Senate Deputy Leader Gianaris Announces Senate Passes His Automatic Voter Registration Act, Dramatically Expanding New Yorkers Registered To Vote

MICHAEL GIANARIS   June 20, 2019

| ISSUE: **AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION**, **#AVRNOW**, **VOTING**, **ELECTIONS**

ALBANY, N.Y. – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris announced the Senate passed his New York Automatic Voter Registration Act (AVR) (S6457A). The legislation registers voters automatically upon their interaction with certain state and local government agencies throughout New York.

"At a time in our country when voting rights are under assault, New York must live up to its reputation as a progressive leader," said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. "Access to the ballot box should be easy and fair. I thank my colleagues for passing this critical bill."

Up to 2 million voting-eligible New Yorkers are not registered to vote, which means this AVR proposal would profoundly enfranchise an enormous number of New York residents.

Under Senator Gianaris' legislation, New Yorkers who fill out forms at designated agencies will be automatically registered to vote, unless they specifically decline – a process known as "front-end" automatic registration. The agencies include:

- Department of Motor Vehicles
- Office of Children and Family Services
- Office of Temporary Disability Assistance
- Department of Health
- Department of Labor
- Office for the Aging
- Department of Veterans Services and Military Affairs
- Office of Mental Health
- Office of People with Developmental Disabilities
- New York Department of State
- Workers Compensation Board
- Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

New York routinely has some of the lowest voter turnout rates in the country. In 2018, New York ranked 48th in turnout.

Fifteen other states have modernized their voting laws in this or similar ways. In Oregon, 94% of individuals who interacted with the DMV and were eligible to vote were registered. Research indicates that 44% of new registrants subsequently voted, leading Oregon to have the largest turnout increase between 2012 and 2016. In 2018, it had one of the highest turnout rates in the country.

AVR also saves the state money by eliminating the costs of provisional ballots, costly paper transactions, and manual data entry.

This voting reform enjoys the support of 64% of New Yorkers in a Civis Analytics poll this spring. Earlier this year, Senator Gianaris wrote an op-ed with Data for Progress' Sean McElwee pushing for this reform. The full op-ed is here.

"This entire legislative session has been an astounding victory for New York voters," said **Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY and founding member of Let NY Vote**. "From early voting to automatic voter registration these groundbreaking reforms will streamline the way eligible New Yorkers vote, and empower a more robust democracy. We still have work to do, but this coalition is ending session with our legislative partners the way it started: putting New York voters first."

"The passage of automatic voter registration is an enormous victory for voting rights. Instead of being a laggard on voting, New York is now a proud leader. This reform would not have happened without the persistent leadership of Senator Gianaris," said **Sean McElwee of AVR NOW.**

"This bill will create the most expansive system of AVR in the nation. It also tops off what has been a great legislative session for voters," said **Sean Morales-Doyle, counsel in the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice**. "Deep South states used to defend their suppressive voter laws by showing how close their policies were to New York's. No more. In one session, New York has made the leap to become a leader in voting reform."

RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S6457A

- Introduced

- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - ○ In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Establishes an electronic personal voter registration process

June 11, 2019

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Michael Gianaris

Do you support this bill?