March 7, 2006
TUESDAY

Search

Submit An Ad
Marketplace
Auto Shopper
Bridal Connection
Careersite
Classifieds
Coupon Book
Employment Guide
Employment TV
Employment TV Live
Local Shopping
Real Estate Guide
News
Regional
National
Finance
Health
Politics
Technology
Weather
Sports
Oakland A's
Oakland Raiders
S.F. 49ers
S.F. Giants
S.J. Sharks
G.S. Warriors
Cal
Stanford
Entertainment
Celebrity News
Just For Fun
Movie Times
The Buzz
@Recess
Special Sections
Chronology '05
Our Town
Discover Oroville
Paper Services
Subscription Services
Site Services
Contact Us
Retail Ad Rates
Classified Ad Rates
National Ad Rates
Location Map

Link To Article Print Article Email Article

Article Launched: 03/07/2006 3:47 AM PST

E-vote pioneer will return to paper ballots

Piedmont, first in state to use touch screens, returns to old technology in city balloting today

By Ian Hoffman, STAFF WRITER

For elections, Alameda Coun-

ty is headed back to the future, and what that future looks like will play out today in the city of Piedmont.

After six years of electronic ballots, voters in Piedmont's municipal elections will be marking their choices on paper ballots, and so far that is the direction Alameda County is headed for the June primary.

The city has a history of being a pioneer in voting technologies for the county, even for the state. Piedmont made California history in 1999 with the state's first election conducted on ATM-like touch-screen voting machines. Riverside County and Alameda County were close behind, and by the last statewide race more than a third of state voters were casting fully electronic ballots.

Yet paperless touch-screen voting has fallen from favor after three years of criticism from computer scientists and voting activists who say fraud and errors on the machines can be virtually undetectable. California and many other states now require that voters have some form of paper printout to double-check their electronic vote and that elections officials use that paper for recounts.

But most voting machine makers did not adapt their touch screens for printers intime for use in elections this spring and early summer. So Piedmont is headed back to plain paper ballots, and so probably is Alameda, at least for the June elections.

Voters in Piedmont or anywhere in the county also will have a chance to experiment today with a new, low-tech variant designed for those with disabilities. It is a ballot-marking tablet called VotePad, with plastic pages and audio instructions to guide voters in marking their choices. Ellen Theisen, founder of VotersUnite, led the invention of VotePad as a simple, nontechnical answer to the demand and federal legal requirement for handicapped-accessible voting. Elections workers at the city community center and other polling places will be on hand to help voters try out the VotePad.

Acting Alameda County Registrar of Voters Elaine Ginnold has been around long enough to see voting systems come full circle, from the old paper punch cards to paperless electronic voting and now back to optically scanned paper.

"I think there's a lot of irony in it," she said Monday. "It's very interesting that five years later we're here in this position without any electronic voting equipment."

Contact Ian Hoffman at

ihoffman@angnewspapers.com.

RETURN TO TOP

TOP JOBS
Jobs | Homes | Renta

INSURANCE
Nevin & Witt Insurance

OFFICE MANAGE
St. John's Episcopal Church

LEGAL

All Listings

ChicoER.com

Other Article

MORE BAY AREA HEADLINES

- Athlete gunned dow mourned
- Eden hospital plans lock out workers when strike ends
- Levee breach in So County floods farmlan
- E-vote pioneer will return to paper ballots
- Berkeley about to g troubled store the boo
- Oaklander turns cri eye to Buddhism
- Protesting parents k kids home from schoo
- Report: Medicare dr plan is not saving seni much
- Time is slipping on package
- Military recruiters g campus pass
- Schools, teachers k up attacks
- UC ordered to refun millions
- Prosecutor: Nut Cas proved own guilt