

Advocates Say Paper Ballots Are Safest | Bloomberg

By Margaret Newkirk

August 16, 2018

In June, voting security advocate Marilyn Marks bought four used optical scanners online from the Canadian government for about \$2.50 apiece. Her purchase was meant to make a point: The state of Georgia doesn't have to spend a lot to replace computerized voting machines considered the most vulnerable in the U.S. And it could do so in time for the midterm elections.

Marks's advice: Don't listen to lobbyists for vendors pushing unnecessarily fancy and expensive voting equipment. Go back to paper ballots. Buy cheap used scanners to read them. Get it done now. "The Department of Homeland Security has said it. Every cyber expert says it," she says. Voting machines like Georgia's "are a national security risk."

As government officials warn of continuing cyberattacks intended to disrupt U.S. elections, Georgia is among 14 states heading into Election Day using touchscreen, computerized machines that don't meet federal security guidelines because they produce no paper record—so voters can't verify their choices and officials can't audit the results.

Such machines are used statewide in Georgia, Delaware, Louisiana, New Jersey, and South Carolina. They're also in at least some polling stations in nine other states: on the ground in 160 of 254 Texas counties and making up almost half of the machines—serving 83 percent of voters—in Pennsylvania, a key swing state. Despite the risks, only Virginia has replaced the paperless machines since the 2016 presidential election; some states moved away from them before 2016, [according](#) to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.