



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins First Bill a Victory for Villages

JACK M. MARTINS March 4, 2011

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State Senator Jack M. Martins and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel were joined today by village elected officials to announce that their legislation, which is critical to the upcoming village elections, was recently signed into law. The Democratic process can now go forward on March 15 and in June when residents head to the polls to vote in their village elections.

The legislation (A.3093b/S.3216) sponsored by Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel allows village governments to continue using lever voting machines as they have in the past until December 31st, 2012.

On Friday, March 4, Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel joined with numerous village mayors throughout the 7th Senate District including Mayor Ralph Kreitzman of the Village of Great Neck and the Great Neck House to announce their intention to continue working for the benefit of their local communities.

Although current state election law, requires the use of electronic voting machines (scanner machines), they are not yet available for many villages, which is extremely problematic because of the upcoming village elections. Without this law, many villages would have been forced to either rent scan machines at an exorbitant cost or conduct their elections using paper ballots, which cost 55 cents each.

“This makes sense for our residents, saves taxpayers’ money and ensures that we preserve the integrity of our voting system while the county boards of election continue the transition to the new machines. Villages can now prepare for their upcoming elections with lever machines without having to worry about how the elections will be conducted,” said Senator Martins. “As the former mayor of a village and the chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Local Government, I am sensitive to the issues facing our local governments. We should allow them to use the process they have been using for years until the scanning machines become available. I thank Assemblywoman Schimel for sponsoring the measure in the Assembly and the Governor for signing it.”

“Voting is the essential component to a democratic system of government. This new law embodies the flexibility needed to react to the new challenges of the electronic voting age. I thank the New York Conference of Mayors and all of my village mayors, who worked with

myself and Senator Martins to make this new law happen. I also thank Governor Andrew Cuomo for recognizing the need for this critical legislation,” said Assemblywoman Schimel.

Peter Baynes, the Executive Director of the New York State Conference of Mayors (NYCOM), said, “Thanks to the concerted efforts of Senator Jack Martins and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel, villages throughout New York will continue to enjoy the benefits of efficient and affordable elections. Extending to villages the same authority school districts possess to utilize traditional lever-style voting machines makes sense for village voters and taxpayers. NYCOM greatly appreciates the swift response of the Assembly and Senate to this time-sensitive issue.”

Under this measure, villages are granted the same convenience as school districts, which are already authorized to use lever voting machines through 2012.

Mayor Marvin Natiss, Village of North Hills & President of NCVOA: “On behalf of the Nassau County Village Officials Association, I would like to thank State Senator Jack Martins and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel for their efforts in making this critical law happen.”

Mayor Charles Weiss, Village of Flower Hill: “On behalf of the residents of the Village of Flower Hill, I am grateful to Assemblywoman Schimel and Senator Martins for their constant vigilance and dedication to the best interests of local governments and the people they serve. Their hard work and Governor Cuomo’s cooperation on this bill means that the upcoming village elections will be able to proceed in an orderly and democratic manner.”

Mayor Ralph Kreitzman, Village of Great Neck: “This critical legislation was sponsored by two important elected officials, Assemblywoman Schimel and Senator Martins, who understand and support local government – the government that is closest to the people and which is most efficient and responsive to their needs. We now have some time to resolve the

difficult and costly, unfunded mandate that was thrust upon our villages.”

Mayor Jean Celender, Village of Great Neck Plaza: “We are relieved and appreciate that Governor Cuomo has signed this bill into law. Our residents will be able to go to the polls on March 15 and vote using the lever machines they know and are accustomed to using. Thanks to our representatives, Senator Jack Martins and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel, who acted quickly and responsively to sponsor legislation and helped get it passed so that we can continue to have efficient and affordable elections. Our Governor and state representatives understood the burdens to the villages and thankfully we now have some breathing room for switching to the newer electronic systems. We're hopeful that in the coming weeks and months there will be more companies available to supply the scanning machines and therefore more affordable options for their implementation.”

Mayor Susan Lopatkin, Village of Kensington: “Passing this important piece of legislation was critical for upcoming March village elections. Had it not been passed, villages would have been forced to utilize old fashioned paper ballots. This would have been an unacceptable cost in both dollars and time when lever machines have been used successfully for many years. Thanks to our smart and hard working legislators, Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel and Senator Jack Martins, this unfortunate turn of events was averted. I want to thank them for sponsoring this legislation and assisting in its timely passage.”

Mayor Barbara Donno, Village of Plandome Manor: “My thanks go to Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel for their bipartisan effort in getting this law, which is critical to the upcoming village elections, passed. The financial burden that would have been placed on the villages without passage of this bill was unacceptable. We are fortunate to have these two representatives who understand the importance of local government and are willing to work together to get things done.”

Mayor Robert Weitzner, Village of Port Washington North: "I am gratified that Assemblywoman Schimel and Senator Martins spearheaded the passing of this important legislation. The voting machine issue was particularly troublesome for the Village of Port Washington North. Without this legislation, we were being forced to either order scanning machines and paper ballots, or forgo machines entirely and go back to the dark ages and use paper ballots; Either method costing us thousands of dollars. I think I can speak for most villages, that given our size, staying status quo with the lever machines makes perfect sense and is the fiscally responsible thing to do. The vital process at which this new law was accomplished should be of vital importance to all. To bring together two NYS elected officials from opposite Houses, from opposite aisles, that have known each other for all of 2 months; to move this bill from the Assembly to the Senate in record time, and then to have the Governor sign it into law restores my faith that the NYS Legislature can in fact work perfectly if given the opportunity. And we have Assemblywoman Schimel and Senator Martins to thank for that."