



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham Presses for Statewide Reforms at Boards of Election with New Legislation

PETE HARCKHAM August 16, 2021

| ISSUE: **BOARD OF ELECTIONS, ELECTION REFORMS, ELECTIONS; VOTING RIGHTS**



*Peekskill, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham is pressing for reforms statewide at boards of election with two new bills that will, respectively, increase structural efficiencies and require BOE officials to comply with the state’s code of ethics for public employees.

“We have to do as much as possible to ensure that elections throughout New York State are conducted with absolute integrity and unfailing protections of voters’ rights,” said Harckham. “The legislation I have introduced will enhance the professionalism at boards of elections and work to eliminate possible conflicts of interest. It’s time for the ideals of good governance, like transparency and accountability, to guide this critical sector of public service.”

Along with Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Senator Shelley Mayer, Harckham was one of the sponsors of a recent public hearing on elections and voting rights in New York State held at the Westchester County Center in White Plains, NY. The hearing and several others were held across the state to give residents an opportunity to express their ideas on how to improve our elections. Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie, chair of the Senate Committee on Elections, organized and conducted the hearings.

Last week Harckham introduced a new bill that will categorize all members, officers, and employees of the boards of elections statewide as public employees. This will ensure that all hirings of board of elections employees are based on their performance on a civil service exam instead of the current arrangement, which encourages patronage, nepotism and ultra-partisanship.

“People should be hired on the basis of what they know rather than on who they know,” said Harckham of the new legislation, which still awaits a bill number. “By removing the political leverage that partisans try to create in the boards of election, our election process will run more smoothly and center on fairness and accuracy.”

Another bill ([S. 6220](#)) Harckham introduced earlier this year requires all board of election employees to adhere to the state’s code of ethics for public employees. The code stipulates employees cannot have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engage in any business or transaction or professional activity or incur any obligation of any nature that is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of their duties in the public interest.

Right now, board of elections employees around the state who are in charge of conducting fair elections also work on and do business (earning outside income usually as consultants) with political campaigns for the very same elections.

“If we want New York residents to have the utmost faith in our electoral process, then we have to institute reforms that support our democracy and enfranchisement,” said Harckham.

Over the past three years New York State has enacted a number of important election reforms, including early voting, consolidation of State and Congressional primaries, easier transfer of voter registration, absentee ballot improvements and automatic voter registration with applications to various government agencies.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2021-S6220

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- 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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Establishes a code of ethics for all board of election employees

April 15, 2021

In Senate Committee Elections

Sponsored by Pete Harckham

Do you support this bill?