



AutoMARK – a new assistive ballot-marking device

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Fast facts

- ▲ AutoMARK is a ballot-marking device that assists voters, including people with disabilities, who have difficulty marking a ballot with a pen.
- ▲ The ballot-marking device was implemented nationwide to comply with the federal 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) that ensures that all voters can cast their ballots independently and privately.

What is the AutoMARK?

AutoMARK is a ballot-marking “electronic pen” device that assists all voters, including people with disabilities, who have difficulty marking a ballot.

The ballot-marking device was implemented nationwide to comply with the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. HAVA, as well as Minnesota statute, requires that all polling places must have assistive voting systems that allow all voters, including people with disabilities, to vote privately and independently. The equipment was successfully used for the 2006 state primary and general elections and for municipal and school district elections in 2007.

How does it work?

Voters who choose to use the AutoMARK are given the same paper ballot everyone else uses. But instead of marking the ballot with a pen, the voter inserts the ballot into the AutoMARK, which displays an electronic version of the ballot on a monitor. The AutoMARK provides these special features:

- If you are blind, the device can provide audio instructions on headphones, with step-by-step directions on how to mark the ballot with a keypad. The device then tells you what you’ve selected. The screen can be turned off so no one else can see your selections.
- If you are visually impaired, large-print, reverse or high-contrast viewing screens and a “zoom in” feature can help you see better. You also can use audio in conjunction with the screen version.
- If you don’t know how to read, the audio version can walk you through the ballot-marking process.
- If you have a reading or learning disability such as dyslexia, the audio version may make it easier for you to fill out your ballot.
- If you are elderly or have difficulty writing with a pen, the touch-screen or keypad makes it easier for you to mark the ballot.

The device is placed on an ADA-compliant, wheelchair-accessible table and set up so that only the voter can see the monitor.

The device automatically notifies you if you’ve done something wrong (voted for too many people, forgotten a vote, etc.) and gives you a chance to correct the error.

The AutoMARK is a *ballot-marking* device – it *does not tabulate or tally votes*.

Fast facts

- ▲ People using AutoMARK use the same paper ballot everyone else does.
- ▲ At least one AutoMARK will be available at every polling place.

Once the ballot is complete, the device verifies how you have marked your ballot. Then you direct the device to “mark” the ballot by printing it, and the ballot is carried to the same optical scanning device that tallies all ballots.

The new device does not completely eliminate the need for assistance. Some people still may need help from a friend, or an election judge can provide assistance.

Many people vote absentee. Why would they come to the polls and use this device instead?

Some voters who previously have not been able to do so may want the experience of coming to a polling place and casting their ballot the way most voters do. The absentee ballot is still an option, especially for those who have difficulty getting to a polling place.

Will there be someone at the polling place who can help me use this machine?

There will be at least one election judge at every polling place who is trained to use the machine.