

New voting equipment will visit Harrah's casino

By Phil Sutin

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St. Louis County's new electronic voting machines will pay a visit to the county's home of slot machines next Wednesday, as part of an effort by the county **Election Board** to display and promote its new gear to voters.

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The voting equipment be at **Harrah's St. Louis-Riverport Casino and Hotel** in Maryland Heights. They will be in a portion of the ballroom, well removed from the gambling machines. The ballroom is in the buffet area. People going there do not have to obtain gaming cards to reach it.

The visit will be from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Election officials will set up three demonstration areas and will have staff members there to answer questions. Members of the **League of Women Voters** will pass out voting-related literature. Participants can come at any time in the four hours to learn about the equipment.

Jeff Tarr, a spokesman for Harrah's, chuckled when a reporter said the two machines appear similar. "They do mimic each other," he said.

The county for the first time on Aug. 8 will use voting machines — whose overall shape is similar to slot machines — for touch screening voting. The touch-screen machines mainly are for the disabled and others who might have difficulty with the optical scan ballot that most voters will use.

However, the county already is using touch-screen machines for voters who go to the Election Board headquarters in Maplewood to cast absentee votes for the primary. The county also plans to solely use touch-screen machines for low-turnout elections, because they use less paper than optical-scan machines.

The visit to Harrah's with the voting equipment is aimed at helping voters get more familiar with the equipment before they go to the polls

The League of Women Voters suggested Harrah's as a site for a voting machine demonstration, Tarr said. The casino's location is well known and easy to reach, he said.

The casino also expects that some of its 2,000 employees also will participate in the voting demonstration, Tarr said.

Harrah's urges employees to be poll workers. The company also encourages employees to vote. It asks new hires if they want to register and points out to workers who come from out of town that they need to register if they want to cast ballots, he said.

The state tightly regulates casinos. "Why wouldn't we want to employees to vote? It makes good business sense," Tarr said.

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