
U.S. Representative

John Spratt

South Carolina # 5th District

News Release

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House Votes to Phase Out Punch Cards

WASHINGTON – The House today passed and sent to the Senate a bill aimed at phasing out punch card voting by the November 2002 general election. The bipartisan legislation, cosponsored by U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC), authorizes one-time payments to states and counties – up to \$6,000 per precinct – to replace punch card machines with more reliable equipment.

Spratt said the funds authorized by the bill – \$400 million nationwide – cover 90% of the cost of replacing the machines. For counties whose per-capita income is within the lowest quartile for such units of government, the payment would be 95% of the cost. The maximum payment a state or county could receive would be \$6,000 for each precinct that used punch card machines in the November 2000 election.

For states or localities that do not want to, or are unable to, replace their punch card machines, the bill provides funds to help them make technical improvements to their existing machines. The maximum payment under this option would be \$2,000 for each precinct that used punch card voting machines in the November 2000 election. Participants in this program could not also participate in the program to replace the punch card voting machines.

Spratt said the bill also establishes a commission to serve as a clearinghouse for information on federal elections and oversee the development of voluntary election standards; provides funds to states to improve the administration of elections; requires states to adopt minimum election standards; and includes provisions intended to facilitate absentee voting by military and other overseas voters.

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