



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senate Passes Bill Allowing Villages, School Districts and Special Districts to Continue Using Lever Voting Machines

JACK M. MARTINS February 29, 2012

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The New York State Senate passed a mandate relief bill that would allow school districts, special districts and villages to permanently continue using lever voting machines in their respective local elections, sponsored by Senator Jack Martins (S.6296). This legislation would remove the 2012 sunset of provisions that would allow the ability to use the lever voting machines.

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 use new machines for all elections. This has proven costly to local governments in both time and money.

"The new scanner machines were intended to move us forward, but unfortunately were a huge step back for many," said Senator Martins, chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Local Government. "There are school districts, villages, and special districts that simply do not have the access to the scanners. As the law stands, their only alternative would be a paper ballot and in this day and age it is not acceptable that we regress to a paper voting system. The prospect of our school districts and villages having to count thousands of paper ballots is absurd. Rather, the only way to insure the integrity of every person's vote is to allow for lever machines when scanners are not available. This bill does that."

"The removal of these provisions would save school districts, villages and special districts money," said Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos. "Taking away this costly burden is the right thing to do and we do not want to impose time-consuming and archaic ballot-counting for the districts and villages that do not have access to the scanner machines."

School districts and villages have expressed a preference to continue using the lever-style voting machines. This legislation would provide significant relief to local school districts, villages and special districts from the HAVA mandate that was intended to apply only to federal elections that have higher voter turnout and less annual costs to administer elections using optical scan voting machines.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly, where it is being sponsored by Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel.