



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Andrew Gounardes

Senator Andrew Gounardes and Senate Majority Advance Election Reforms And Further Empower New York Voters

ANDREW GOUNARDES January 11, 2021

| ISSUE: **VOTING REFORM, ABSENTEE BALLOTS**

(**Brooklyn, NY**) -- Senator Andrew Gounardes, together with the Senate Majority, started the 2021 Legislative Session by advancing major voting reforms to improve New York State's electoral system and empower voters. The bills advanced by Senator Gounardes build on the historic election reforms passed during the 2019 and 2020 Legislative Session. The pro-voter bill package includes legislation to enable greater access to using absentee ballots and ensuring they are counted, no-excuse absentee voting, and an absentee ballot tracking system.

Senator Andrew Gounardes said, "Today, we begin the 2021 legislative session with the recognition that the benefits of a democratic society stem from access to the vote and trust in the system. We continue on our steady path to move New York from 'worst to first,' in voter participation. These bills will ensure that many more New Yorkers can vote easily, and, equally importantly, that their voices get heard and their votes get counted in a timely manner. This year, New York's election workers pulled off a free, fair and well-run election in the midst of a pandemic - we honor them and thank them. But in races like mine, voters did not know the results nearly two weeks after Election Day. New Yorkers deserve better, and this legislation to count the votes more quickly is an important step. I am proud to vote for greater access to the vote and faster election results today."

The bills advance by Senator Gounardes and the Senate Majority include:

- **Speeding Up the Absentee Ballot Counting Process:** This bill, [S.1027](#), sponsored by Deputy Majority Leader Senator Michael Gianaris, amends various provisions of the Election Law in order to allow for expedited review and canvassing of absentee ballots without compromising the integrity of elections.
- **Preventing Disenfranchisement of Absentee Voters:** This bill, [S.253](#), sponsored by Senate Elections Committee Chair, Senator Zellnor Myrie, prohibits voiding absentee ballots on technicalities where intent of voters is clear and the law has been substantially complied with, including where there are stray marks or the ballot is undated but is time stamped by the Board of Elections.
- **Permanently Authorizing Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes:** This bill, [S.492](#), sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman, authorizes the Board of Elections to establish absentee ballot drop-off locations or drop-boxes to provide voters with a convenient and secure option for delivering their absentee ballots.
- **Increasing Transparency and Information about Absentee Ballots through a Tracking System:** This bill, [S.1028](#), sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, ensures that all voters in the state have access to absentee ballot tracking by requiring the New York State Board of Elections to create a statewide absentee ballot tracking system for absentee voters ensure that their vote is counted in the election while allowing counties and the New York City Board of Elections to also maintain their own absentee tracking systems.
- **Implementing Permanent Authorization for Applying for Absentee Ballots Online:** This bill, [S.632](#), sponsored by Senator Robert Jackson, permanently allows voters to apply for absentee ballots online and allows absentee ballots postmarked through Election Day by making permanent Chapter 91 of the Laws of 2020, which sunset on December 31, 2020. Under current Election Law, applications may only be made by mail or fax.
- **Creating Accountability for Timely Receipt of Absentee Ballots:** This bill, [S.516](#), sponsored by Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris, establishes a mandatory timeframes for processing of absentee ballot applications and ballots by Boards of Elections based on when the application was received.
- **Enabling Earlier Applications for Absentee Ballots:** This bill, [S.631](#), sponsored by Senator Julia Salazar, permits Boards of Elections to receive absentee ballot applications earlier than

thirty days before the applicable Election Day by making permanent Chapter 138 of the Laws of 2020, which sunset on December 31, 2020.

- **No-Excuse Absentee Voting Constitutional Amendment:** This legislation, [S.360](#), sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, amends the State Constitution to allow for any voter to vote by absentee without an excuse.
- **Ensuring Voters Timely Receipt of Absentee Ballots:** This bill, [S.264](#), sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, sets deadline for absentee ballot applications sent by mail to 15 days before the election, up from 7 days, to better allow for voters timely receiving their absentee ballots.

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2021-S1027

-
- 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

-

Relates to the canvassing of absentee, military and special ballots and ballots cast in affidavit envelopes; repealer

January 06, 2021

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by Michael Gianaris

Do you support this bill?

2021-S253

-
- 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
 -

Relates to ballots where the express intent of the voter is unambiguous

December 23, 2020

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by Zellnor Myrie

Do you support this bill?

2021-S492

- 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
-

Authorizes boards of elections to establish absentee ballot drop-off locations

January 04, 2021

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Do you support this bill?

2021-S1028

-
- 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
 -

Relates to absentee ballot tracking

January 06, 2021

In Senate Committee Elections

Sponsored by Leroy Comrie

Do you support this bill?

2021-S632

-
- 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
-

Relates to absentee voting

January 04, 2021

In Senate Committee Elections

Sponsored by Robert Jackson

Do you support this bill?

2021-S516

- 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
-

Relates to the time period during which absentee ballots shall be mailed or delivered after an application for such ballot is received by the board of elections

January 04, 2021

In Senate Committee Elections

Sponsored by Michael Gianaris

Do you support this bill?

2021-S631

Boards of Elections, Elections, Absentee Ballots, Coronavirus Pandemic; COVID-19; absentee voting

-
- 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
-

Relates to requests for absentee ballots

January 04, 2021

In Senate Committee Elections

Sponsored by Julia Salazar

Do you support this bill?

2021-S360

-
- 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
 -

Authorizes ballot by mail by removing cause for absentee ballot voting

December 30, 2020

Passed Assembly

Sponsored by **Leroy Comrie**

Do you support this bill?

2021-S264

-
- 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
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Relates to absentee voting application deadlines

December 23, 2020

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Zellnor Myrie**

Do you support this bill?