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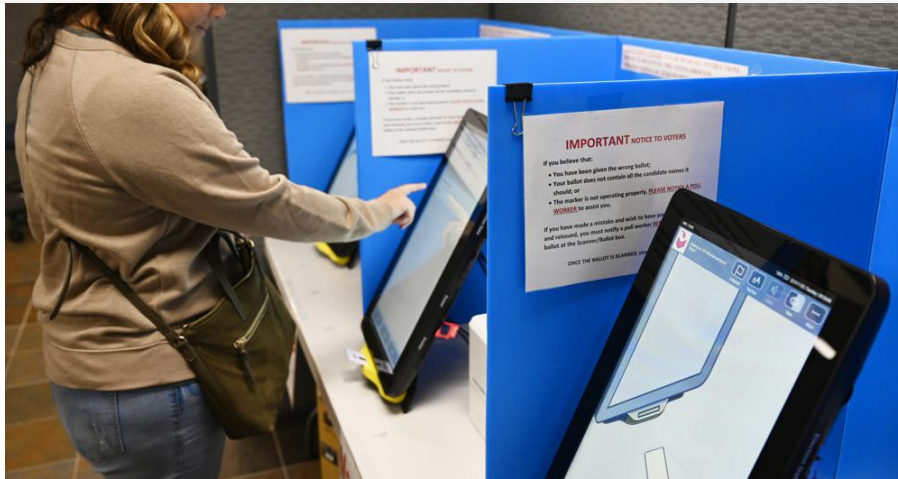
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# Lawyers spar over Georgia voting machine glitch, planned fix

By KATE BRUMBACK    September 29, 2020

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ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia election officials say they're implementing a software change to fix a glitch in the state's new voting machines. But election integrity activists say the state is downplaying the problem and putting the security of the upcoming election at risk.

During preelection testing on the new touchscreen voting machines

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candidate U.S. Senate race. Under certain circumstances, not all of the

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Election officials initially thought they would have to rebuild the

database but then discovered they could fix the problem through a software change, said Bryan Tyson, an attorney representing the state.

Lawyers representing election integrity activists told U.S. District Judge Amy Totenberg this problem and others bolster their arguments that the voting machines are not secure and aren't ready for use. Totenberg is presiding over a lawsuit that challenges the constitutionality of the state's brand new voting machines and she's expected to rule soon on requests that the state be ordered to ditch its new voting machines and use hand-

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Totenberg held a three-day hearing on the requests earlier this month

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raised the database error in a filing late Friday. Instead, she held an emergency hearing Monday.

Tyson repeatedly called the problem a “very minor issue” and told the judge the activists “have jumped to conclusions not fully understanding what is happening, and they are trying to make a mountain out of what really is a mole hill that is not really as big a deal as they are alleging.”

The fact that the issue was discovered during preelection testing shows that the system worked the way it was supposed to, Tyson argued.

Eric Coomer, an executive with Dominion Voting Systems, which

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with the way the voting machines communicate with the underlying

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will address the issue.

The new software will have to be tested and approved by a third-party vendor, and then state election officials will have to load it onto 159 USB drives to be delivered to the counties, the activists said in a court filing. County election officials will then have to install the software on hundreds of voting machines, reprogram the machines and then do preelection testing, the filing says.

At least some of the machines will have to be ready in about two weeks, when in-person early voting begins Oct. 12.

“I mean, this is a mountain. It is not a mole hill,” David Cross, a lawyer

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He questioned whether the state would get federal certification for

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measures would be taken throughout the process.

In a written declaration filed by the activists, J. Alex Halderman, a University of Michigan professor and a leading expert on election security, said “in complex computerized systems like Georgia’s election equipment, last-minute changes, even seemingly small ones, can introduce serious and difficult-to-foresee consequences.”

A change now would not leave enough time for rigorous testing and security measures, and “would provide an attractive vector for attackers seeking to spread malware,” he wrote.

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make big changes, that the election was effectively underway. Cross

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34,000 machines is a much bigger change than switching to hand-marked paper ballots, which is

already the backup plan if there's a problem with the voting machines.

Tyson accused the activists of engaging in "a disinformation campaign about Georgia elections," prompting angry responses from Cross and Bruce Brown, an attorney representing the Coalition for Good Governance and individual voters.

Brown told the judge there are at least two other issues that further support their arguments about the machines' weaknesses. Election officials in one county told them that, during preelection testing, the tabulation of absentee ballots did

Tyson said the absentee ballot tabulation problem was due to a

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local election officials and the other issue arose because a write-in candidate who has a number in his

name while there are only letters on the keyboard.

Totenberg asked questions throughout the hearing and, once it was over, ordered the state to submit additional documentation about testing of the modified software and any documentation filed for federal certification.

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