



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS February 28, 2011

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Perhaps the most important part of our Democratic process is our citizens' ability to vote and elect those who will make the crucial decisions for our local governments. On the local level, villages provide our residents with basic services, from emergency services, water and garbage collection to snow removal. As the former mayor for a village for eight years, I am fully aware of the effectiveness of our local villages.

This March and June, residents will be going to the polls to elect fellow residents to serve on the various village boards. Our citizens must be able to vote in a system that is accurate and effective so that the Democratic process continues. It is critical for our system of government.

A recent change in election law mandated the use of electronic scanner machines for voting. However, when it became apparent that these would not be available in time for upcoming village elections, the New York State Legislature was forced to act. That's why I was proud to sponsor a bill that allows villages to continue to use the lever voting machines as they have in the past until the scanner machines are available.

This bi-partisan legislation was passed in the Senate and sponsored by Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel and passed in the Assembly. Governor Cuomo recently signed the bill into law. The integrity of our voting system has been preserved.

The alternative was simply not acceptable. It would have forced villages to use the paper ballots without the scanner machines. The ballots cost 55 cents each, placing a financial burden on our taxpayers. In a difficult financial time, our villages shouldn't be saddled with unnecessary expenses. Furthermore, it would require villages to provide the manpower necessary to count the ballots by hand.

As the chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Local Governments, I needed to take action to protect our election system. We sent the Governor a bill that makes sense, saves taxpayers money and makes sure we preserve the integrity of our voting system while the county boards of election continue the transition to the new machines. I was proud to have worked in a bi-partisan matter to pass this legislation that is important for villages and I want to thank the Governor for signing it. Villages can now prepare for their upcoming elections with lever machines without having to worry about how the elections will be conducted.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve.