

# From Voice to Electronic

...the Evolution of the Voting  
Process in Louisiana...

# “From Voice to Electronic” Beginnings

- ★ Prior to the 1850’s voters cast their votes publicly through oral declaration.
- ★ This method posed problems as voters found themselves under scrutiny since the votes were publicly declared.



# “From Voice to Electronic” Introduction to Secret Ballots

- ★ In 1856 Australians developed the secret ballot which rendered the voice vote obsolete. This method was soon adopted by Americans.
- ★ The voter was able to cast a paper ballot into a sealed ballot box.



# “From Voice to Electronic” The Impact of Secret Ballots

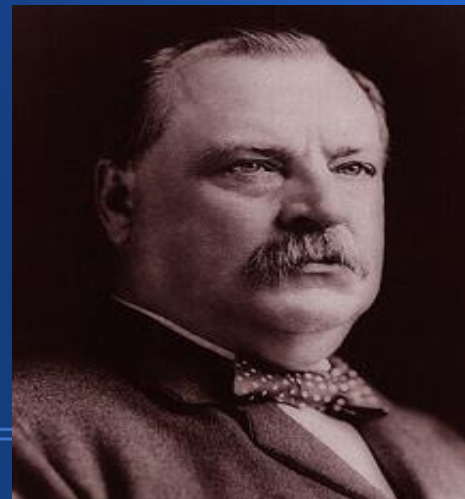
- ★ Political reformers saw the use of secret ballots as a way to weaken the power of the political machines, thus strengthening voter trust and turnout.
- ★ The Populist Party of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century included the use of secret ballots as one of their platform issues. This enabled the Populist Party to become a major force on the political scene.



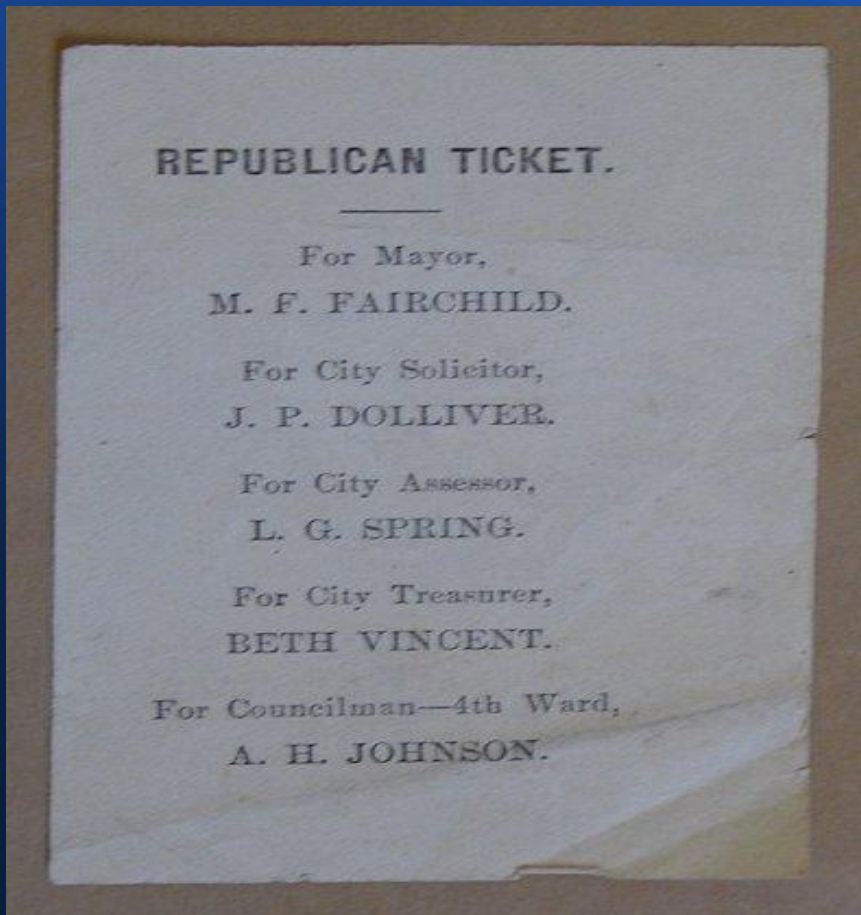
Members of the Nebraska Populist Party, circa 1890.

# “From Voice to Electronic” The Spread of Secret Ballots

- ★ By 1884 most states used secret ballots.
- ★ In 1891 Kentucky was the last state to use the voice vote.
- ★ In 1892 Grover Cleveland was the first president elected solely through the secret ballot.



# “From Voice to Electronic” Corruption



- ★ During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century political parties controlled the printing of ballots, which were called party tickets.
- ★ Although state election laws regulated the dimensions and thickness of the ballots, local party officials and candidates controlled the rest of the election process.
- ★ These actions opened the door for fraud and corruption, thus bringing the call for reform in the voting process.

# “From Voice to Electronic”

## The Arrival of the Mechanical Voting Machine

- ★ In 1892 the “Myers Automatic Booth” debuted in Lockport, New York. It was the first lever type voting machine.
- ★ In the early 1940’s former Louisiana Secretary of State Wade O. Martin introduced mechanical machines in the election process for the first time.
- ★ There were two main manufacturers at the time: Automatic Voting Machine Corporation (left) and Shoup Voting Machine Co. (right)



# “From Voice to Electronic” Implementation and Longevity



★ Since the number of machines needed was too great for either company to fulfill within a set amount of time, both machines were ordered for widespread use across the state.

★ The Automatic Voting Machine and Shoup Voting machine were manufactured until 1985. Louisiana continued to use the mechanical machines until the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002.





# “From Voice to Electronic”

## How did they work?

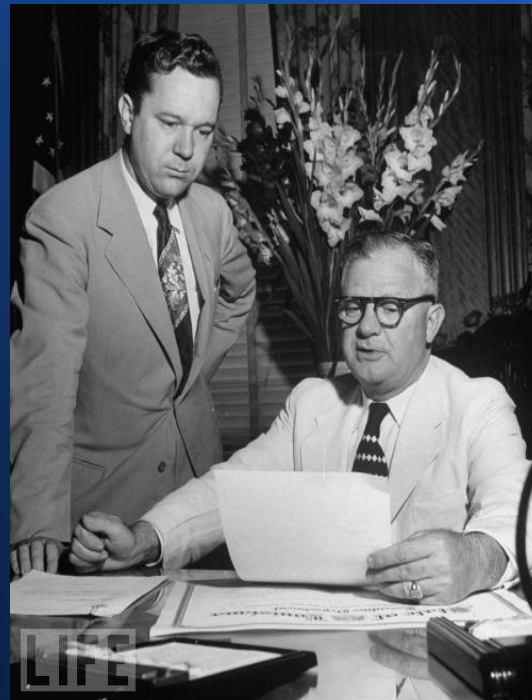
- ★ The mechanical machines contained a series of levers on the front of the machine, with the name of the candidate or ballot choice on a specific lever. A set of printed strips identified the assigned levers. Subsequently, a lever is pushed to close the privacy curtain.
- ★ Once the voter entered the voting machine and then pulled a lever to close the privacy curtain, the voter made their choice(s). Pulling the privacy curtain in the reverse direction for exiting registered the vote on the counters in the mechanical section of the machine.



# “From Voice to Electronic” Historical Perspectives

★ The Voting Machine Law of 1952 mandated that voting machines be under control of the Secretary of State.

★ In 1956 Governor Earl K. Long stripped the Secretary of State of control of voting machines. A new state department called the Custodian of Voting Machines was formed, later called the Commissioner of Elections.



★ In January 1975 a new Department of Elections and Registration was formed with voter registration added to the duties of the Custodian of Voting Machines.

★ In January 2004 legislation merged the Secretary of State and the Department of Elections and Registration as the Department of State.

★ Voter registration and elections are once again under the direction of the Secretary of State.

★ The legislation also provided for the appointment of the Commissioner of Elections.

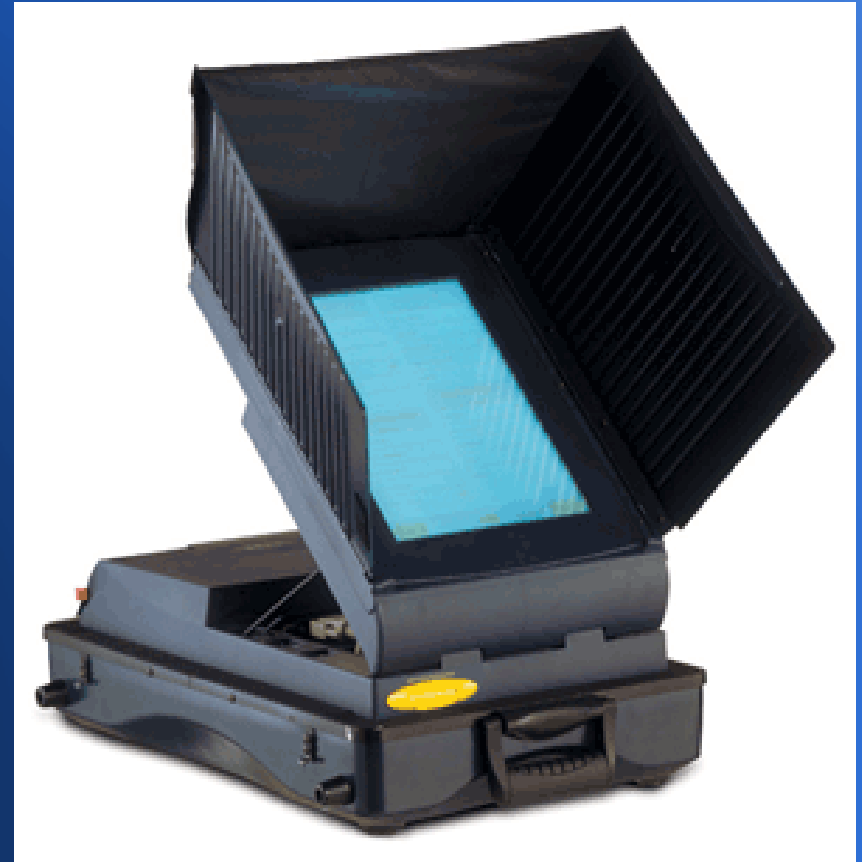
# “From Voice to Electronic” Historical Perspectives

- ★ In 1991 Elections Commissioner Jerry Fowler introduced the AVC Advantage Machine in the state.
- ★ Fowler initiated the centralized voter registration system which linked every parish by computer, thus reducing dual registrations. Fowler also initiated the statewide system of electronic voting.
- ★ Fowler served as elections commissioner from 1980 until 1999.
- ★ In November of 2000 Fowler plead guilty for his part in a kickback scheme. His actions hastened the decision to return the Department of Elections to the control of the Secretary of State.



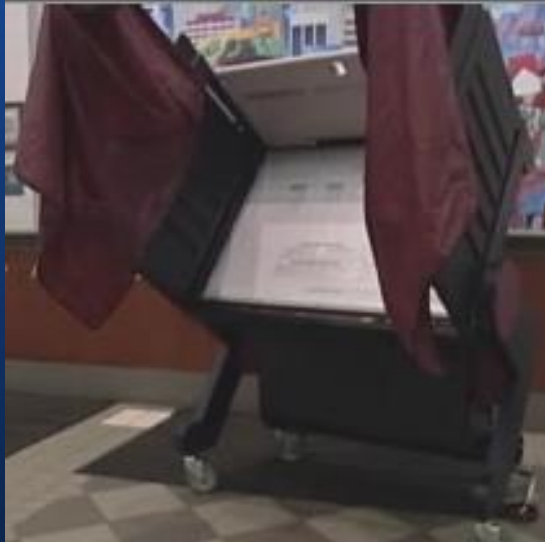
# “From Voice to Electronic” The Advent of Electronic Voting

- ★ By 2005 electronic voting machines were modified to meet the needs of disabled persons and to comply with federal regulations.
- ★ By 2006 the AVC Advantage Electronic Voting Machine was available for use in all Louisiana Elections.
- ★ Louisiana also uses the DRE (Direct Recording Electronic) Machine system. These machines are primarily used for early voting.
- ★ The touch screen allows voters to navigate with ease.



# “From Voice to Electronic”

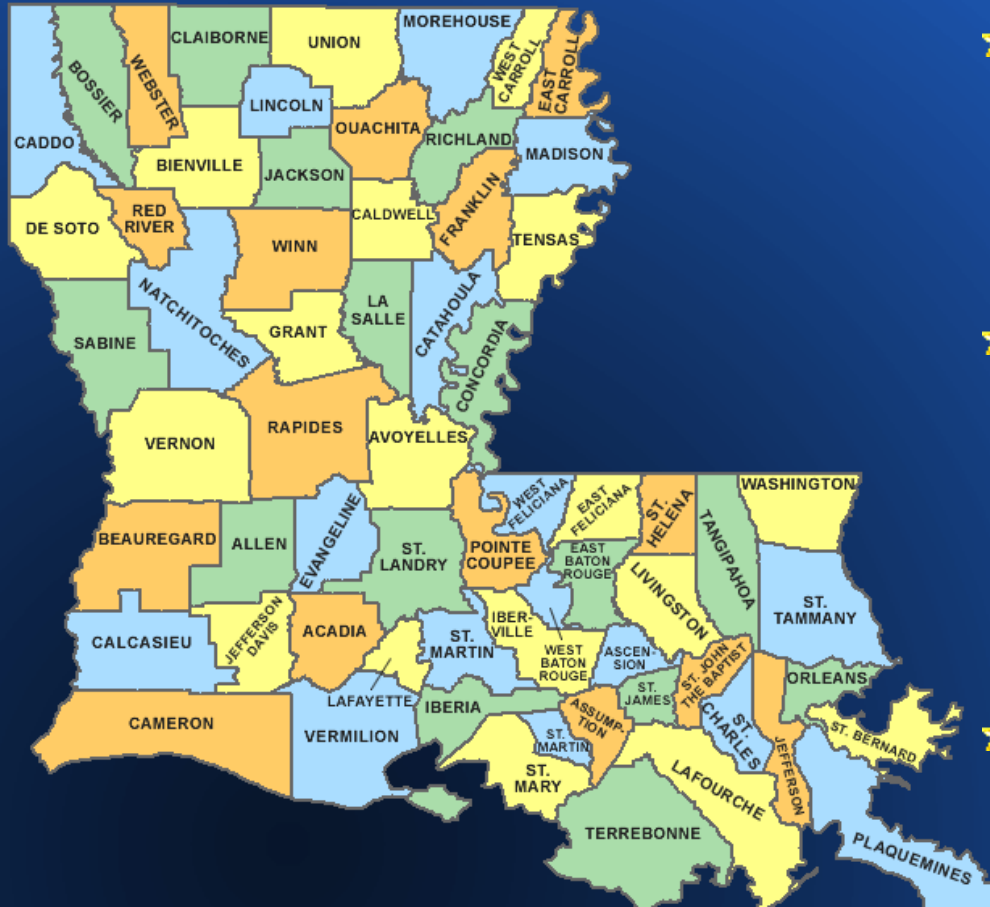
## How do they work?



- ★ Instead of levers, the electronic voting machines allow the voter to push a button next to their selection. A light will appear which highlights the choice.
- ★ On the touch screen machines, voters make their selection(s), review their selection(s), and then navigate to the “Touch Here to Cast Your Ballot” screen.
- ★ If the voter desires to change their vote, the voter simply touches the button again to clear the error.



# “From Voice to Electronic” Centralized Registration and Voting



- ★ Louisiana has a unique computerized system for maintenance of voter registration records. Louisiana was one of the first states in the nation to implement this system.
- ★ Louisiana is one of the few states that has fully implemented centralized voting. All parish Registrars of Voters are linked into one statewide network that is a first class communication system housed at the Secretary of State main office in Baton Rouge.
- ★ Elections ballots are assembled and programmed from the Secretary of State main office in Baton Rouge.

# “From Voice to Electronic” Lagniappe

- ★ All voting machines are owned by the state.
- ★ There are 9,443 AVC and 624 Edge Machines.
- ★ Each parish has its own voting machine warehouse.
- ★ Drayage contracts have been negotiated to distribute the voting machines from the voting machine warehouse to the respective precincts for an election.
- ★ The Secretary of State Elections and Field Operations Division consists of full time and part time staffers who are trained service technicians to maintain the voting machines in all 64 parishes.

# “From Voice to Electronic”

## Important Dates In Voting History

- ★ 1776 - After announcing its' independence from Great Britain, the right to vote in the United States was based on property ownership.
- ★ 1787- The Constitution gave the states authority to set voting rights.
- ★ 1870 - The 15th Amendment prohibited state and federal government from denying a citizen's right to vote based on race.
- ★ 1890 - Wyoming became the first state to practice universal suffrage, thus allowing women to vote.
- ★ 1920 - The 19th Amendment made universal suffrage nationwide, thus giving all female citizens of age the right to vote.
- ★ 1953 - Voting machines were first used statewide in Louisiana.
- ★ 1964 - The 24th Amendment banned the use of poll tax or any other tax as a requirement for voting.
- ★ 1971- The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.
- ★ 1991- Electronic voting machines were first used in Louisiana.



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For additional information, please contact the Secretary of State's office at 225.922.2803 or your local registrar of voters.

