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MARGARET S. CHIN
COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 1

New York State Board of Elections
40 Steuben Street
Albany, NY 12207-2108

July 7, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

It has come to my attention that the voting machines New York will use this fall may discard thousands of my constituents' votes.

The State Board of Elections has apparently decided to configure our new machines in a way that will confuse voters. The machines do not adequately inform voters what an "overvote" is, or that casting an overvoted will result in their ballot being voided in the overvoted race. Several counties in Florida that set their machines this way had overvote rate fourteen times higher than counties that automatically rejected overvoted ballots (a practice common in the rest of the country). Research suggests the elderly, African Americans, Latinos, and voters not fluent in English would be most affected.

I understand that there is a simple fix, which takes less than a day to implement: have the machine automatically reject an overvoted ballot. This can be done by simply checking a box in the "configuration file" for the machines in Albany and does not require any reprogramming of the machines. This small change will cost the State Board of Elections nothing and would preserve thousands of votes.

Such a fix would bring the machines in line with most jurisdictions including California, Connecticut, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

I look forward to your written response that explains why the State Board of Elections has refused to implement this simple fix.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret S. Chin".

Margaret S. Chin
New York City Councilmember,
District 1 - Manhattan