ALBANY — Good-government groups and constitutional-amendment advocates have some advice for voters when they receive their ballots today: flip them over.

New York voters will have to flip their ballots in at least 58 of 62 counties to weigh in on six opportunities to change the state Constitution. It’s the first time the state will use its electronic voting machines to tally a statewide referendum, and poll watchers and experts say they’ll be closely monitoring the results to see how it affects voter participation.

“I’ve been saying to people in the community who are candidates or work at polling places, you have to remind voters that they have to turn over their ballots,” said Barbara Bartoletti, legislative director of the state League of Women Voters. “My fear is that people will turn over the ballot as it’s being slid into the machine.”

If history is a guide, turnout for ballot proposals will be low.

Since 2003, eight constitutional amendments have been proposed in New York, with six passing and two failing.

Of all the ballots cast during those elections, an average of 54 percent left the referendum votes blank, according to data from the state Board of Elections. Excluding the presidential election year of 2008 — in which voter turnout and blank votes spiked — the average of blank referendum votes is still 48 percent.

The most apt comparison to this year may be 2009 and 2005, the last time the New York City mayoral race was on the ballot without any statewide contests.

In 2009, 3.3 million ballots were cast statewide. Of those, 1.9 million were blank or void on a proposal to allow a National Grid power line in St. Lawrence County. On a question of whether prisoners should be able to work for nonprofits, about 1.5 million ballots were blank.

Two proposals were on the ballot in 2005: a transportation bond act and a plan to transfer some budget powers away from the governor’s office. The budget amendment ultimately failed, but 1.8 million of the 3.9 million ballots cast were left blank or void on the proposal. On the bond act, 1.7 million ballots were blank.

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