

of the House and the President of the Senate. The State Administrator of Elections has the option of seeking assistance with the study from computer specialists, academic professionals, and community activists and is required to submit the findings of the study to the General Assembly by December 1, 2005.

While I support the concept of utilizing independent verification systems and understand the importance of examining our recent integration of new computer technology into the administration of elections, the analysis of these systems to protect the integrity of the process should be conducted in a process that is directed by the Executive Branch. House Bill 479 fails to provide a role for the Administration in this evaluation. Furthermore, it eliminates the Governor's ability to appoint members to the Advisory Committee that is responsible for this study.

The procurement of touch-screen electronic voting systems was conducted by the prior Administration. When these systems came under attack last year for their veracity and reliability, the information technology unit at the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) managed the State's program to have an independent analysis and risk assessment to test the system's vulnerability to tampering or fraud. Through this analysis, DBM lead the effort to rebut the challenges to the system's security and provide the factual analysis to assuage public concerns.

Please be assured that the Administration is committed to instilling public confidence in elections and ensuring that all Marylanders have the opportunity to cast a ballot and have their ballot fairly counted. To this end, I will appoint a Commission to examine and evaluate all of the election law bills passed this session and make recommendations concerning our State's election process. Specifically, this Commission will work with DBM and the Board of Elections to conduct such a study as proposed by this legislation. I am confident the Commission will develop policies and procedures assuring that fair and accurate elections take place within the State.

For the above stated reasons, I have vetoed House Bill 479.

Very truly yours,
Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor

House Bill No. 479

AN ACT concerning

Election Law - Voting System - Study of Independent Verification Systems

FOR the purpose of requiring the State Administrator of Elections to study, review, and evaluate independent verification systems, including at least one system that includes a voter-verified paper audit trail, for the voting system currently used in the State; requiring the study to be conducted during certain municipal elections; authorizing the State Administrator to seek assistance from certain individuals in conducting the study; establishing an advisory committee to assist and advise the State Administrator in a certain review; providing for the membership of the advisory committee; providing for the duties of the advisory committee; requiring the State Administrator to report to the General Assembly