



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

State Senator Liz Krueger Condemns Senate Republicans for Voting Down Amendment Adopting Optical Scanning as Statewide Voting Machine Standard

LIZ KRUEGER January 23, 2006

Albany, NY – State Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) sharply criticized her Senate Republican colleagues for voting against an amendment that would have adopted optical scanning as the standard statewide voting system. “We are a few months away from a federal mandate to have new voting machines in every county,” stated Senator Krueger. “Optical scanning is the only technology that will assure the voters of New York State that their votes are counted accurately. The fact that this amendment did not pass proves yet again that the Senate Republicans are more interested in protecting the desires of voting machine vendors than the voting rights of New Yorkers.”

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), a federal law that was passed in response to the 2000 Bush-Gore fiasco in Florida, requires all states to upgrade their election procedures by January 2006. This includes updating voting machines, registration processes, and poll worker training to ensure fair elections at all levels. Presently, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) has started legal action against New York State for not complying with HAVA. New York was the last state in the union to complete HAVA legislation. The package of legislation

languished in the Legislature for over two years and in the end the legislative leadership decided in favor of local decision-making by county boards of elections. The counties are in the process of choosing between purchasing PBOS (Precinct-Based Optical Scanning) machines, DRE (Direct Recording Electronic) systems, or some other voting technology.

The amendment that was rejected by the Senate Majority is also a free standing bill (S. 5625) sponsored by Senator John Sabini (D-Queens). This bill would require the State Board of Elections to adopt a statewide voting system using equipment bought through a competitive-bidding process which will become the exclusive, official voting system used in New York State starting in the Primary and General Elections of 2006 and thereafter. The voting machines would be PBOS and would be used in conjunction with precinct-based paper ballots, and a ballot marking device for the disabled.

In testimony presented before the State Board of Elections in December, Senator Krueger said, "I strongly urge the City of New York and the counties of New York State to reject DRE systems as it selects the HAVA-compliant voting technology that New Yorkers will be using for many years to come. As I see it, PBOS systems should be used for two reasons: 1) A PBOS system is more accurate, secure and recountable than a DRE system, and 2) A PBOS system will cost the City significantly less money in both the short and the long term. According to New Yorkers for Verified Voting, in a voting district with three lever machines, the cost for DRE machines will be \$36,000. The cost for the PBOS machines with a ballot-marking machine will only be \$10,000. Maintenance and storage costs – which will not be paid by federal funds – are significantly lower for the optical scanners than for the DRE machines. Because PBOS systems are simpler and more straightforward, it is both easier and cheaper to

train election assistance workers for PBOS systems. No one knows the expected life of a DRE machine, but some predict that they will have to be replaced in five years, to be paid by either the state or local government.”

Senator Krueger concluded earlier today, “a reliable voting technology is a basic requirement for the integrity of New York State’s elections. Equally important, that technology must be transparent and inspire voter confidence. It is clear that optical scanners are that technology and we will continue to push for its institution.”