

## **TOWN OF SOUTHTON; REGISTRARS OF VOTERS**

### **SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE: AVANTE ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES**

The Town of Southington made the decision to participate in a pilot program initiated by the Secretary of the State with the approval of the Connecticut Legislature. Program would involve using Electronic Voting Machines in 2 of our polling locations during the 2003 Municipal Election. Our local election is complicated by multi-candidate positions i.e. any 6 out of 12 candidates for Town Council etc. There are no single candidate offices on the ballot.

Southington was paired up with Avante Voting Machines by the Secretary of the State in September of 2003. We thought we drew the short straw as most of the attention seemed to be on the full face voting machine. As it turned out we believe we got the best of the deal. The machines are very portable, reliable and even with the printer making it a 2 piece unit it can easily be carried by the average person.

We were led to believe the elderly voters were going to have the most problems with voting on the machines so we scheduled 2 morning demonstrations in our Calendar House and had 100 plus senior citizens vote on the machines. Because we were anxious to determine what problems voters would face we let the seniors vote without assistance just outlining the general operation of the machine. To a person they had no trouble using the machines and loved them. Comments like "great", "it's about time", "love them", "easy to use" were the order of the day. We held demonstrations in an over 55 condo village with the same result. Demonstrations were held in both schools that serve as the polling places we used, at our local Apple Harvest Festival and daily in our offices. Reception of the machines was favorable almost to a person.

A common misconception is that it takes "computer savvy" to operate the machines. This is far from accurate. All it takes is an ability to follow simple instructions.

For our poll workers we held 4 training sessions on the opening and closing of the machines and the general procedures for polling operations on Election Day as it related to the electronic voting machines. We believe this was sufficient to properly train them. Additional classes were held for their normal poll training.

At every training session and public demonstration, except our daily in office demos, Avante personnel were present to oversee the operation.

The public demonstrations gave us a chance to answer questions on registration and voting procedures. We garnered much publicity as a result of this and it helped with things like address changes etc by giving the public an awareness that an election was coming up (even though one comes up each year).

Avante personnel were on hand when we locked down the machines (Registrars test voted the machines) and the night before the election to assist in setting up the polling places as well as on Election Day at the polling places.

At the polls the machines and printers performed flawlessly. We had a demonstration unit as voters came in as well as a video on the operation of the machines. We also had a card activator (to encrypt the cards and give them to each voter). At the exit we had a card collector (voters had no choice but to go by him) who collected the cards and returned them to the activator to be recycled. Voting proceeded smoothly with no delays.

Opening and closing the polls went very smoothly even though we had 3 times the normal amount of machines. We read the results but it was not necessary to write them down on our Moderators Tally Sheet as we could staple the printed results from each machine on the sheet for our permanent record. We had a recount and it was not necessary to do anything with the electronic machines as the printed tally results were acceptable.

The upshot is that the election went smoothly with normal problems not attributable to the electronic machines. The main feature of the Avante machine is if anyone questions the integrity of the machines we have a record of each vote cast that was verified by the voter.

### **ADVANTAGES OF AVANTE AS WE SEE THEM**

VERY PORTABLE. CAN EASILY BE TAKEN AROUND TO PUBLIC MEETINGS, FAIRS FOR DEMONSTRATION AS WELL AS USED IN SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE ELECTION EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS. WE WOULD ALSO HOPE IF AVANTE IS AUTHORIZED WE CAN TALK THE LEGISLATURE INTO LETTING US USE THEM FOR SUPERVISED BALLOTING IN NURSING HOMES RATHER THAN ABSENTEE BALLOTS. FOLKS THERE WOULD FEEL LIKE THEY ARE VOTING ON THE SAME MACHINES AS EVERYONE ELSE.

EASILY PROGRAMMED RIGHT UP TO ELECTION. (AVANTE PROGRAMMED OUR MACHINES AS IT WASN'T WORTH OUR LEARNING IT FOR THE ONE ELECTION) IF THE AVANTE MACHINE IS SELECTED WE WILL LEARN HOW TO PROGRAM THE BALLOT LOCALLY ELIMINATING THE EXPENSE OF MACHINE STRIPS, SET UP ETC.

VOTER VERIFIED PAPER TRAIL TO ELIMINATE ANY HINT OF IRREGULARITY.

EXCELLENT BACKUP FROM AVANTE. (THEIR PERSONNEL WERE VERY HELPFUL AND GREAT TO DEAL WITH)

OPERATION EASILY UNDERSTOOD WITH SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS.

**SUMMATION:**

WE LOVED THE MACHINES AND HOPE THAT THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT ADOPTS THEM OR AT LEAST ALLOWS THEM TO BE USED. WE WILL NOT HESITATE TO RECOMMEND THAT OUR TOWN BUYS THEM FOR FUTURE USE. AS YOU KNOW AS REGISTRARS WE WOULD NOT FAVOR ANYTHING THAT WE FELT WOULD ADD TO OUR ELECTION DAY PROBLEMS. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT USING THE AVANTE MACHINES WILL ELIMINATE PROBLEMS RATHER THAN ADD TO THEM.

SHOULD YOU HAVE ANY QUESTION WE CAN BE REACHED AT (860)276-6268 OR ON THE WEB AT <http://registrars.southington.org>.

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REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

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