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In one North Carolina county, more than 4,500 votes were lost in this election because officials mistakenly believed a computer that stored ballots electronically could hold more data than it did.

And in San Francisco, a malfunction with custom voting software could delay efforts to declare the winners of four races for county supervisor.

In the Ohio precinct in question, the votes are recorded to eight memory locations, including a removable cartridge, according to Verified Voting Foundation, an e-voting watchdog group. After voting ends, the cartridge is either transported to a tabulation facility or its data sent via modem.

Kimball Brace, president of the consulting firm Election Data Services, said it's possible the fault lies with the software that tallies the votes from individual cartridges rather than the machines or the cartridges themselves.

Either way, he said, such tallying software ought to have a way to ensure that the totals don't exceed the number of voters.

County officials did not return calls seeking details.

Matthew Damschroder, director of the Franklin County Board of Elections, told The Columbus Dispatch that on one of the three machines at that precinct, a malfunction occurred when its cartridge was plugged into a reader and generated a faulty number. He could not explain how the malfunction occurred.

Damschroder said people who had seen poll results on the election board's Web site called to point out the discrepancy. The error would have been discovered when the official count for the election is performed later this month, he said.

The reader also recorded zero votes in a county commissioner race on the machine.

Other electronic machines used in Ohio do not use the type of computer cartridge involved in the error, state officials say.

But in Perry County, a punch-card system reported about 75 more votes than there are voters in one precinct. Workers tried to cancel the count when the tabulator broke down midway through, but the machine instead double-counted an unknown number in the first batch. The mistake will be corrected, officials say.

Meanwhile, in San Francisco, a glitch occurred with software designed by Election Systems & Software Inc. for the city's new "ranked-choice voting," in which voters list their top three choices for municipal offices. If

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no candidate gets a majority of first-place votes outright, voters' second and third-place preferences are then distributed among candidates who weren't eliminated in the first round.

When the San Francisco Department of Elections tried a test run Wednesday, some of the votes didn't get counted. The problem was attributed to a programming glitch that limited how much data could be accepted, a threshold that did not account for high voter turnout.



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