



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

SCOTT M. STRINGER
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer
before the NYC Board of Elections on Proposed Voting Systems**

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Good Afternoon, I would like to start by thanking the New York City Board of Elections (NYC BOE) Executive Director, John Ravitz, and the Commissioners of the Board for holding not only this hearing but also the demonstrations of voting systems in each borough. Allowing the public to view and comment on proposed voting systems is an essential step toward ensuring the system selected will meet the needs of New York City voters.

Both the direct recording electronic (DRE) and optical scan voting machine technology presented at the NYC BOE borough demonstrations allowed attendees to touch and feel what voting will look like in the near future. Following the borough demonstrations and many conversations with voters, I strongly urge the NYC BOE to select optical scan voting technology for several reasons.

First, optical scan technology is a tried and true mechanism used in elections across the country. The optical scan voting technology has been used in Oklahoma for over a decade without issue and many large states have used the technology for years including Oregon, Arizona, Michigan, Ohio, Rhode Island and West Virginia. New York City should capitalize on the data and real world experiences from around the country which point to optical scan as an effective and reliable technology. Municipalities which have purchased DRE voting technology machines since the "Help America Vote Act" (HAVA) implementation have reported serious issues concerning machine malfunction. Miami-Dade County in Florida has even gone so far as to consider replacing their \$25 million DRE machines with optical scan machines after only three years.

Second, the verified paper trail created by optical scan voting machines is essential to protecting New York City elections from fraud and keeping public faith in the election process. The marked ballot of an optical scan voting machine serves as a reliable record in the event of an election dispute or a recount, while DRE machines offer no actual voter marked record. Ensuring a paper trail gives New York voters faith that although any technology may be fallible, there will always be a secondary means of counting the true vote of an election.

Another benefit of optical scan voting technology comes from the familiarity of its ballot marking technique. The optical scan bubble marking ballot is familiar to many more voters from school forms and tests or other common paperwork they have known. A voting technology which is inherently familiar to the general voter population will create greater ease of use and accessibility.

According to preliminary studies by the Taskforce on Election Integrity, the cost difference between DRE and optical scan machines is substantial. The study indicates where one optical scan machine may be able to serve an entire precinct; New York would need to purchase three or four DRE machines to serve the same number of voters. While I do not think cost should be sole determining factor of choosing our voting machines there needs to be consideration give to the notion New York City would have purchase roughly four times the number of DRE machines than optical scan.

Lastly, I want to stress that any voting system chosen in New York must be fully accessible to voters with disabilities. Under HAVA, people with disabilities are guaranteed privacy in their vote. In New York City, there are an estimated one million people with disabilities; they must have full and independent access to any new voting technology. The selected voting machines must have the ability for a disabled voter to vote easily in his or her local precinct. Without an additional mechanism to allow voters with disabilities the ability to vote in privacy, the process will never be fully democratic.

Overall, optical scan voting technology offers reliability, effectiveness and familiarity to voters at a lower cost than DRE voting technology. I urge the NYC BOE to fully consider today's comments in the voting machine selection process. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with the NYC BOE in educating voters on new voting machine systems and choosing a system which will serve all voter needs.