



Working Families Party Statement in Support of Optical Scan Voting Machines

As New York counties and the City of New York move closer to making decisions about voting systems to replace our current mechanical lever machines, the Working Families Party of New York State urges adoption of precinct-based optical scan systems. We believe that these systems best meet the requirements of our state law and the federal Help America to Vote Act (HAVA).

Optical scan machines use paper ballots that can be counted by hand or by using scanners. They have a number of advantages over touch-screen machines. First, they are cheaper – statewide, the cost difference would run into tens of millions of dollars, and in New York City the initial and continuing costs may be half or less than the cost of electronic voting touch screen or pushbutton machines. Besides wasting money, the high cost of electronic voting machines would likely lead to too few being purchased, resulting in long lines at the polling place. Second, optical scan systems are more accessible to voters with disabilities and minority languages. Third, and most important, the paper ballots used with precinct-based optical scan machines provide an easily guarded, easily recounted paper audit trail.

As we are all aware, in a number of jurisdictions using electronic voting machines, questions have been raised about the validity and accuracy of the vote count due to high percentages of lost votes and extra “phantom” votes. With the flimsy, heat-sensitive, difficult-to-handle-and-count paper trail with tiny print size offered by electronic voting systems, such irregularities would be costly and time-consuming to resolve.

Our own experience in New York tells us that the ability to re-count and audit a disputed vote is vital to the legitimacy of our own government. Even if electronic voting machines were entirely reliable, - widespread doubts, combined with the difficulty of recounting votes when there are disputed outcomes, would undermine confidence in our elections.

Optical scan paper ballots offer a reliable, auditable, cost-effective alternative to computerized voting machines. Our Boards of Election know how to safeguard and handle paper ballots. An optical scan system, along with provisions for meaningful audits and basic security safeguards, would temper public skepticism about the integrity and security of elections.

The advantages of optical scan voting are widely recognized. A recent *New York Times* editorial says, “The best voting technology now available uses optical scanning.”

When New York replaces its mechanical lever voting machines, New Yorkers deserve the most reliable, trustworthy election equipment available. In our opinion, the precinct-based optical scan system is the best choice. We urge all members of all parties to work for its adoption.