



## COLUMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Virginia Martin, Democratic Election Commissioner

October 28, 2009

Congratulations to Councilwoman Helen Foster for taking a courageous and principled stand in favor of electoral integrity and security, as well as fiscal prudence. As a county election commissioner, I am concerned that electronic vote-counting equipment will prevent me from complying with my responsibility under the New York State Constitution to ensure that the vote is counted accurately. If New York's counties cannot afford to use electronic equipment properly and securely, we should stick with what we can afford and what we already own—lever voting machines and accessible devices for voters with disabilities. I have alerted my county and the state legislature that I will refuse to certify any election in which the votes are electronically counted without sufficient audits to ensure that all election outcomes are accurate.

The Help America Vote Act sought to improve election administration and to ensure that every citizen can vote privately and independently at the poll site. New York City and New York State must now take a bold step forward in support of both objectives. The best interests of no one, surely not those with disabilities, will be served by electronic voting, which requires so much of our resources that a host of other critical needs will have to go unmet. Important programs for social, health, educational, and other needs, including those that would benefit voters with disabilities, will be sacrificed for the extravagance of electronic voting. We must not let necessities fall victim to an unnecessary state-imposed mandate.

In the spirit of progress, let us devote our energies not to the complexities of insecure electronic voting but forward to meet the needs of our communities while, with fiscal prudence, we confidently and effectively administer our elections. Using our tried-and-true system of lever voting machines paired with ballot-marking devices, we can do just that.