

New voting-machine demos for community set at BC3

Sept. 30, 2019

(Butler, PA) Community members from Butler County's 89 voting precincts and Butler County Community College students can learn to operate a new paper-ballot scanner tabulator that will be used in November's general election by visiting the Heaton Family Learning Commons on BC3's main campus in Butler Township on Oct. 10.

BC3 "is an ideal location" for the Butler County bureau of elections to demonstrate its new Election Systems & Software DS 200 scanner tabulator and its Americans with Disabilities Act-accessible ExpressVote ballot-marking device, said Shari Brewer, bureau of elections director.

Demonstrations will be available from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Heaton Family Learning Commons. Parking is available in Parking Lot 6.

All state and local election officials must assure that voters use a system that produces a paper record that the voter can verify and that election officials can audit by the 2020 primary election, according to an April 2018 directive issued by the Pennsylvania Department of State.

Pennsylvania is one of 13 states using direct-recording electronic voting machines, the commonwealth's Department of State reported in February.

Community members and BC3 students can learn how to designate their selection on the paper ballot by using a blue- or black-inked pen, and for those with special needs, the ExpressVote ballot marking device, place the ballot into the DS 200 scanner tabulator and follow prompts to complete their vote, Brewer said.

"We will let people vote on a demo ballot and put it in the scanner so they will basically get the feel of exactly what they need to do," Brewer said.

It may be important for community members and BC3 students to learn to operate the DS 200 scanner tabulator before the Nov. 5 general election, Brewer said.

"A lot of people are intimidated when they go in (to vote)," she said. "They are just not sure what to expect. And I think that sometimes prevents people from going. So this way, if they know what to expect when they go in, they won't be as intimidated by the whole process."

Demonstrations also provide an opportunity for the Butler County bureau of elections to stress the importance of voting, Brewer said.

“We want to get the word out to everyone, and younger people are voters too,” Brewer said. “We want to attract the younger voter.”

Voter turnout nationwide among 18- to 29-year-olds in the 2018 midterm election increased 79 percent from 2014, the largest percentage-point increase for any age group, according to the U.S. Census Bureau in an April 18 report titled “Behind the 2018 Midterm Election Turnout.”

Turnout in that age group rose from 19.9 percent in 2014 to 35.6 percent in 2018.

Those with higher levels of education had higher levels of voter turnout in 2018, the Census Bureau said.

Thirty-nine percent of registered voters nationwide who hold only a high school diploma cast ballots in the November general election, according to the Census Bureau. Of those with some college credits or an associate degree, 52 percent cast ballots; with a bachelor’s degree, 62 percent, and with an advanced degree, 68 percent.

Among registered voters nationwide ages 18 to 24 who hold only a high school diploma, 22 percent cast ballots in the November general election, according to the Census Bureau. Of those with some college credits or an associate degree, 37 percent cast ballots; with a bachelor’s degree, 48 percent, and with an advanced degree, 29 percent.

Butler County had 126,522 registered voters as of Sept. 23, according to the Pennsylvania Department of State. The last day to register to vote in the Nov. 5 election is Oct. 7. Visit votespa.com to learn how to register.