



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel Strike Deal on Lever Machines, Paving Way for Permanent Solution

JACK M. MARTINS June 19, 2014

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Working together once again in a bipartisan manner to deliver for the community, Senator Jack Martins and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel announced that the New York State Legislature passed legislation they sponsored (S.7371A/ A.9321A) to allow villages, school districts and special districts to continue using lever voting machines for an additional year.

Without this bill, local governments and school districts would be forced to purchase or rent electronic voting machines at an exorbitant cost or use paper ballots in conducting their local, non-partisan elections. The legislation also paves the way for a permanent solution to address the problems that have hindered the ability of localities to transition to electronic voting machines.

Senator Martins, the Senate sponsor of the legislation, said, "Allowing schools, villages, and special districts to continue to use lever-style voting machines will help them save money and conduct elections with fair and accurate outcomes. These are non-partisan elections with small voter turnouts; they are completely different from a regular general election and need to be treated that way. Extending this exemption will deliver real relief to our schools and local governments," said Senator Martins.

Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel, the Assembly sponsor of the bill, said, “This legislation ensures that the democratic process in non-partisan elections will go forward while the State Board of Elections develops solutions to ease localities transition to electronic voting machines. For the first time, we are putting the government’s feet to the fire by forcing the State BOE to consider the fiscal and resource impact of its recommendations on local governments and school districts. ”

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) required states to adopt new voting machines in federal elections, and in implementing the Act, New York chose to mandate the use of new electronic machines for all elections. This has proven costly to local governments in both time and money.

This legislation will extend the current exemption allowing school districts and localities to use lever-style voting machines until December 31, 2015. Additionally, the New York State Board of Elections (State BOE) is required to conduct a report on the administration of elections by villages, school districts and special districts. The report, which must be submitted to the Governor and State Legislature by January 31, 2015, must include recommendations and guidance to localities on how to successfully transition to electronic voting systems. The report must also include an analysis of the cost and fiscal impact of these solutions on local governments and school districts. The bill also requires the State BOE to take into consideration recommendations proposed by various stakeholders, such as the New York State School Boards Association, the New York State Council of School Superintendents, the New York State Conference of Mayors, and the New York State Association of Counties.