



**THE VOTE CENTER DILEMMA:  
HERE'S HOPING COUNTY AND STATE LEADERS CAN NOW GIVE US SAFER, MORE SECURE ELECTIONS  
Last in a series**

In this series we've presented some of the research that our [group](#) has pursued over the last several years. This includes issues about the use of voting machines and various processes that are anything but transparent or conducive to truly safe, secure elections.

Specifically, given the fact that we vote in vote centers, one truth is abundant. If we don't return to precinct voting – which we did up until three short years ago – we will [never be able to bring in hand-marked paper ballots \(HMPBs\)](#) to give voters greater trust into how their votes are cast and counted... without adding an entirely new machine system at a cost of approximately one-half million dollars.

Yes, another machine needed to correct process problems created by the original machines.

So, what are some indisputable **truths** we've learned?

The **voting machines on which we vote are vulnerable** [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), as a start. The problem continues today ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). And **no one is allowed unfettered access to inspect these machines** for [nefarious parts](#).

**Yet, the Williamson County Election Commission continues to force us to use these machines.** Why? Talk about being deaf to the customer! Isn't our vote important? What other proof do we need of machine vulnerabilities but the [October 2021 Franklin municipal election](#) where seven of 19 tabulators stopped counting votes on the tabulator tape, ultimately leading the county to get rid of those machines? And placing us right back in a different brand of machine that is [just as bad as the one they got rid of](#)?

**Ballot marking devices are just as dangerous.** [Here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

To blunt the adverse effect of machines, **voters want hand-marked paper ballots as a safer option** on which to vote. In the US, more than [68% of voters vote on hand-marked paper ballots](#). Yet with the election commission's zealous defense earlier this summer of ballot marking devices and their refusal to give HMPBs a try, it makes us wonder about the validity and seriousness of their offer to pursue a HMPB feasibility study as part of their approved resolution.

**The only focus of their initial scope of work for that study?** [Bringing in ballot-on-demand machines](#). No other option – including moving to precinct voting -- has been discussed at a meeting.

**Since no study has begun six months after gaining County Commission approval**, this may have been a carrot to entice County Commissioners to allow the election commission to purchase machines. Sixteen County Commissioners took the bait and there appears to be no rush by the election commission to implement the study for the 2024 presidential election.

As we profiled in several series installments, the machines and their costs could be avoided and **HMPBs easily brought into Williamson County if we simply moved back to precinct voting**. Because in most cases that means only one ballot would probably be needed per precinct per election, which eliminates the need to print a myriad of ballots in a vote center on a ballot-on-demand machine.

**Then there are the problems with vote centers themselves.**

They **require an internet connection**, which is a [tempting target for hackers](#).

The [VPNs don't adequately protect those connections](#). Companies today are spending far more money protecting their data than Williamson County is protecting our votes. And yet they're [being hacked](#).

Vote centers **demand machines** such as ballot marking devices, which encase voter selections [in a ballot bar code](#), which voters can't read to verify their choices. So, voter intent can't truly be discerned.

Vote centers have **forced Williamson Countians to vote in far fewer voting locations**. 42% fewer, in fact. Creating longer voting lines that have increased wait times and driven some voters away from voting. Is it possible that the intended outcome of moving voters to fewer voting locations -- which some voters feel is a time suck -- will allow the commission to easily convince citizens to approve mail-in voting?

Recall that the 2005 Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform affirmed mail-in voting was [the riskiest method of voting, practically inviting vote fraud](#).

**Vote centers have not increased voter participation** as they promised to do. This [data from the Tennessee Secretary of State](#) shows that the **highest turnout occurred when we voted in precincts**. Every other election before and since has had lower turnout.

**Precincts are safer because they're smaller and more secure** where workers are more likely to know [if someone is voting that shouldn't be voting](#). Plus, there's a finite number of voters, so a finite number of ballots will be needed in each precinct. Again, negating the need for ballot-on-demand machines.

Finally, **most people prefer the security** of knowing their ballot is counted as cast in precincts, versus the uncertainties in a "convenient" vote center setting.

There is no question that there can be much improvement in how we vote. Starting with removing [vulnerable machines](#) from our voting process, returning us to precinct voting vs. [vote center voting](#), and bringing in [hand-marked paper ballots](#). Doing so will return overwhelming citizen trust to the process of how we elect our leaders in Williamson County, Tennessee and America.

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[Tennessee Voters for Election Integrity](#)

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