

# Operating Cost Comparison for Different Types of Voting Systems

Optical Scanners in Wake and Durham Counties, and Direct Record Electronic Voting Machines in Mecklenburg and Guilford Counties

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This is an analysis of the annual expenditures of the Directors of Elections Offices of four large North Carolina Counties for the fiscal years 1999 through 2004. The analysis compared the expenditures of counties using Optical Scan equipment to counties using Direct Record Electronic (DRE) equipment.

We studied two optical scan counties, Durham and Wake, and compared them to two counties that use DRE equipment, Guilford and Mecklenburg. This report shows the annual cost that these counties spent per registered voter in each of the six years. None of the counties made changes in voting equipment during the 6 year period studied.

The comparison shows that the counties using DREs spent approximately 1.5 times as much per voter each year as those using optical scanners. Remarkably, a similar study by Rosemarie Myerson, comparing two Florida counties, found that the annual expenditures used to operate DREs were about 1.5 times as much as the operating expenses for paper-based systems. [1]

The expenditure data for Durham, Guilford, Mecklenburg, and Wake Counties were provided by their county finance departments. For the counties other than Mecklenburg, the net expenditures were determined by subtracting the annual revenue from the annual expenditures. The information for number of registered voters was supplied by each county's Director of Election.

Cost comparison chart on next page.

[1] <http://www.votersunite.org/info/costcomparison.asp>

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<b>Precinct-Based Optical Scanners</b>							
<b>Wake County</b>				<b>Durham County</b>			
Year	Expend	Reg Voters	Cost/Voter	Year	Expend	Reg Voters	Cost/Voter
'04	\$1,455,458	460,821	\$3.16	04	\$556,923	175,322	\$3.18
'03	\$1,951,178	415,649	\$4.69	'03	\$703,031	158,916	\$4.42
'02	\$1,232,426	403,050	\$3.06	'02	\$506,287	154,950	\$3.27
'01	\$1,539,268	426,375	\$3.61	'01	\$668,777	152,324	\$4.39
'00	\$1,250,349	411,121	\$3.04	'00	\$547,576	156,131	\$3.51
'99	\$1,434,369	377,435	\$3.80	'99	\$437,795	150,984	\$2.90
6 Year Total:	\$8,863,048			6 Year Total:	\$3,420,389		
Average:	\$1,477,175		<b>\$3.56</b>	Average:	\$570,065		<b>\$3.61</b>
<b>Direct Record Electronic Voting Machines</b>							
<b>Guilford County</b>				<b>Mecklenburg County</b>			
Year	Expend	Reg Voters	Cost/Voter	Year	Expend	Reg Voters	Cost/Voter
'04	\$1,569,894	290,129	\$5.41	'04	\$2,400,533	470,849	\$5.10
'03	\$1,776,383	268,368	\$6.62	'03	\$2,549,260	426,212	\$5.98
'02	\$1,776,383	276,492	\$6.42	'02	\$2,266,099	442,055	\$5.13
'01	\$1,285,192	274,357	\$4.68	'01	\$2,195,750	434,335	\$5.06
'00	\$1,181,877	279,221	\$4.23	'00	\$2,457,602	467,875	\$5.25
'99	\$1,101,522	267,650	\$4.12	'99	\$1,670,825	433,121	\$3.86
6 Year Total:	\$8,691,251			6 Year Total:	\$13,540,069		
Average:	\$1,448,542		<b>\$5.25</b>	Average:	\$2,256,678		<b>\$5.06</b>