

# FAQ: Why Keep Lever Voting Machines?

## 1. Why keep lever voting machines?

**A:** Lever machines have 100 years of proven service, for minimal cost, without inviting widespread fraud. The alternative is

- 97% unverified, unobservable, computerized vote-counting by precinct-based optical scanners.
- Voter-marked paper ballots that will be out of public observation for up to two weeks between the end of the election day and the 3% spot-check that NY law calls an “audit.”

## 2. Why keep trying? That train has left the station.

**A:** This argument is just designed to discourage people and shut us up, because:

- No final, working version of optical scanners have been submitted for certification tests.
- No optical scanners have passed their certification tests despite nearly 4 years of testing.
- No contracts have been signed.

## 3. It's 2009. Computers are modern.

**A:** Democracy is about government by the people, not about being modern or old-fashioned. 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 and honest handling of votes.

## 4. Voters with disabilities don't want “separate but equal” treatment. They want to use the same machines as everyone else.

**A:** If all voters cast a private and independent “secret ballot” and their votes are counted as intended, no one is separate and everyone is equal. Sameness, in itself, is not always desirable—for example, if everyone should wear shoes to be equal, should all the shoes be the same size?

## 5. We need some form of a paper record of each ballot, which lever machines don't have.

**A:** Paper records are needed for software-independent verification of software-created results. That is why election integrity advocates demand a paper trail or paper ballots for computerized voting and vote-counting machines -- such as optical scanners.

- 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 votes that the scanner counted to prove that the scanners were programmed correctly.
- Lever machines use hardware components—metal rods and gears—to increment hardware counters. Lever machines need visual inspection, mechanical tests, and visual comparison of the Return of Canvass to the mechanical counters. Lever machines don't use software, and don't need software-independent verification methods.

## 6. Our whole society uses computers.

**A:** Technology should not be misused or used in the wrong place. Computerized voting and vote-counting are an example of both.

- Democracy is government of the people. Computers shut people out of understanding how their votes are (or should be) counted, and keep people from observing the handling and counting.
- In business 100% of processing is verified at every processing step. In elections we intend to verify 3% of the scanners and blindly trust 97% of them. This is misuse of technology.
- We have thousands of new computer viruses per month. Even the Dept. of Defense has been broken into often. 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.
- The FBI says 87% of installations have security incidents in a year, 64% of which are serious and result in loss of money. 44% are caused by insiders! Why risk our elections with this kind of vulnerable technology—with a 3% scheme of verification? That means 97% invisible vote-counting which is vulnerable to both innocent mistakes and undetectable, intentional fraud.

**7. All we need is some security device to protect the scanners.**

**A:** There is no such a device.

**8. Mail-in voting and internet voting should replace poll-site voting anyway.**

**A:** Mail-in and internet voting opens the door to vote selling and coercion. A boss or landlord can demand to see your votes, submit them for you, or fire you or throw you out of your apartment. Internet voting also opens the door to vast computer vulnerabilities.

**9. Advocates for accessibility are not responsible for election security.**

**A:** Accessibility is achieved when every voter's secret votes are cast and counted as intended. Voters using New York's new accessible ballot marking devices are getting the "gold standard" of ballot-handling—their votes are counted immediately upon close of polls without being out of public view. Meanwhile, advocating the use of known insecure technology and unobservable vote counting in the name of accessibility is irresponsible. Such technology may indeed result in a kind of equality—no one's votes would be secure, and the public would never be sure whether election results were created by error, fraud, or the voters.

**10. Lever machines can be broken, or jimmed to not work.** Every machine can be broken if there is negligence or malicious intent.

--Lever machines are too cumbersome to tamper with. This is a historical fact – after 100 years of lever machine use, a culture of breakage & cheating with these machines just does not exist.

--If someone with access to voting equipment wants to cheat, paper ballots and computers are easier targets.

--Paper ballots have a vast history of being tampered with once they are out of public view. That's why the "gold standard" in #8 is so important.

--Computers are one of the most vulnerable and uncontrollable technologies ever invented. Google on "computer fraud cases" gives over 12 million entries

--Lever machines are understandable with brief training, and enable observers to directly see how votes are counted. No computer can be verified like that.

## **Conclusions**

**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.

**2. Balance our concerns for access and security.** Regardless of technology, only public observation of election procedures can ensure election integrity. It is irresponsible to advocate computerized methods of vote-counting that prevent observation.

**3. Don't let computerized elections take tax dollars away from other essential services that people's lives depend on. The 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 extra money, it could go into training poll workers to assist voters on our accessible BMDs and making poll sites accessible. Why not use any extra money to keep senior centers, firehouses, libraries, parks, and hospitals open? We must all be part of the balancing process to wisely apportion scarce funds.

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

Teresa Hommel April 22, 2009

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