

Secretary of State Pushes For Vote Centers In Columbus

By JORDAN VINSON

Posted March 18, 2013

Secretary of State Connie Lawson met with a couple dozen county-level officials from around the state in Columbus on Monday to discuss the ins and outs of a vote centers, which have been proposed in Bartholomew County and elsewhere.

Lawson is pushing a polling system based on vote centers she says would consolidate and centralize voting locations at sites capable of accommodating up to 10,000 voters apiece on Election Day. Current precincts, under state law, limit the number of voters in each one to between 1,200 and 1,400 people.

Voters are not assigned to particular polling locations in vote center counties – they can vote anywhere, Lawson’s proposal would also do away with paper ballots, in favor of computers that tally votes and transmit them by high-speed internet.

“This is a way to reduce locations, reduce the number of poll workers needed, reduce the expenses as it relates to poll workers like meals, to reduce the number of voting equipment, the amount of storage space that they need,” he says. “Lots of different efficiencies that the counties might find. And lets face it—counties are looking for every dollar that they can right now.”

Morgan County Clerk Stephanie Elliott, says vote centers would be convenient for busy voters on election days.

“I anticipate that they will be as excited as we are. I mean I kind of just think if there was a way where we could get one maybe by one of the Walmart’s or where there’s lots of shopping,” she says. “You know someone that’s out and about, rather than have to take off work or you know change their schedule for the day to vote. They could just vote where they’re at.”

A number of counties have rejected vote centers thus far because of political squabbling, worries about the security of electronic voting or a desire to implement them only after the 2012 presidential election was complete.