FAQ: Why Keep Lever Voting Machines?

1. Why keep our lever voting machines? Why not switch to paper ballots and scanners?
A: Lever machines have 100 years of proven service, ease of use, minimal cost, simple visual inspection to ensure correct programming of the rods and gears, and 100% recanvass.
−If New York replaces our lever machines with paper ballots and scanners, our law specifies:
• 3% "audit" of scanners, too little to find all innocent or malicious programming & scan errors
• 97% unverified computerized vote-counting by scanners
• Paper ballots can be out of observers' view for up to 15 days between the end of election
  day and the 3% "audit," creating opportunity for tampering and suspicion of it.

2. Lever machines can be broken, or jimmied to not work, so we should use computers.
A: This "sinners and saints" argument is false, because replacing levers with computers won't turn negligent or malicious election personnel into saints.
−Lever machines are tamper-resistant because they are too time-consuming to tamper with, and
  someone can look in the back and see what was done. In contrast, computers are vulnerable
  targets--fraud takes minimal time and can be undetectable.
−Lever machines are understandable with brief training, and enable observers to directly see
  how votes are counted. No computer can be verified like that–scanners require expensive,
  burdensome hand-count audits after each election to detect programming and scanning errors.
−Paper ballots have a vast history of fraud that takes place when they are out of observers' view.
−Computer errors and fraud worldwide are rampant and uncontrollable. See #6 below.

3. Why keep trying? That train has left the station.
A: This argument is designed to discourage people and shut us up, because:
−No optical scanners have passed their certification tests despite nearly 4 years of testing.
−No contracts have been signed except those required for the "pilot" in Sept. and Nov. 2009.
−The levers are alive and well in their warehouses.

4. It's 2009. Computers are modern.
A: Democracy is about government by the people, not about being modern. Government behind closed doors is easily corrupted. That includes elections. Computers are like closed doors that can't be opened -- they prevent election observers from witnessing the proper handling of votes.

5. All we need is some security device to protect the scanners.
A: There is no such a device.

6. Our whole society uses computers.
A: Technology should not be misused or used in the wrong place.
−Democracy is government of the people. Computers shut people out of understanding and
  observing how their votes are (or should be) handled and counted.
−In business 100% of processing is verified at every processing step, but errors and fraud occur
  anyway. In elections NY intends to verify 3% of the scanners and blindly trust 97% of them.
−Thousands of new computer viruses appear every month. The Dept. of Defense was broken into
  several times. Banks and financial companies have lost tens of millions through computer fraud
  by insiders and outside hackers. ATMs are widely used for fraud and identity theft.
−Google on "computer fraud cases" and "ATM fraud" gives over 12 million entries.
−The FBI says 87% of installations have security incidents in a year, 64% of which are serious
  and cause loss of money. <u>44% are caused by insiders!</u> Why risk our elections with this kind
  of vulnerable technology—with a 3% scheme of verification?

7. Voters with disabilities don't want "separate but equal" treatment. They want to use the same machines as everyone else.
A: "Separate but equal" for Blacks was a sham—it was never equal, and always inferior.
- Voters using New York's accessible Ballot Marking Devices ("BMDs") have the "gold standard" of voting – voter-marked paper ballots with vote-counting immediately upon close of polls with all ballots under continuous observation.
- Everyone wants equality, but at this time no vendor is offering a machine that gives us the same process for all voters with and without disabilities and also preserve the integrity of the vote.
- The objective of election integrity advocates is for all voters to cast a private and independent "secret ballot" with votes that get counted as they intended.

8. Advocates for accessibility are not responsible for election security.
A: It is counter-productive to advocate the use of technology that is (1) known to be insecure with a history of errors and fraud, and that (2) prevents citizen oversight of our elections. Computerized voting and vote-counting do create a kind of equality—no one's votes are secure, and no one knows whether election results were created by innocent error, fraud, or the voters.

9. We need some kind of paper record of each ballot, which lever machines don't have.
A: Paper records are needed for *software-independent verification* of software-created results. Lever machines don't have software at all, and don't need software-independent verification.
- Lever machines use hardware components—metal rods and gears—to increment hardware counters. Lever machines need visual inspection and mechanical tests.
- Scanners use invisible software to add up the votes in invisible software counters. Scanners need software-independent verification that observers can witness—that means hand-counting the same votes that the scanner counted to prove the scanners were programmed correctly.

10. Vote-by-mail and internet voting should replace poll-site voting anyway.
A: Vote-by-mail and internet voting open the door to vote-selling and coercion. A bully can demand to see your votes or submit them for you, or get you beaten up, fired from work, thrown out of your apartment, etc. Internet voting also opens the door to vast computer vulnerabilities.

<u>**Conclusions**</u>

1. Heed the warnings of computer scientists and computer professionals. No computer is secure. No computer can be made secure. This is the wrong technology for a governmental process that requires public observation and oversight.

2. Balance our concerns for access and security. Regardless of technology, only public observation of election procedures can ensure integrity. Computerized vote-counting prevents observation. Voter-marked paper ballots hand-counted at close-of-polls is a "gold standard."

3. Don't let computerized elections take tax dollars away from other essential services that people's lives depend on (schools, senior centers, firehouses, etc). Our economic crisis is real. Cuts to essential programs are inevitable. But new election equipment is not essential or inevitable. We can have trustworthy, affordable elections with the equipment we now own. If we had the money, our Board of Elections could fully train poll workers to assist voters on our accessible BMDs, make poll sites more accessible, and produce materials in accessible formats.

4. Don't let new technology turn our elections into a cash machine for private companies, and prevent even our Board of Elections from knowing whether our election results are created by the voters -- or by innocent computer errors or fraud.