

NEWS Rensselaer County Legislature

Office of the Minority 270-2892

Minority Leader Ginny O'Brien 434-3347 ♦ Deputy Minority Leader Keith Hammond 283-3329
Flora Fasoldt 466-1703 ♦ Peter Grimm 273-1500 ♦ Kevin Harrington 330-9114 ♦ Brian Zweig 326-3980

May 22, 2008

Legislators Get a Firsthand Look at Board of Election Upgrades

TROY—Legislators Ginny O'Brien, Kevin Harrington, and Brian Zweig took a tour of the Board of Elections with Commissioner Ed McDonough and Senior Elections Registrar Mary Sweeney. The legislators scheduled the visit to learn about equipment and processing upgrades being instituted at the Rensselaer County Board of Elections in response to the New York State Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

One HAVA requirement is to implement a statewide voter registration list. The list is to be a uniform, interactive database, accessible throughout the state, and necessitates the conversion of voter registration records from paper to electronic records. It's an extensive project the Rensselaer County board initiated in March of 2007. When Mary Sweeney demonstrated the multi-step process of converting one voter's records, the magnitude of the job of processing a total of 105,955 registered voters' records became evident. Sweeney and her co-workers, nearly halfway to completion of the job, have scanned approximately 51,000 over the past 4 months.

HAVA requires that lever and punch card voting devices be replaced with new machines specially equipped to make them accessible to voters with special needs. County Board of Elections officials recently picked up a number of the new voting machines and Commissioner McDonough gave the visiting legislators instruction in their operation. The legislators then had an opportunity to go through the new voting process and cast sample ballots.

"The scope of the work involved in converting from paper records to the electronic system was extensive," commented Ginny O'Brien. "We were really impressed by the Election Board employees' intense work as they strive to accomplish their task. The use of these technologically equipped machines will be an impressive step toward making the voting process open and accessible to all."

(Picture on next page)

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Commissioner Ed McDonough (L) meets with (L-R) Legislators Kevin Harrington, Ginny O'Brien, and Brian Zweig. Senior Elections Registrar Mary Sweeney (R) is demonstrating how to convert voter records to electronic files to conform to HAVA standards.