

MAYOR'S ELECTION MODERNIZATION TASK FORCE PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Mayor's Task Force Issues Report Outlining Steps that the Board of Elections Should Undertake Immediately to Streamline the Implementation of New Voting Machines for New York City

*Urges Creation of Detailed Project Plan, Hiring of an Expert Consultant
and Solicitation of Public Input*

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New York, July 1, 2005 – The Election Modernization Task Force, a panel formed by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, today issued a report outlining steps that the Board of Elections in New York City should immediately undertake to streamline plans for implementing a new voting machine system for the City.

On June 23, 2005, the State Legislature finally passed long overdue legislation that implements the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and requires the Board of Elections to select a new voting machine to replace the City's outdated lever machines. Due to the Legislature's delay, the State lags far behind the rest of the country in planning to replace its voting machines, and the Board of Elections is under very short Federal and State deadlines for introducing new machines at the polls for the 2006 elections. The report concludes that the Board of Elections must immediately and substantially accelerate its efforts to be prepared fully to evaluate the voting machines that the City will purchase, conduct a procurement process and manage other related tasks – from training poll workers to modifying warehouse space for storage.

As detailed in the Task Force's report, entitled "Preparing to Introduce New Voting Machines in the City of New York," the forthcoming selection of new machines by the Board of Elections is a highly complicated project that will change the way the City runs its elections for the foreseeable future. Because the City's share of federal HAVA assistance, expected to be approximately \$72 million (but potentially several million dollars less if the State misses 2006 deadlines established by HAVA), will be insufficient to cover the full cost of implementing a new voting system, the complete project will end up costing the City millions of dollars.

To ensure that the Board is able to manage this complicated, highly technical and multidimensional project under an extraordinarily short timeframe, the Task Force strongly recommends in its report that the Board do the following immediately:

1. Develop a detailed project plan containing a timeline for each task that needs to be completed, so that the project can be managed effectively;

2. Before the end of August 2005 at the latest, retain a consultant with expertise in this area to work with the Board's staff on a day-to-day basis on all aspects of the project;
3. Implement the project by working with various City agencies that have experience in complicated projects and procurements of this type;
4. Continue to inform the public about its progress in implementing the new voting machine project and solicit input from the public on the type of voting machines the City should purchase;
5. Be fully prepared to purchase new machines as soon as the State Board of Elections completes the certification and State contracting processes; and
6. Be fully prepared to implement the needed poll worker and voter training programs that are necessary to ensure that poll workers and voters understand how to use the new machines.

"These are commonsense but critical steps that the Board of Elections should immediately undertake to ensure that the City obtains the voting machine that best meets voter needs," said Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo, who is heading the Task Force. "This is a highly complicated and multifaceted project, and we urge the Board of Elections to work with the City and an expert consultant to make sure that it is fully prepared to start introducing new voting machines in the 2006 elections."

The Election Modernization Task Force was created by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg following widespread election and voter problems in New York City during the November 2004 elections. This report is a second in a planned series of reports on improvements to the City's system of elections.

The Task Force's first report, "The Urgent Need For State Voting Machine/HAVA Legislation," was issued on March 18, 2005, and called for the State Legislature to pass legislation immediately that would allow the State and City to access Federal funding to replace the City's outdated voting machines and improve the administration of elections. (To obtain a copy of the report, please contact Kate O'Brien Ahlers, New York City Law Department Press Director, at 212-788-0400 or kahlers@law.nyc.gov.) The final legislation passed by the State Legislature included several of the Task Force's recommendations, such as ensuring that the City is ensured a fair share of federal HAVA funds and creating a State procurement process.

The Task Force, chaired by Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo of the New York City Law Department, is also composed of eight other members, including: 1) Preeta D. Bansal, of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom LLP and the former Solicitor General of the State of New York, 2) Dr. David A. Caputo, President of Pace University; 3) Allan H. Dobrin, the Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer of The City University of New York (CUNY), 4) Stephen J. Fiala, the Richmond County Clerk and the Commissioner of Jurors for Richmond County, 5) Jerry Garcia, Vice President and Client Executive at The Bank of New York, 6) Colvin W. Grannum, the President of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, 7) Gail

Hilson, a community and political activist, a former candidate for the New York State Assembly in the 73rd District and a member of the Board of Directors, Citizens Union, and 8) Peter Vallone, Sr., former Speaker of the City Council.

Also working with the Task Force as staff counsel is Tal Golomb, an Assistant Corporation Counsel in the New York City Law Department's Legal Counsel Division. Those with legal questions about the Task Force can contact Tal Golomb directly at (212) 788-1182 or tgolomb@law.nyc.gov.

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