



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senate Passes Bill to Strengthen Voting Process for Military Voters

JACK M. MARTINS March 7, 2011

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Measure has Governor's backing and is set to become law

The New York State Senate gave final legislative approval to legislation (S.3500) sponsored by State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats), Chairman of the Senate Elections Committee, to ensure that special elections in New York State provide more time for military absentee ballots to be mailed and counted.

"It's the right time to make this change, and it's a sound piece of legislation. It ensures that New York's servicemen and servicewomen are given every reasonable opportunity to have their voices heard and their votes counted in special elections," said O'Mara, who noted that the new law is expected to be in effect for an upcoming special election in western New York's 26th Congressional District.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo recently noted that current state law fails to provide adequate time for state and county boards of elections to adhere to federal law requiring that elections officials finalize and transmit the final ballot to military voters overseas within 45 days of a special election.

Governor Cuomo sent a proposal to change the law to both houses of the Legislature on February 23rd and urged its swift enactment. It was approved by the Assembly yesterday and will now be delivered to the Governor to be signed into law. The measure would take effect immediately.

"This bill ensured that those who are serving our country are included in the electoral process. It is important that we listen to those who have chosen to serve in the military. They are true heroes," said Senator Jack M. Martins, who voted in favor of the legislation.

Under current state law, special elections are held between 30 and 40 days from their announcement by the Governor. The new measure will more than double that timeframe to between 70 and 80 days and give county boards of elections adequate time prior to special elections for absentee ballots for military voters to be mailed and counted in compliance with federal law.