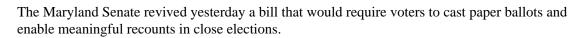http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/politics/bal-md.notebook06apr06,0,7093202.story?coll=bal-mdpolitics-headlines

From the Baltimore Sun

Senate revives bill for paper ballots

Capital Notebook

April 6, 2007

The Maryland Senate revived yesterday a bill that would require voters to cast paper ballots and enable meaningful recounts in close elections.

The bill, which received preliminary approval from the Senate yesterday, essentially would scrap the state's existing high-tech computers, which operate much like ATMs but do not produce paper receipts.

Those machines, made by Diebold Election Systems Inc., would most likely be replaced with more affordable optical-scan machines in time for the 2010 gubernatorial elections. Voters would mark their choices by filling in ovals or completing a broken arrow on a paper ballot, and then feed the ballot into a computer for tallying. The ballot would be saved in the event of a recount.

The proposal has one important caveat: The state has to come up with the money to pay for the new equipment next year or the bill becomes moot. But Sen. Roy P. Dyson, a Southern Maryland Democrat, said that the bill's 2010 timetable should give the legislature time to work out financing.

[Melissa Harris

Bill ties truancy, driving permit

The Maryland Senate approved a measure yesterday that would prevent habitual truants from obtaining learner's permits.

The Senate voted 40-7 with slight changes to the bill, which passed overwhelmingly in the House last month. The bill would require a student under 16 to submit an attendance record when applying for a driving permit. A student with more than 10 unexcused absences in the previous school semester would be ineligible for a permit.

The bill's lead sponsor, Del. Gerron S. Levi, a Prince George's County Democrat, has said the measure would be a useful tool to combat truancy, which has become a severe problem in her jurisdiction.

Those who voted against the measure said it might have the opposite effect. "I think this bill has untended consequences," said Sen. E.J. Pipkin, a Republican from the Eastern Shore. "I think it will lead to more drop-outs, not less."

[Kelly Brewington

Sex medication program gets OK

A novel Baltimore program intended to contain the spread of sexually transmitted diseases by allowing infected