



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Martins-Schimel Lever Voting Machine Bill Signed Into Law by Governor

JACK M. MARTINS August 19, 2014

| ISSUE: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### *Law Will Save Millions of Dollars For Schools, Villages, and Special Districts*

Senator Jack M. Martins (R-Mineola) and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel (D-Great Neck) announced that Governor Andrew Cuomo has signed legislation they sponsored (S.7371A/ A.9321A) allowing school districts, villages, and special districts to continue using lever voting machines as they have in the past for an additional year. According to the New York State School Boards Association, this law will save \$81 million for school districts alone.

Without this law, 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.

“This is great news for our schools, villages, and special districts. Continued use of lever-style voting machines in these non-partisan, small turnout elections will save taxpayer dollars while also ensuring that elections are conducted fairly and accurately. I thank Governor Cuomo for signing this common-sense law which will reduce costs for our school

districts, villages, and special districts,” said Senator Martins.

“This law gives immediate relief to villages, school districts, and special districts. Now the State Board of Elections must help formulate 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,” said Assemblywoman Schimel.

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 new law extends 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) must 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 law 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 Conference of Mayors, and the New York State Association of Counties.

"Villages and other local governments once again have Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel to thank for working tenaciously to get this extension bill passed for another year. NCVOA and NYCOM, along with the organizations that represent the

school districts and other special districts, will now have the opportunity to work with our State representatives and State and local Boards of Election to come up with a practical and cost effective way to conduct local elections. We stand ready to assist in at last resolving this important issue," said Peter Cavallaro, Mayor of the Village of Westbury and President of the Nassau County Village Officials Association.

"Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel in sponsoring this law have saved millions of dollars for our taxpayers. Importantly, by requiring the State BOE to listen to stakeholders, study and report, they have forged the way to find a solution to the problem of permitting local governments to be able to have the use of scanner voting machines at, hopefully, reasonable cost," said Ralph J. Kreitzman, Mayor of the Village of Great Neck and member of the executive boards of the Nassau County Village Officials Association and the New York State Conference of Mayors.

"I join fellow local elected officials in thanking Governor Cuomo, Senator Jack Martins and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel for their leadership in establishing legislation extending the current exemption allowing municipalities and school districts and special districts to use lever style voting machines. This is wonderful news and we are grateful to Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel for time and time again understanding our concerns and taking on the charge to ensure fiscal relief for local governments," said Village of Great Neck Plaza Mayor Jean Celender.

"Allowing school districts to use lever voting machines for an additional year will provide tremendous fiscal relief to many cash-strapped districts," said Timothy Kremer, Executive Director of the New York State School Boards Association. "NYSSBA was a strong advocate for the passage of this legislation. We thank Governor Cuomo, Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel for their leadership on this cost-saving legislation."

"Thanks to the leadership of Senator Martins and Assemblywoman Schimel, village elections will continue to be held in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible," said Peter A. Baynes, Executive Director of the New York State Conference of Mayors. "Their common-sense legislation will also provide for a long-term resolution of the transition from lever-style machines to optical scanners. NYCOM appreciates Governor Cuomo's approval of this important bill, and we look forward to working with the State Board of Elections in analyzing the cost of village compliance and developing recommendations for a reasonable transition to scanner voting machines."