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## **Senators Reject ‘New Wave’ Unverifiable Voting Systems**

ATLANTA GA – The Georgia Senate took its first major steps to move toward voter-marked paper ballots on Thursday. The Ethics Committee voted to abandon both unverifiable electronic voting and “new wave” technology that counts votes in computer-generated barcodes rather than human-readable marks. In a landmark decision during a Senate Bill [SB403](#) hearing, the committee voted unanimously to require any future ballot marking devices used in Georgia to produce **voter verifiable and readable** marks that are tabulated for results.

Some ballot marking devices employ a touchscreen to create bar coded selections of voter choices that are interpreted internally by a scanner and accumulated when the votes are cast. The unverifiable bar code technology, promoted by certain vendors and the office of the Secretary of State, enables a “new wave” of hacking possibilities and significant potential for undetectable errors.

At the hearing, Senator Michael Williams proposed a VoterGa recommended language change requiring scanners to tabulate only **human readable and voter verifiable marks** from any ballot marking devices that may be employed in the future. The committee passed his amendment unanimously.

[SB403](#) sponsored by Senator Bruce Thompson, requires the Secretary of State to begin the process to replace Georgia’s unverifiable voting equipment. The bill also passed the committee unanimously on Thursday after being amended.

Lobbyists for at least one voting system vendor have claimed that language requiring verifiable ballot marks would eliminate them from the future bid process. However, two of the state’s long time election integrity advocates, John Fortuin and Garland Favorito testified they believe the motive behind such a claim is just to sell Georgia much more expensive equipment. They contend all vendors who demonstrated systems in a House Science and Technology hearing last year can also offer Georgia cost effective, verifiable voting systems that they have already installed successfully in other states.

Some vendor lobbyists may continue their push to sell unverifiable voting systems since Georgia election law is complicated, somewhat redundant and prone to loopholes. House bill HB848 that is similar to SB403 but does not have the same voter protections, is expected to receive a hearing in the Governmental Affairs Committee on Tuesday afternoon.