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## A guide to e voting

County clerk shares instructions on how to cast an electronic ballot

By **Cristin Ross**

Officials with the Cherokee County Clerk office and election judges from around the county agree, while the county's electronic voting machines might seem a little intimidating to some, they're really very simple to operate.

"Everyone who's ever used one has said they're really very simple to operate and understand," Cherokee County Clerk Laverne Lusk said.

Texas counties began offering electronic polls after the federal government passed the Help America Vote Act in 2002, which established a program to provide funds to states to replace punch card voting systems, to assist in the administration of federal elections and certain election laws and programs, to establish minimum election administration standards for states and units of local government with responsibility for the administration of federal elections, and for other purposes.

They've been available in Cherokee County for the last few election cycles.

"A very small percentage of voters actually have used them since they've been available," said Laura Mullenax, who's worked as a volunteer election clerk for several past elections. "Surprisingly, it's the older voters who are a little more adventurous here, at least from what I've seen."

When asked why voters don't seem to be warming up to the electronic polls, Mullenax said she figures on habit and unfamiliarity.

"I think it's just instilled in most voters to go for the paper ballot," she said. "Plus it's an unknown. But usually once people use them, they're like 'yea! I did it!' They really feel good about it."

According to the Web site, [www.procon.org](http://www.procon.org), most electronic voting machines used today are manufactured by one of four companies — Premier Election Solutions (formerly known as Diebold Election Systems); Election Systems and Software; Hart InterCivic; and Sequoia Voting Systems.

"While all electronic voting machines directly record and tabulate votes electronically, the way votes are cast differs between machines and models," the site states.

Cherokee County uses Hart InterCivic's direct recording electronic (DRE) voting machines, which uses a selection wheel, like an iPod. Voters navigate through the ballot with the SELECT wheel and make their choices by pressing the ENTER button.

Here's a step-by-step guide to using the local electronic voting machines:

### 1. Getting started

Using the SELECT wheel, the voter selects a language. Next, the voter enters the randomly generated four-digit access code they receive at check-in at the polling place. The code tells the system which ballot to produce for the voter's precinct. The access code does not identify the voter in any way and can not be linked to the voter.

### 2. Making ballot choices






### Photos



The ballot summary page will be the last screen a voter sees before casting an electronic ballot. **None!** (Click for larger image)

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The ballot then appears on the color screen and the voter uses the SELECT wheel to move a blue highlight bar through the ballot. Once the voter moves the highlight bar onto their desired choice, they simply press the large button marked ENTER and the selection is marked. The box beside that choice is marked in red and the voter's selection becomes bold while all of the other choices fade into the background so the voter has a strong visual signal of their vote.

### 3. Reviewing ballot choices

After the voter has voted in the last contest on the ballot, a Ballot Summary screen will appear listing all the choices made and lets the voter know if they have missed voting in any race. If the voter makes a mistake or changes their mind they can make corrections from the Ballot Summary screen.

### 4. Cast ballot

After reviewing and confirming the Ballot Summary screen, the voter can press the CAST BALLOT to finish voting. The screen informs the voter that they cannot go back after CAST BALLOT has been pressed. Voters will know they have finished voting when they see the waving American flag or hear "Your vote has been recorded" on the audio headset.

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). EAC is an independent, bipartisan commission charged with developing guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, and serving as a national clearinghouse of information about election administration. EAC also accredits testing laboratories and certifies voting systems, as well as audits the use of HAVA funds.

The Web site, [procon.org](http://procon.org) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) public charity whose mission is "promoting education, critical thinking, and informed citizenship by presenting controversial issues in a straightforward, nonpartisan primarily pro-con format."



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