Testimony of Art Chang
Chair
New York City Voter Assistance Advisory Committee

City Council Committee on Governmental Operations
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Good Afternoon Chairwoman Brewer and Committee members. I am Art Chang, Chair
of the Voter Assistance Advisory Committee (VAAC). With me today is Amy Loprest,
Executive Director of the New York City Campaign Finance Board. Thank you for the
opportunity to testify before you today.

As you may know, the Voter Assistance Advisory Committee was created by an
amendment to the city Charter last November. I also serve as a member of the Campaign
Finance Board. I thought it might be helpful for me to tell you a little about myself to
help provide context for the comments I will offer shortly on the ballot and voting
process. I formed my company, Tipping Point Partners, in 2005 to bring together
entrepreneurs and investors to incubate Internet companies from concept to
commercialization in mobile, media, and enterprise applications. But you don't have to
be a professional to recognize the tremendous potential of technology as a vehicle for
change.

In the last fifteen years, we've witnessed a revolution in the way people access, receive,
and share information. Technology has fundamentally transformed American life,
making it easy to connect with old friends, share opinions with strangers and simplify and
streamline our lives from shopping to banking to filing our taxes electronically. No
institution touches our daily lives as much as city government, yet the ease and

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accessibility of technology has yet to transform the way citizens connect with their representatives and leaders at the local level. The opportunity for city government to apply the user-friendly principals of technology now widely available in the consumer sphere to improve the New York voting experience is ripe.

Technology is not a *solution*; it is a *vehicle* to this end. Ballot design, for example, is a critical aspect of improving the voting process. But it must be supported by a system that accurately and efficiently records our votes. If votes are cast electronically, we should not have to count paper ballots. Imagine a system that enabled us to count electronic votes as they are cast, thus reporting results to the public more quickly. This would be a great step forward, increasing efficiency and transparency in the voting process.

While I understand that this issue is largely out of the purview of the City Council and the city's Board of Elections, I'd be remiss not to take this opportunity to publicly comment that the city deserves a voting system that offers its citizens the same ease and accessibility that they may find elsewhere in their everyday lives. The potential to apply simple technology to invigorate and inspire more citizens to register to vote and to participate in local elections is great. We must leverage our city's technology expertise to explore new ways to simplify and streamline the most fundamental elements of voting, from voter registration, to casting votes, to counting ballots. We, as a community, must pressure the state to allow for flexibility to easily incorporate new tools and technologies that will drive these improvements.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify about the proposed resolution and to share my thoughts on setting a course that will ultimately make the voting process more accessible. We hope the state finds a way to provide the BOE with the flexibility to make the ballot clear and legible, and further urge the Council to continue the conversation about how to employ cutting edge technology to our voting process. With that, I will conclude. I am happy to answer any questions you may have and I look forward to continuing this conversation in the future.