC's solution? Bring in an entirely new machine system -- ballot-on-demand machines -- to print ballots at each vote center. At a cost of \$500,000+. Yikes!

If instead we can move back to precinct voting, which is how we voted three short years ago, we could easily add more [secure hand-marked paper ballots](#) as an option since each precinct would likely have only one ballot. Meaning a finite, manageable number of ballots for a finite, manageable number of precinct voters. Plus, more convenience since a voter's wait time would be greatly reduced as double the number of privacy voting booths can better ensure voter throughput. And no ballot-on-demand nor \$500,000+.

Earlier in 2023 [Maury County proved this can easily be done](#).

Vote center voting has far more risks than precinct voting. So, why are we forced to continue it? After our three-year experiment, it's time to admit that vote centers haven't saved WCEC money, increased voter turnout, lessened crowds, saved voters time, offset vulnerable machines, added vote security or made it easy to add in hand-marked paper ballots. Just the opposite.

Next, we'll look at the myth of "anywhere voting" and how CONVENIENCE is far less SECURE than we were led to believe.

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