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New voting machines 'great,' voters say

Although some devices crashed or need to be reprogrammed, touchscreen and other high-tech voting machines experienced few problems Tuesday as they made their full-scale debut in more than 200 counties nationwide.

Anxious to avoid the kind of snags that created Florida's primary mess and lesser troubles in Maryland in September, election officials had spent countless hours training poll workers and educating voters on how the new digital tallying machines work.

The biggest general election debut for touchscreen machines was in Georgia, where some 19,000 were deployed across the state and voters offered good reviews.

One voter, Tracy Yandle of Atlanta, said it was "as easy as using an ATM."

"It's great. I've been voting for a lot more years than I care to say," Joe Penley of Barnesville raved. "It's almost too simple. My 4-year-old granddaughter could do it. It's hard to make errors if you just follow instructions."

Technical problems characterized as minor were reported

in three of Georgia's 159 counties, with two machines failing in one.

One touchscreen machine locked up and crashed as Mary Perdue, the wife of Georgia's Republican gubernatorial candidate Sonny Perdue, was casting her ballot. Officials rebooted the computer, and she continued with ease.

Only a few problems, meanwhile, were reported in the Florida counties of Miami-Dade and Broward where difficulties with high-tech machines had thrown the Sept. 10 primary into confusion. Former Attorney General Janet Reno not only lost the Democratic primary for governor on that day. She was also turned away from her suburban Miami polling station when machines weren't ready.

"This time was different. It was smooth," said Reno. "They were prepared for me this time."

Miami-Dade and Broward election officials had stepped up poll worker training and added hundreds of workers to troubleshoot the machines.

"You're never going to have a flawless opening," he said.

Electronics play bigger role in '02 elections

More voters will be using touch-screen and other electronic voting machines in this year's elections.

Voting equipment used
Percentage of all counties

Year	Punch card*	Lever machine	Paper ballot	Optical scan	Electronic
2000	18.53%	14.39	11.85	41.50	13.73
2002	15.50%	10.57	10.50	43.00	16.33

*Includes "Datavote."

SOURCE: Election Data Services

"The backup system worked."

For Tuesday's elections, 510 of the nation's counties — or 16 percent — were using electronic voting systems, up from 293 counties in 2000, according to Election Data Services, an independent research company in Washington, D.C.

Voting also went well Tuesday in the nation's largest county to go all-electronic: Harris County, Texas, which includes Houston. Harris' new system uses 5.2-pound machines that look like personal digital assistants on steroids. Voters use a dial to highlight names.

Other states with counties debuting high-tech equipment included Louisiana and Mississippi.

Many counties rushed to replace outdated equipment to avoid a balloting fiasco like one that besmirched the 2000 presidential vote in Florida. And that meant that machines were deployed more quickly than reasonable, analysts say.

If there were major problems Tuesday, it could foreshadow trouble for 2004, when many states will have high-tech machines thanks to a new \$2-billion federal law to help replace outdated equipment.

GOP takes Georgia seat to win Senate majority

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans ousted a Georgia Democrat on Tuesday and won a hotly contested race in New Hampshire as the GOP pushed to overturn the Democrats' one-vote majority in the Senate.

In Georgia, Republican Rep. Saxby Chambliss defeated incumbent first-term Democratic Sen. Max Cleland, a triple amputee from the Vietnam War, after chiding him for opposing President Bush's plan for creating a new Department of Homeland Security.

Rep. John Sununu was victorious for the GOP in New Hampshire, retaining a Republican-held seat that Democrats had high hopes of winning. He defeated Democratic Gov. Jean Shaheen, despite a lack of help from many conservatives bitter at his primary defeat of Republican Sen. Bob Smith.

The turnover in Georgia could prove crucial to the GOP's bid to reclaim control of the Senate in the Congress that convenes in January.

In a ferocious state-by-state battle, initial results showed each party was recapturing most seats held by incumbents. Incomplete results had Republicans leading in races for Democratic-held seats in Missouri and Minnesota. Democrats threatened to defeat GOP Sen. Tim Hutchinson of Arkansas.

In North Carolina, Republican Elizabeth Dole won the right to succeed the retiring Sen. Jesse Helms, battling down a challenge by Democrat Erskine Bowles, the one-time chief of staff to President Clinton.

In South Carolina, four-term GOP Rep. Lindsey Graham will replace another outgoing conservative icon, Sen. Strom Thurmond. Graham bested Democrat Alex Sanders, the former College of Charleston president.

Thurmond will turn 100 next month and will leave the Senate in January after serving a record 47 years and three months.

Democrats held the New Jersey seat that will be relinquished to Sen. Robert Torricelli, who abruptly ended his campaign last month after ethics violations seemed to end his chances of being re-elected. Returning in his place will be Frank Lautenberg, who retired two years ago after an 18-year Senate career.

Republicans on track to take House control

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans turned aside crucial Democratic challenges in region after region Tuesday and headed towards extending their eight-year control of the House of Representatives.

Democratic hopes of regaining the chamber dimmed as Republicans chalked up wins or were leading in most of the races earlier seen as toss-ups. Americans voted to fill all 435 House seats, but only a tenth of them were truly competitive.

Early Wednesday with only Alaska's polls still open, Republicans had won 195 seats and were leading in 32 others. If that trend continued, Republicans would hold 227 seats — four more than they do in the current Congress. Majority control requires 218 votes.

Traditionally, the president's party loses seats in midterm elections. But this year, Republicans appeared to be helped by President Bush's popularity and by the relatively low number of competitive races.

Democrats needed a net gain of seven seats to reclaim the control they lost in 1994. As returns rolled in, it seemed likely they would fall far short — not only failing in some high-profile challenges to Republican incumbents but also losing

some of their own incumbents.

In a closely watched Kentucky contest, three-term Republican Rep. Anne Northup defeated Democrat Jack Conway. Republican Jeb Bradley defeated Democrat Martha Fuller Clark in an open New Hampshire seat that had been Republican.

Republican Rep. Shelley Moore Capito won a second term in West Virginia, defeating Democratic challenger Jim Humphreys, a wealthy lawyer, in what was the most expensive congressional race in the country with \$9 million raised and spent.

Republicans won three of four races that featured incumbents running against other incumbents — the result of a redistricting that reflect population changes.

Rep. Nancy Johnson, R-Conn., defeated Rep. Jim Maloney, D-Conn., and Rep. Charles Pickering, R-Miss., defeated Rep. Ronnie Shows, D-Miss. Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill., Miss. Rep. John Shimkus, D-Ill., in a downstate district. But a Republican incumbent was trailing the Democratic incumbent in a see-saw vote count in another such race in Pennsylvania.

In another closely followed race, GOP businessman Cliff Chocoma won an open northern Indiana House seat that had been Democratic.