



News from State Senator

18th Senatorial District

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Joint Testimony before the NYC Board of Elections In Support of Optical Scan Voting Machines on Tuesday, January 23, 2007

by

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21st Senate District

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23rd Senate District

Assemblymember James F. Brennan

44th Assembly District

Assemblymember Hakeem Jeffries

57th Assembly District

Assemblymember Annette Robinson

56th Assembly District

Council Member Letitia James

35th Council District

Thank you for holding this hearing. We are here to express our concerns about the new voting machines that the Board of Elections in the City of New York will select for use in and after 2007. We need to be absolutely sure that every voter's vote is counted in every election.

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Optical scan systems are a much more reliable option — tried and tested by voters for many years with an established track record in contrast to the evolving electronic voting machine technology.

The reasons that we support the Paper Ballot and Optical Scan system are as follows:

- 1. With paper ballot and optical scan systems, all voters use an identical ballot and the same system.** Absentee, disabled, military, and provisional voters use the same ballot.
- 2. Paper ballots are easily understood by voters and are inherently voter verified.**
- 3. Paper ballots allow each voter to vote only once.** Each voter is given a single ballot when signing in at the polling place. (Some DREs require “Smart Cards” to be inserted in the computer to allow voting.) DREs can be compromised and used to vote several times.
- 4. Precinct-based optical scanners allow voters to correct mistakes and detect over-votes and under-votes.** Incorrectly completed ballots (e.g., over-voted ballots, smudged ballots, etc.) will be rejected by the scanner. Voters can then exchange the spoiled ballot for a new blank ballot and correct their mistakes. In the case of under-votes, they have the option of completing the same ballot or having the scanner accept it as is.
- 5. Paper ballots for optical scanners are easy to recount by hand.** Paper ballot lay-outs are clear and on quality paper, whereas DRE paper records have light, quickly-fading print on thermal, ATM-type paper which make recounts difficult for DREs.



6. Paper ballots are easier to vote on. Some people, particularly the ELderly, find computers unfamiliar and will find the marking of a paper ballot more comfortable than using DREs.

7. Voting will take less time and most jurisdictions have no waiting lines with paper ballots. Separate ballot marking devices for the voters who need an assistive device to mark their ballot will enable other voters to continue voting even when it takes longer for a disabled person, an elderly person, or someone needing to use the multi-lingual features of the marking device to vote. Optical scanners take just seconds to read and verify a ballot, and no problems with lines are experienced in states using precinct based scanners.

8. Only one optical scanner and one small marking-device per precinct will require storage between elections. Optical scanners and ballot markers are much smaller than DREs and can be stacked in storage, requiring far less storage space and cost during the year than DRE systems. They are also small, and easy to transport to and from polling places during elections and do not require professional movers to handle them.

9. The scanner only counts votes; therefore, it is much less complex and will require much less maintenance and upgrading over the years than DREs, which are a newer and unproven technology.

It is imperative that these new systems are not only secure, accessible and affordable, but also understandable and manageable by our voters, poll workers, and election staff. Therefore, we urge you to select a paper ballot/optical scanner (PBOS) system of voting.



10. Optical scanners are reliable, mature technology that has been used successfully in United States elections for 20 years. More precincts in the United States use paper ballots and precinct based optical scan systems than DREs. Many states are now adopting PBOS systems to meet HAVA compliance. Arizona, Minnesota, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma and West Virginia are some examples of states that have decided to use this reliable, auditable, cost effective voting technology.

For these reasons, we believe that electronic voting machines will diminish citizen participation in the electoral process. This is especially true among minority voters, senior citizens, and those who are not computer savvy. Electronic voting systems are vulnerable to software errors, viral attacks and security threats, and many New Yorkers will not want to participate in an election process that has the potential for corruption and undetectable manipulations on so many levels.

We hope that we can count on you to make the right choices for our constituents and yours.

Thank you.

