



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Governor Signs Addabbo Bill to Expand Available Polling Places for Disabled

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR August 23, 2010

| ISSUE: **ELECTIONS**

Mandates that Buildings Getting State Benefits Must be Used as Polling Places that are ADA-Compliant

Queens, NY, August 20, 2010 – NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Queens), Chair of the Senate's Elections Committee, today announced that Governor Paterson has signed legislation (S5029A) which would amend the election law in relation to the use of certain buildings as polling places accessible to persons with disabilities. The new law expands the pool of available handicapped accessible polling places by mandating that buildings that obtain tax abatements or exemptions or other public benefits must be made available for use as polling places. Specifically, the law gives statewide applicability to the provisions of section 4-104 of the Election Law, which requires that the owners or operators of any building that obtains a tax abatement or exemption or a subsidy, grant or loan for construction or renovation of the building or operation of a

program in the building, must make the building available for use as a polling place if it is designated for that purpose. Buildings used solely for residential purposes that contain 25 dwelling units or less are exempt.

As a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal and state statutes, the legislature has established a goal of full polling place accessibility. The prior amendments to the law partially achieved this goal in our larger cities, where polling places of any kind were not readily available, and where it was very difficult to comply with this goal without relocating at least some polling places to locations which are inconvenient for many of the voters. It has since become evident that the same pressing needs exist in the suburbs of the six largest cities, and in smaller upstate cities, as well. Over the years, the legislature has attempted to improve the situation by mandating at first that public schools, and later, those public buildings, must be made available for use as polling places. This bill should substantially expand the pool of available polling places.

“I am very pleased that this important legislation was signed into law” said Senator Addabbo. “Our goal with this legislation is to require that building owners who get tax abatements, exemptions or other public benefits should make their areas available for polling sites and accessible to those with a handicap. The owners should have rooms available for voting and registration to those with disabilities to ensure that they can exercise their right to vote.”

#