

## Time to reconsider

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Bucks County's electronic voting machines have performed without serious incident. Still, with growing evidence that the machines are flawed, it might be time for the county commissioners to revisit their decision to purchase them two years ago.

We supported the commissioners' decision back then, believing it had been made on the basis of good information and a thorough review even though the vote to purchase more than 700 Danaher electronic machines for about \$3.8 million was soundly criticized, particularly by a group known as the Coalition for Voting Integrity.

The coalition has never ceased in its efforts to have the Danaher machines — which they say are vulnerable to hacking and produce no paper record of the votes actually cast — tossed out in favor of a system using optically scanned paper ballots. Paper ballots may seem to some like a step backward, but opponents of the electronic machines insist such ballots represent the best way to assure voters' choices are accurately recorded.

Last week a standing-room-only crowd of some 100 citizens — and there were more who couldn't squeeze into the room — packed the commissioners meeting with a single purpose in mind: Convince Republican Commissioners Jim Cawley and Charley Martin and Democrat Diane Marseglia to support a federal bill that would reimburse counties for the cost of replacing electronic voting machines with a paper ballot voting system.

Cawley and Martin refused, noting they weren't sure the bill would really reimburse counties based on comments made by county chief operating officer Dave Sanko. A spokesman for Bucks Congressman Patrick Murphy, a co-sponsor of the bill, disputed Sanko's analysis.

Fact is, unfavorable information continues to surface about electronic machines, including from watchdog group Common Cause. It would seem that this is no time for the Republican commissioners to turn a deaf ear to an issue that clearly has some county residents upset.

The commissioners' position stands in stark contrast to the fact that a number of states have decided that electronic voting machines are just too fraught with demonstrated and/or potential problems and have decertified their use. Indeed, the Republican commissioners no longer can turn their backs on this by maintaining there is no problem.

Costs have to be considered. The county has spent going on \$4 million to buy the Danaher machines already and just approved almost \$100,000 to extend the machines' warranty for another year. The House bill as drafted would authorize \$500 million in federal funds for the switch away from electronic machines.

If the bill passes, though, it would make no sense to pass on an opportunity to put this long-running controversy to rest.

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