



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

New York State Senate Democratic Policy Group Release Report on "Why Don't More New Yorkers Vote? A Statewide Snapshot Identifying Low Voter Turnout"

SENATOR VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY May 1, 2018

| ISSUE: **LOW VOTER TURNOUT, VOTING REFORMS, EARLY VOTING, PREVENTING VOTER SUPPRESSION**

NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

Why Don't More New Yorkers Vote? A Statewide Snapshot Identifying Low Voter Turnout

New York State Senate Democratic Policy Group Release Report on "Why Don't More New Yorkers Vote? A Statewide Snapshot Identifying Low Voter Turnout." The Policy Group members include: Senator Brad Hoylman, Chair, Senator Leroy Comrie, Senator Velmanette Montgomery, Senator Kevin S. Parker, Senator Diane Savino, Senator José M. Serrano, and Senator David Valesky.

The freedom to vote is arguably our country's most important and hard-won right. New York ranks as 41st in turnout in the nation, and is worst in the Northeast. The State's system of elections has many problems, including needlessly early registration deadlines, strict absentee ballot rules, and confusing rules for primary elections. As a result, in the 2016 general election, only 57% of voting-eligible New York voters cast a ballot for a presidential candidate. In the recent special elections, fewer than one in four registered voters cast a ballot for a highly-contested State Senate seat in Westchester, while in a Bronx Senate race, the turnout was less than 2%.

The Senate Democratic Conference conducted a statewide survey of eligible voters to help determine the source of such low turnout. The results provide a snapshot of reasons voters chose not to go to the polls and point towards legislative solutions to address the problem.

Key findings from the survey include:

- 79% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote in an election if early voting was enacted.
- 76% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote in an election if no-excuse absentee voting was enacted.
- 81% of respondents who live in counties with voting hours from 12:00 – 9:00 PM on primary day said they would be more likely to vote in an election if voting hours were extended to 6:00 AM – 9:00 PM.
- 28% of respondents said they have missed an election because of work or school obligations.

To address these findings and strengthen the democratic process in New York State, the Senate Democrats have introduced "Increasing Access to the Ballot Box: The Democratic Conference's Voting Agenda" which includes legislation:

- Enactment of early voting
- Amendment of the Constitution to permit no-excuse absentee voting
- Automatic voter registration
- Preregistration for 16- and 17-year olds

- Shortening the deadline for party enrollment
- Lengthening primary polling hours Upstate
- Consolidating the federal and state primaries
- Making important information available in more languages
- Requiring mailed notice to voters before primary, special, and general elections

To view the full report and survey, please visit:

<https://www.scribd.com/document/377827073/05-01-18-Why-Don-t-More-New-Yorkers-Vote-A-Statewide-Snapshot-Identifying-Low-Voter-Turnout> or download PDF above.

To learn more about Senate Democratic Conference legislative agenda to fix election laws, visit: <https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/velmanette-montgomery/protecting-new-yorks-democracy-senate-democrats-issue>

New York State Senate
Democratic Policy Group

Why Don't More New Yorkers Vote?

A Statewide Snapshot Identifying Low Voter Turnout

Senator Brad Hoylman, *Chair*

Senators Leroy Comrie, Velmanette Montgomery, Kevin S. Parker,
Diane Savino, José M. Serrano, and David Valesky
Policy Group Members



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Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Democratic Conference Leader



Senator Jeff Klein
Deputy Democratic Conference Leader