A Call to Continue Voting by Lever

As skepticism grows over computerized voting systems nationwide, a growing push is emerging in the state to keep the once-disdained lever voting machines. Proponents argue that now is not the time to be spending millions of dollars on upgrading decades-old machines that they say are more reliable than the new systems.

In the last several weeks, four counties — Dutchess, Ulster, Columbia and Schuyler — and the Association of Towns have passed resolutions urging the state to keep the lever machines. The city’s Board of Elections held a hearing last week to let lever supporters make their case.

“We’re where lever machines were born, and if I have my way, it’s not where they are going to die,” said Andrea Novick, founder of the Election Transparency Coalition.

The push comes now in large part because accessible machines for impaired voters were installed at each poll site for the 2008 election. Lever proponents argue that these machines bring New York into compliance with the federal voting reform legislation, passed after the 2000 recount debacle.

Lever machines work by incrementing counters in the back each time a voter pulls the lever. At the end of the day, the machines are opened in public, and the counts are tallied, though some people criticize this procedure for lacking a paper trail.