



## Legislation Text

**File #:** Res 0058-2002, **Version:** \*

Res. No. 58

Resolution calling upon the State Legislature to amend the Election Law, requiring a "full-face" ballot, which substantially hinders the City and State from considering advanced voting technologies that promise to greatly improve the election process and enhance democratic participation.

By Council Members Reed and Vann; also Council Members Addabbo Jr., Seabrook, Clarke, Comrie, Koppell, Liu, McMahon and Yassky

Whereas, The New York State Election Law, pursuant to section 7-104, requires that all ballots "be printed in black ink on clear, white material, of such uniform size and style as will fit the ballot frame"; and

Whereas, The Election Law further requires that the ballot layout consist of columns or rows each of which contain one office and one party; and

Whereas, These stated requirements have become commonly referred to as the "full-face" ballot requirement; and

Whereas, This Election Law was enacted mainly in contemplation of the old lever machines, which have many documented problems, are no longer manufactured, and must soon be replaced with new voting machine technology; and

Whereas, This Election Law was also enacted when there were far fewer parties and offices participating in elections, and when there were far fewer foreign language-speaking voters in the City and State; and

Whereas, The current voting machine ballots, given the full-face ballot requirement, are becoming less able to accommodate the increasing number of parties, offices, and languages required, and soon it will become impossible to fit all the necessary ballot information on a single face; and

Whereas, The new voting technologies that presently exist or are to be developed accommodate with great ease, accuracy and convenience, the increased number of parties, offices, and languages that the City's ballots must contain; and

Whereas, Many of these new technologies, although not arranged by rows or columns of party candidates, nonetheless permit voters to select a straight party-line by the press of one button; and

Whereas, Many of these new technologies, unlike the current lever machines, enable physically handicapped and blind voters to cast their votes on their own, without any need for another individual to assist them, thereby preserving their autonomy and privacy in the voting process; and

Whereas, Extensive studies have demonstrated that these new voting technologies decrease the number of votes that are unable to be counted, increase the accuracy of all phases of canvassing, and generally improve the ability and willingness of citizens to vote; and

Whereas, Virtually all of these new technologies do not accommodate the State's full-face ballot requirement, and therefore may not presently be used or even considered by the City or State; and

Whereas, The State Task Force on Election Modernization and State Attorney General Spitzer's Office each acknowledge in their respective reports on election reform that the full-face ballot requirement probably poses an obstacle to advancing the election process in New York State; and

Whereas, The State has appropriated substantial funds to the City's Board of Elections to study and test new voting technologies, yet the Board is precluded by the full-face ballot requirement from even considering the vast majority of systems now or soon to be available; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Council calls upon the State Legislature to amend the Election Law, requiring a full-face ballot, which hinders the City and State from considering advanced voting technologies that promise to greatly improve the election process and enhance democratic participation.