

A Little Background

Some people with visual or dexterity impairments cannot mark a paper ballot without assistance. The Federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) requires that every polling place must offer a method by which people with disabilities can vote independently.

Electronic voter-assist devices provide help to some voters, however the machines are difficult to use and many fail to provide assistance to voters with dexterity impairments. Furthermore, all electronic voter-assist products are expensive to acquire, store, and maintain. Only a portion of the acquisition cost is funded by federal HAVA money.

The Problem

To their surprise, many jurisdictions that already use computerized voting equipment are finding that there are no HAVA-compliant electronic options compatible with their current systems. They need a compliant device quickly, if only as an interim solution.

Paper-ballot jurisdictions that do not want to or cannot afford to computerize their election systems need a non-computerized method of providing private and independent voting for voters with disabilities.

All jurisdictions need to provide independent voting on paper provisional ballots and back-up paper ballots.

Preparation and Costs

One Vote-PAD would be needed in every polling place. Officials customize each Vote-PAD booklet with holes at appropriate places for the ballot it is intended to contain, adding raised dots and page-turning aids.

Though costs will vary depending on the size of the ballot and the number of unique ballots needed, using Vote-PADs for many years would be a fraction of the cost of merely acquiring computerized equipment. And Vote-PADs, unlike computers, need no maintenance, storage, or repairs.

"I can't use my fingers, so I have to hit a touch screen with my whole hand and I get lots of error messages. But I can use the Vote-PAD."

~ Maria Matos, Tester with quadriplegia at Boston Center for Independent Living

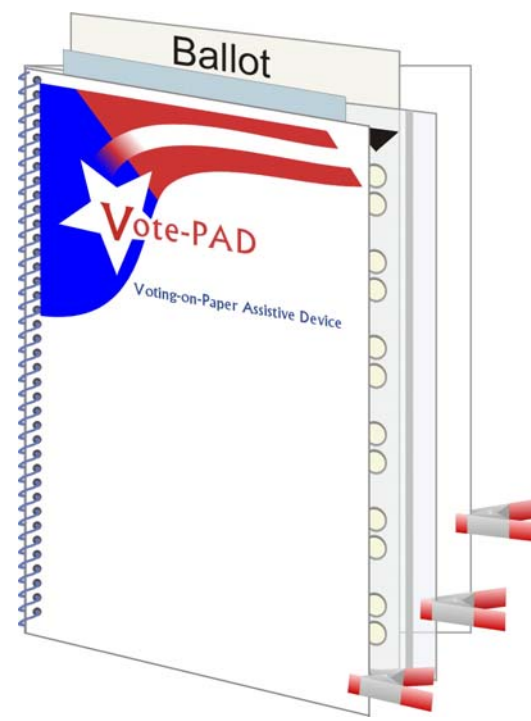
"For me, this 2005 election on the difficult-to-use DRE machines was just another real reminder that we definitely need your Vote-PAD."

~ Noel Runyan, Human-Factors Engineer who is blind

We are grateful for the input from people with dexterity impairments and people with visual impairments, whose advice and suggestions we included in the design.

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Independent Voting for People with Disabilities



Voting-on-Paper Assistive Device
(Vote-PAD)

www.Vote-PAD.US
Patent Pending

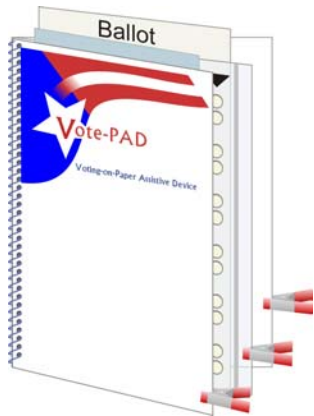
The Solution

The **Voting-on-Paper Assistive Device (Vote-PAD)** is an inexpensive, non-electronic, voter-assist alternative that helps most people with visual or dexterity impairments to vote independently.

The Vote-PAD can be used in any jurisdiction. It is customized to provide access to each precinct's hand-counted or optically-scanned paper ballot.

All jurisdictions must offer provisional ballots during federal elections, and many also provide paper ballot backups in case voting machines break down.

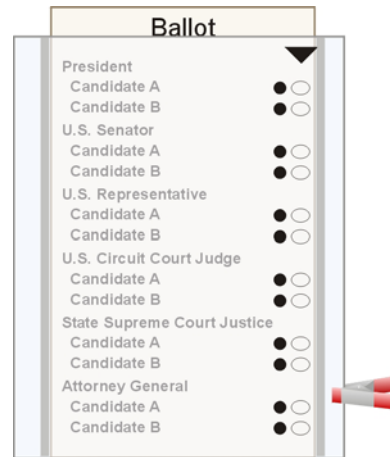
Supplementing existing voter-assist methods with Vote-PADs is a responsible way of ensuring accessible provisional voting and voting during breakdowns.



The Vote-PAD is composed of one custom "ballot sleeve" for each sheet of a ballot. The sleeves are bound together between front and back opaque covers for privacy.

The heart of the Vote-PAD is the transparent ballot sleeve, which encloses the ballot on both sides and reveals the content of the ballot that slips into it.

Holes are cut out of the sleeve at locations where a voter can mark choices. The sleeve protects the ballot from stray marks.



A page-turning aid is attached to the right edge of each sleeve and each cover to assist voters in turning the pages.

Raised dots attached to the sleeve beside each cutout provide tactile indications for voters with visual impairments. An audio tape interprets the raised dots so listeners know which hole corresponds to which candidate – just like the tactile ballot templates used in Rhode Island.



Unlike voter-assist methods that only offer audio assistance, the Vote-PAD can be accompanied by Braille and large-print instructions.

A mark-sensing wand allows voters with visual impairments to review their selections. As they replay the audio tape, or re-read the Braille instructions, they point the wand at each marking location to receive vibrational feedback indicating whether or not the location is marked.

An opaque, sliding "privacy shield" sits in a pocket inside the front cover and slides part-way out to conceal the ballot as it is being deposited in a ballot box or precinct scanner.



The ballot for each election in each jurisdiction is unique. Because each sleeve is specifically constructed to match a unique ballot sheet, the Vote-PAD is custom built for each ballot. Therefore, production of each Vote-PAD is designed to be inexpensive, so it can be recycled or discarded after each election.