



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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NY Voters to Decide on Proposals to Amend State Constitution

PATRICK GALLIVAN | October 28, 2021

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ELECTION DAY

Tuesday  **November 2**

This election season, voters across the state will decide which candidates will represent them in very important local offices. The 2021 ballot also includes five separate propositions to amend New York's Constitution. Voters will find the questions on the ballot they cast during the general election on November 2 or during the early voting period that ends October 31. Below is some information about each proposal.

Proposal 1 would amend the state's apportionment and redistricting process. If approved, it would reverse some of the key reforms approved by voters in 2014, which were intended to

reduce the influence of political parties in the once-a-decade process of redrawing state Legislative and Congressional district lines. It would also amend the process for counting the state's population and freeze the number of state senators at 63. My concern is the proposal changes a process voters just recently approved. It also unfairly empowers the majority party by preventing the minority party from having input in the process, and it significantly reduces the role of the redistricting commission. This is especially troubling when one party controls both houses of the state legislature, which is the current case in New York.

Proposal 2 would amend the Constitution to establish the right of each person to "clean air and water and a healthful environment." The effort to ensure these as fundamental rights is laudable, but the language is vague and difficult to define and enforce. The lack of details leaves the amendment open to interpretation and may result in costly and time-consuming legal challenges.

Proposition 3 would eliminate the current ten-day advance voter registration requirement in New York. If approved, it would allow the Legislature to implement same-day voter registration. I consider the 10-day requirement a reasonable way to protect the integrity of the ballot box and prevent a voter from illegally registering and voting at multiple sites. Allowing the Board of Elections time to determine a person's voting eligibility and to ensure they are registered in the proper district is an important safeguard.

Proposal 4 also deals with the voting process by authorizing no-excuse absentee ballots. Currently, absentee voters must be unable to appear at the polls because they are out of town or because of illness or physical disability. The proposed amendment would eliminate those requirements and allow any voter to request an absentee ballot. Proponents say the change will increase voter access and participation. Opponents raise questions about the cost and the time it takes to tally results.

The final proposal applies only to Civil Courts in New York City and doubles the monetary limits for cases to \$50,000, the first increase in 38 years. Expanding access to Civil Courts helps ensure plaintiffs their day in court, while reducing expenses to claimants and taxpayers. This proposal passed both houses of the Legislature unanimously.

I encourage you to do your own research on these important questions and decide for yourself. You can find more information at the Board of Elections web site:

www.elections.ny.gov.