

Computers need software-independent verification. Lever machines need somebody to look in the back.

Electronic and mechanical systems have different vulnerabilities & security requirements.

The Issue

New Yorkers for Verified Voting (NYVV) and the League of Women Voters of New York State (LWVNYS) claim that lever machines "do not meet current standards for voting systems" and do not have the "higher level of ... accountability " that optical scanners offer.

They are wrong. By "current standards" they simply mean "computer standards" but it is inappropriate to apply computer standards to non-computerized machines, whether we are talking about voting machines or any other.

Why It Matters

New York is about to replace our mechanical lever voting machines with voter-marked paper ballots, with the votes to be counted by optical scanners (computers).

Computers are controlled by software, which no one can see. Unlike lever voting machines, which have large, easily-visible rods and gears, you can't just look in the back of a computer and see whether it is programmed correctly.

Unlike mechanical programming, software programming can produce unexpected errors, even after it passes all its tests prior to elections. That's why computer results need "software independent" verification - in other words, that's why paper ballots counted by scanners need to be audited by hand-counts after each election.

Lever machines can be "audited" more simply, since programming errors and tampering can be detected by looking inside, and by simple mechanical tests.

It Is Time To Apply Lever Machine Standards To Scanners

1. We can't open the back of a scanner and see that the ballot programming is correct.
2. The counties can't afford the post-election audits that scanners need.
3. The scanners won't last another 100 years with low-cost maintenance. New York State expects a deficit of over \$2 billion this year, and over \$18 billion within three years. This is the wrong time to switch to expensive new equipment that may have to be replaced soon after the 5-year warranty expires.

The League of Women Voters of the United States ("National League") improperly altered their position on electronic voting as approved by their 2006 national convention.

The National League selectively quoted--and changed the meaning of--their position on voting equipment as adopted at their 2006 convention, which was written to oppose touchscreen voting machines without a paper trail. The 2006 convention approved the following language:¹

...

Whereas: Paperless electronic voting systems are not inherently secure, can malfunction, and do not provide a recountable audit trail,

Therefore be it resolved that: The position on the Citizens' Right to Vote be interpreted to affirm that LWWVUS supports only voting systems that are designed so that:

1. they employ a voter-verifiable paper ballot or other paper record, said paper being the official record of the voter's intent; and

...

This wording was in reaction to the National League's 2004 and pre-2004 positions supporting unauditible touchscreen voting machines without a paper trail. By dropping the "Whereas" clause in a publication in January, 2009, the National League improperly changed the meaning of the 2006 convention's work and made it appear to demand a paper trail or paper ballot for all voting.

Statement By Teresa Hommel

As a member of the group that worked in 2004 and 2006 to wean the League of Women Voters of the United States away from support of paperless touchscreen voting machines, I attest that no one foresaw or intended that the 2006 position would be applied to non-electronic voting systems such as mechanical lever machines.

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¹ The full text of the 2006 resolution on electronic voting systems, and the history of the National League's positions: <http://www.leagueissues.org/>
More information: <http://www.wheresthepaper.org/ny.html#KeepLevers>
http://www.wheresthepaper.org/RebutLeverage_BackToBasicsApr11_09.pdf