



# Paper Ballot Costs and Printing

The printing of ballots suitable for use in paper ballot/optical scan systems is an exacting task. Ballot printing may be done by companies that supply optical scan equipment or by printing companies that can meet the specifications set by equipment manufacturers.

Printing may be done by the offset process or, more recently, by direct digital printing using, for example, laser printers. Optical scan equipment vendors can train printing companies to produce acceptable ballots. There are over 250 printing companies in the US that supply ballots.

## Paper Ballot Printing

Optical scan paper ballots are generally slightly thicker than “20 pound bond” copy paper typically used in office printers and copiers. The ES&S system uses 80 pounds “text” paper, which is approximately equivalent to 31 pound “bond” paper. So ballot paper for optical scan is about 50% thicker than normal copy paper.

The ballot paper is cut and marked precisely. ES&S supplies specially marked paper to printers at a cost of about 8¢ to 10¢ per sheet. Acceptable paper can also be obtained from many other sources, such as paper specialty companies.

Ballots have registration marks to determine the ballot location in the scanner. There can also be special marks or ink for security purposes. Ballots may be folded as long as the folds are not on the registration marks. Folded ballots can thus be mailed to and from absentee voters.

Ballots may be printed by offset, which uses a master, making this a more expensive alternative. Digital printing, using laser printers and similar technology, and ubiquitous in modern print shops, does not use a master and is simpler and cheaper.

Each election district may have different contests, and the ballots must be different. The optical scan vendors have special software that they use themselves, or supply to qualified printers, which keeps track of multiple races. The software also ensures that the optical scanners recognize different races and can tally them correctly.

## Paper Ballot Printing Costs in Other States

New Yorkers for Verified Voting conducted a survey of states and counties nationwide that have been using precinct based optical scan systems. One of the survey questions asked the cost of printing optical scan ballots. It is interesting to note that relatively few Board of Election officials seem to know the cost of printing ballots. Usually this is because the budgetary responsibility for printing ballots lies with local authorities rather than the Board of Elections. So ballot printing costs are not problematic for these states - these officials would know the print costs quite exactly if their counties were in an uproar about this expense.

Here are optical scan ballot printing costs we received from several states:

<b>Alabama</b>	Less than 30¢	<b>Colorado</b>	29¢ to 50¢
<b>Arizona</b> , Cochise City	28¢	<b>Iowa</b> , Chickasaw Co.	Less than 10¢
<b>Arizona</b> , Maricopa	28¢	<b>Minnesota</b>	14¢ to 17¢
<b>Arkansas</b>	27¢	<b>Vermont</b>	22¢
<b>California</b>	18 inch - 40¢, 11 inch - 31¢	<b>Washington</b>	31¢

## Paper Ballots Costs for New York State

We have discussed the production and costs of paper ballots with personnel from ES&S, and Dayton Legal Blank of Dayton, OH, a large quantity printer of ballots. *The consensus is that straightforward black and white full face optical scan ballots, printed digitally, will cost less than 30¢ per ballot.*

Below is a quotation obtained from Dayton Legal Blank, a certified ballot printer in Ohio, to supply optical scan ballots for Schenectady County. The price quoted is 29¢ per ballot, not including shipping and taxes.

This quote assumed a full face ballot (an example of the a 2004 New York City optical scan ballot for absentee voters was provided as an example). It also assumed that for each of Schenectady's 80 Election Districts, there would be down ballot differences for local races, so there would be a total of 80 different ballot styles.

With a competitive bidding process, there is good reason to believe that New York could pay far less. New York State has over 11 million registered voters. If the state were to designate and certify printers around the state to print optical scan ballots, the quantities of scale for New York's 11 million voters would ensure low ballot costs.

If Arizona can print ballots for 28¢ each, surely New York, with 11 million voters, can negotiate the same.

## Price Quote for Schenectady County

**dlb**

Toll Free (800) 262-8480  
Office (937) 435-4405  
Fax (937) 435-8352

**Dayton Legal Blank Inc.**

P.O. Box 750788 Dayton, Ohio 45475-0788

### QUOTATION

Date: 04/28/2005  
To: Bill Edelstein  
Customer Name: New Yorker's for Verified Voting

Quantity	Description	Unit Price	Total
103,000	Optical Scan ballots for Schenectady County, NY.	\$0.2900 per 1	\$29869.99
	Subtotal		\$29869.99
	Estimated Freight		\$800.00
	Total		\$30669.99

Shipping charges are not included.

The above pricing should be used for budgetary purposes only.

Prices could vary greatly based on the actual election specifications.

By: Dave Keeler