



**Press Clippings
November 2019
Web**

Title: Twitchy touchscreens, tiny font, button confusion: Did Philly's new voting machines pass their test?

Author: Michaela Winberg, Ryan Briggs, and Nina Feldman

Link: <https://billypenn.com/2019/11/05/twitchy-touchscreens-tiny-font-button-confusion-did-phillys-new-voting-machines-pass-their-test/>

Date: November 5, 2019

Mayor Jim Kenney's first experience using Philly's brand-spanking-new touchscreen voting machines? Positive.

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Some voters agreed with Philly's mayor. But people all over the city have reported issues with voting via the new devices.

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"The same stuff that normally dominates, dominated today," Custodio said, "Election judges oversleeping, stuff like that. From our perspective this has been a normal election."

To use the virgin voting machines, which cost the city roughly \$30 million — and were rushed into place so they could be tested before the presidential referendum in 2020 — voters inserted a blank paper ballot and then made selections on a touchscreen. Their choices were printed onto that paper ballot, which was then presented to them for an accuracy check before the final OK.

It might sound easy enough — and for many voters, it was. But some Philadelphians ran into complications.

Paper ballots come with their own issues

The idea behind the paper ballots is that they provide more accountability, since they leave a paper trail that can be audited — but they did present some confusion.

Germantown resident Jorge Brito said he heard the paper didn't arrive on time to his polling place. About a dozen people had to wait in line until the equipment was delivered, he said, and election officials didn't let people start voting until around 7:35 — more than a half hour after the polls opened.

Custodio, of the City Commissioners office, attributed problems like these to confusion about where the materials were stored. Poll workers didn't receive the ballots separately — they were inside the back of the machine itself.

"We have had several people, that when the technicians got there, they were like, 'Oh, they had their paper ballots,'" Custodio said.

The paper ballot system also created confusion for people used to pressing "vote" just once under older voting systems. The newer machines require voters to push the button twice.

The first press submits the on-screen picks to the machine, which then prints them onto the paper ballot and ejects a hard copy for review. Voters must then press this button again to confirm the correct choices were reflected on the paper. That last step is necessary in order for a vote to count and be tallied.

But in the city's 18th Ward, which covers parts of Fishtown and Kensington, minority inspector Monica King said some voters simply walked away after paper ballot was ejected for review.

"After their paper ballot is spit out," King said, "they're leaving the booth without confirming their vote." She noted that at least one ballot had to be invalidated by poll workers after a voter walked away without pressing the confirmation button a second time.

"Thankfully we learned from that early mistake," she said. "Now the machine inspectors are making sure that everybody has cast their ballot before they leave."

Are the touchscreens too sensitive?

King also said election workers in her division had to tell voters to roll up their shirt and coat sleeves to avoid overly sensitive touchscreens.

"People's puffy coats are causing them to select or deselect candidates when they rub against the screen," the inspector told WHYY. "It just happened with an older woman in the booth. She almost spoiled her ballot and she didn't know what was going on. We realized it was her coat."

At least three other voters had similar problems, per King, all traced to coat sleeves or shirt cuffs brushing against the screens. Voter Michele Harper also described machines automatically changing her votes when she visited the polls.

“When I hit all Democrat, it changed all my votes to Republican,” said Harper, who cast her vote at Academy House on Locust near 15th. “Every one, all down the line.”

“Do our votes count?” she wondered at the time. “This is terrifying.”

Luckily, Harper noticed before she submitted an incorrect ballot. She called out to the poll workers, who helped her manually adjust her selections.

The City Commissioners office checked in with the judge of elections at Academy House where Harper voted, per staffer Custodio, who said they found any machine issues there could be attributed to human error.

When the font is too small — or too big

Mark Feinstein, who voted at Peirce College in Center City, navigated the new machines with a few hiccups — some of which he thinks could impact other older voters.

Among the issues: the font size on the printed ballot. Feinstein had trouble reviewing his selections because the voting booth was dimly lit, he said, and he couldn’t make out the small type.

“That’s brutal for most,” Feinstein said. “I could barely read it.”

Small font aside, Feinstein also said it was hard for him to choose all the candidates he wanted because of crowding.

“Why have so many contests on the same screen?” Feinstein added. “I figured it out, but it takes longer versus a new screen for each category. I can see senior citizens or others missing some contests.”

Custodio said all poll workers were trained to help voters increase or decrease the machine’s font size to their liking — there is even a “night mode” that can be enabled for sensitive eyes in during evening polling hours.

But King, from the 18th Ward in Fishtown, said voters themselves were rarely aware of these facts or knew to ask for help resizing the ballot. Worse, when

poll workers at her division did help a voter enlarge the font size on a machine, it only created more problems.

“The problem is instead of a two-page ballot, the ballot becomes 32 pages,” King said. “The voter asked the machine inspector to change it back to the regular font.”

Like ordering lunch at Wawa

Not all first-time experiences were negative. By and large, most voters were able to figure out the unfamiliar machines.

Karin, a 72-year-old Mount Airy resident who declined to give her last name, said although it took her a little longer, she was able to cast her vote. She compared the new voting system to the touchscreen sales kiosks at Wawa.

Others found the screens intuitive. Nicetown voter Andrea Akins said the machines worked fine for her — although her elderly mother was a bit confused. “I had to step in and kind of walk my mom through it,” she said.

Katie Coble, 31, voted in Norris Square. She said she found the new machines more trustworthy than the old system.

“I found it to be easier to use,” she said. “Before the buttons were kind of hard to know if you pushed them and so the touch screen made everything really clear and you also had confirmation with your paper ballot that everything you pushed was correct.

Hope Herbert voted in Holmesburg. She wasn’t crazy about the new machines, but said they weren’t hard to figure out. “It’s the new age, we all got to adapt to what’s going on,” she said.

“It’s just the way the world is — everything is digital, so you gotta go with the flow or be left behind. If you know how to work a computer, it’s nothing but tapping a button.”

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Title: Cost of college was unchanged for all students at Peirce College

Author: Keystone Business News Reports

Link: <https://keystonebusinessnews.com/stories/513742938-cost-of-college-was-unchanged-for-all-students-at-peirce-college>

Date: November 8, 2019

Tuition and fees were unchanged for 2018-19 at Peirce College, according to recent data from the U.S. Department of Education.

Pennsylvania students paid \$15,060 to attend the four-year private not-for-profit institution in both the 2017-18 and 2018-19 academic years.

Data shows 100 percent of full-time undergraduates who started school in 2015-16 received student financial aid in some form. In all, 38 students received grants or scholarships totaling \$457,238 and 4 students took out student loans totaling more than \$15,776.

Including all undergraduates (1,357), 1,080 students used grants or scholarships totaling \$5.3 million, and 1,051 students took out \$9 million in federal student loans.

The cost of attending:

	Enrollment	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Change in tuition and fees 2015-16 to 2018-19
In-state	~1,208	\$14,184	\$14,472	\$15,060	\$15,060	6.2%

Undergraduate financial aid

The following data includes only full-time students who began an undergraduate program at Peirce College in 2015-16.

Type of Aid	Number of students receiving aid	Percent receiving aid	Total amount of aid received	Average amount of aid per student
Federal grants	36	95%	\$165,544	\$4,598
State / local grant or scholarship	10	26%	\$36,711	\$3,671
Institutional grants or scholarships	37	97%	\$254,983	\$6,891
Grant or scholarship aid total	38	100%	\$457,238	\$12,033
Federal student loans	4	11%	\$15,776	\$3,944
Other student loans	0	0%	\$0	-
Student loan aid	4	11%	\$15,776	\$3,944
Total student aid	38	100%	-	-

Title: Peirce College enrolls 1,271 undergrads

Author: Keystone Business News Reports

Link: <https://keystonebusinessnews.com/stories/513479973-peirce-college-enrolls-1-271-undergrads>

Date: November 12, 2019

At Peirce College, 78 percent of undergraduate students are nontraditional students - age 25 or older - and 72 percent are female, according to the latest disclosure from the U.S. Department of Education.

The four-year private not-for-profit institution in Philadelphia enrolled 1,357 students in fall 2018, including 1,271 in undergraduate and 86 in graduate programs, data shows. 16.8 percent of undergraduates transferred from another college or university.

89 percent of undergraduates are residents of Pennsylvania, and 11 percent are residents of other states.

The undergraduate student body is comprised mostly of students who identify as Black or African American (62 percent) and white (18 percent).

Peirce College undergraduate enrollment

	Total	Portion of Total
Undergraduate enrollment	1,271	
Transfers	213	16.8%
Male	~356	28%
Female	~915	72%
Age 24 and under	~267	21%
Age 25 and over	~991	78%
In-state residence	~1,131	89%
Out of state residence	~140	11%
Asian	~38	3%
Black or African American	~788	62%
Hispanic/Latino	~89	7%
White	~229	18%
Two or more races	~13	1%
Enrolled in distance education	~686	54%
Enrolled in some distance education	~737	58%
Not enrolled in distance education	~51	4%