VVSG 2.0 – A Summary

What is the EAC and VVSG?

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). The EAC is an independent, bipartisan commission charged with developing guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, and serving as a national clearinghouse of information on election administration.

The Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) are a set of specifications and requirements against which voting systems can be tested to determine if they meet required guidelines. These guidelines are developed and maintained by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and are voluntary for states to adopt.

There are 3 revisions of the VVSG standards:

- VVSG 1.0 (2005)*
- VVSG 1.1 (2015)*
- VVSG 2.0 (2021)

The "VVSG 2.0" guidelines incorporate the latest technological developments for voting systems in the United States.

All EAC-approved fielded systems across the nation are currently certified to the VVSG 1.0*. Please check with your election provider or your State Election Authority to confirm the VVSG version your jurisdiction is using.

The VVSG 2.0 is a significant overhaul of the VVSG 1.0*, with an updated structure and content than the previous versions. It includes high-level principles and guidelines coupled with the latest technical requirements that emphasize usability, accessibility, security, privacy, and interoperability.

The VVSG 2.0 guidelines have 3 categories:

- **Principles and Guidelines** - Describe the desired outcomes and characteristics of voting systems, covering aspects such as functionality, accessibility, security, privacy, usability, and auditability.

- **Requirements and Test Assertions** - Specify how to measure and verify the compliance of voting systems. The requirements and test assertions are organized into four categories: system, hardware, software, and human factors.

- **Updates and Improvements** - The VVSG 2.0 represents the latest in both industry and technology best practices, requiring significant redevelopment in many aspects of voting systems. The VVSG 2.0 was unanimously adopted by the EAC commissioners on February 10, 2021.
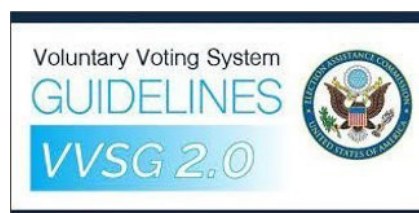
The Big Picture – What's Changing?

VVSG 2.0 standards are a major change for voting systems in the United States. These are the new baseline requirements for all voting system manufacturers to include in their basic voting systems.

The standards are built on:
- 15 principles
- 53 major requirements
- 469 minor requirements

The new standards cover aspects of functionality, accessibility, security, privacy, usability, and auditability. A few examples:

- New Voting System Test Labs must be certified to test 2.0 systems, follow new testing procedures, and perform penetration testing

- There are new hardware and software requirements that drive product development around expanded accessibility support, a higher level of security and new guidelines for user interfaces.

- Accessibility support now extends to back-office applications for election officials and to all poll worker functions in the polling place.

These guidelines are considered the new "table stake" requirements for voting system manufacturers.

After Nov 15, 2023 the EAC will only certify new voting systems using VVSG 2.0 guidelines or limited maintenance modifications to existing EAC-certified systems.

Know Before You Purchase

All states can voluntarily adopt the VVSG 2.0 standards when they are ready which provides flexibility for new voting system purchases. Rest assured, the existing VVSG 1.0* Certified systems are secure and approved for election usage. The new VVSG 2.0 standards simply take security, privacy, accessibility, and usability to the next level.

As your jurisdiction prepares to purchase future voting systems, it is important to understand that voting system manufacturers are allowed to continue selling their existing VVSG 1.0* certified systems while they work toward VVSG 2.0 Certification.

In addition, "VVSG 2.0 Certified" is the official stamp of approval from the EAC. Any other title like VVSG 2.0 Compliant or VVSG 2.0 Ready, most likely, means the manufacturer is claiming to be working toward a 2.0 certification.

Before your jurisdiction commits to a new voting product or solution, ensure you ask the right question...

What version of VVSG Certified systems are you selling?

Source(s)

1. Federal Register :: Proposed Voluntary Voting System Guidelines 2.0
2. Voluntary Voting System Guidelines Version 2 - EAC
3. Voluntary Voting System Guidelines | U.S. Election Assistance ... - EAC
4. Handbook for VVSG 2.0 Usability and Accessibility Test Strategies
5. VVSG 2.0 FAQs - Hart InterCivic

Footnote:
*VVSG 1.1 was a slight modification of VVSG 1.0. The EAC adoption of VVSG 1.1 was delayed. Manufacturers never developed a certified system using VVSG 1.1 guidelines.