



## Let's get voting right

### Program machines to warn of overvote

**T**he comfortable era of lever voting machines is likely to end in New York in September. So we'll have to get used to marking paper ballots and stuffing them into scanners that will read and count our votes — except when they won't.

A 2002 federal law, reacting to the chaos of the 2000 presidential election, mandated new voting systems. New York moved slowly. But, with a firm shove by a federal judge, the levers are disappearing and scanners are set to appear this year.

Now the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University is leading a lawsuit by civil rights groups against the boards of election for the state and New York City. The plaintiffs don't want to block use of the new machines, as Nassau and Suffolk have so far been unable to do. They just want them set up properly.

The problem is overvotes — accidental votes cast for more than one candidate in the same race. Lever machines don't allow it, but on a paper ballot, you can make that mistake. So when you feed the ballot into the scanner, it should warn you and direct you to seek help in trying again.

The Brennan Center says New York scanners are set up in a way that doesn't clearly notify you that if you cast this ballot, your vote on any overvoted race won't count. The suit argues that this problem disproportionately hurts minorities.

All New York needs is reprogramming, so that scanners here give the same warning that appears in other states. To make every vote count, that's the very least we can do. 