

PRESS RELEASE

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Ralston Leaders Ramrod Fiscal Nightmare through House

ATLANTA GA – On Tuesday, the Georgia House passed an omnibus voting system bill that **will require taxpayers to spend over \$150 million on an electronic ballot marking system experts say is not auditable and less secure** than a \$40 million hand marked paper ballot system. [HB316](#) passed at the urging of House leaders with **no fiscal note** despite obligating Georgia State and county taxpayers to an estimated **\$350 million** outlay during the next 10 years alone.

Preliminary [VoterGA estimates](#) show a statewide implementation costing taxpayers over \$150 million initially and over \$15 million annually for the **10 year shelf life** of the new system. However, the Budget proposed by Governor Brian Kemp has a line item for a **20 year bond** to purchase the equipment. That means **Georgia taxpayers would still have to pay on the equipment for 10 years after its shelf life expires!** In addition, **the \$50 million interest cost of the bond alone is higher than the entire cost of a more secure voting system.** The electronic devices are considered insecure partly because they print tiny, unverifiable receipts called “ballots” which embed hidden votes in bar codes.

Adding further to the financial confusion is the question of whether the state or counties will pay for ongoing maintenance, licensing and other expenses of the **unnecessary** ballot markers. Those extra costs would likely exceed about **\$15 million yearly** in additional costs or roughly **\$10 million extra annually than a more secure, auditable voting system.** Current indications are that the additional \$10 million would be an **unfunded mandate** on Georgia counties.

Electronic ballot marking devices have **never** been deployed statewide to all voters as HB316 proposes. Other states typically deploy one device for each precinct to assist voters who may have disabilities. Under HB316, the state would deploy a dozen or more devices to each precinct.

[HB316](#) was introduced by Rep. Barry Fleming and was co-sponsored **exclusively** by members of the leadership team for House Speaker David Ralston. The bill is now in the Senate where it will have a second hearing in an Ethics Elections Subcommittee on **Monday at 9 am** in CLOB 307. The burden now falls to the Georgia Senate to perform the due diligence that should have been done by the House and the [SAFE voting system commission](#).