



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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Senate Majority To Build On Election Reforms And Further Empower New York Voters

Includes the Doctor John L. Flateau Voting and Elections Database and Academic Center of New York Act

(Albany, NY) Today, the Senate Democratic Majority will advance legislation to improve New York State's electoral system, allow for portable polling locations, expand ballot drop-off locations, establish the Democracy Preservation Act, establish the New York Voting and Elections Database, modify the ballot order, allow food and non-alcoholic drinks to voters waiting in line at the polls, establish voter suppression as a criminal offense, and allow the board of elections to join a multistate voter list maintenance organization. These actions continue the Senate Democratic Majority's tradition of kicking off Session by passing major pro-voter, anti-disenfranchisement, pro-democracy legislation.

"Every year our first order of business as the Senate Majority has been to improve and strengthen the democratic process and to pay homage to the voters of this state who used their voices to put us in these positions," **Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. "We have seen so many attempts across the country of targeted and calculated attacks on the rights of voters, and we can not allow this kind of voter disenfranchisement to exist in New York. My bill, along with all the other important bills in this package, will be another step in our commitment to modernize and create a fairer, more accessible, and transparent election system for our great state."

Bill sponsor, **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris** said, "At a time when some in other states seek to increase their power by denying eligible voters their most important democratic right, I am proud our New York State Senate remains committed to the truth that our democracy is stronger when more eligible voters participate in elections and feel invested in their government. Our democracy is also stronger when our elections are free from corporate money and foreign interference, which is why I am delighted the Senate will be passing my bill, the Democracy Preservation Act, to bar foreign-influenced corporations from spending on New York political campaigns."

Bill sponsor and **Chair of the Elections Committee, Senator Zellnor Myrie** said, "Once again, the Senate Majority is putting the rights of voters at the very top of our agenda as we begin a new legislative

session. This isn't a coincidence-- we truly believe that breaking down barriers for voters is central to protecting our democracy. I'm extremely proud of what's become an annual tradition, and will continue fighting to keep New York on the path "from Worst to First" when it comes to improving elections and defending voting rights."

The voting reforms being passed by the Senate Democratic Majority, include:

- **Crimes of Voter Deception and Suppression:** This bill, [S263](#), sponsored by Senator Stewart-Cousins, prohibits deceptive practices and the suppression of voters, and increases penalties for violations of the elective franchise.
- **Democracy Preservation Act:** This bill, [S371](#), sponsored by Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris would ban political spending by foreign-influenced business entities in New York's state and local elections.
- **Refreshments at the polls:** This bill, [S.616](#), sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, allows snacks and non-alcoholic drinks to be given to voters waiting in line at the polls.
- **Doctor John L. Flatau Voting and Elections Database and Academic Center of New York Act:** This bill, [S657A](#), sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, establishes a New York voting and elections database and an academic center to maintain a statewide database of voting and election data and serve as a research hub.
- **Political Committee Public Website Transparency:** This bill, [S6675](#), sponsored by Senator Neil Breslin requires public-facing websites that are operated by political committees to include "paid for by" language.
- **Absentee Ballot Drop-off Box Locations:** This bill, [S610](#), sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal, allows local Board of Elections to establish absentee ballot drop-off locations to provide voters with a convenient alternative option to submit their absentee ballots.
- **Protecting Constitutional Rights:** This resolution, [B1460](#), sponsored by Senator Liz Krueger, rescinds calls for a constitutional convention to protect all existing constitutional rights.
- **Portable Polling Locations:** This bill, [S242](#), sponsored by Senator Rachel May, amends the election law to allow counties the option to establish portable polling places for early voting.
- **Ballot Order:** This bill, [S5943](#), sponsored by Senator James Skoufis modifies the order in which candidates appear on the ballot in descending order based on the size of the electorate and requires certain federal offices to be listed before state, county, and local offices.
- **Multistate Voter List Maintenance Organizations:** This bill, [S6173B](#), sponsored by Senator James Skoufis, authorizes the state board of elections to join a multistate voter list maintenance organization such as the electronic registration information center also known as ERIC.

Bill sponsor, **Senator Neil Breslin** said, "I am proud to join with my colleagues in support of this voting reform package. With voting rights coming under attack more and more throughout our country, it has never been more apparent that we must do what we can to preserve people's fundamental right to vote."

Bill sponsor, **Senator Liz Krueger** said, "I am proud to be part of a Senate Supermajority that continues to take a strong stand on protecting the fundamental right to vote. Passing these bills just days after the anniversary of the anti-democratic January 6th insurrection is particularly meaningful, and represents the commitment of our conference to protecting our precious but fragile democracy. The bill I carry to remove New York from the list of states calling for a dangerous Article V convention would stymie

efforts by extreme right-wing forces to tear up the protections all Americans enjoy under the US Constitution. I am pleased that the Senate will be passing it again, and I encourage our colleagues in the Assembly to do the same.”

Bill sponsor, **Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal** said, “It’s time New York catches up with the 25 other states across the country that make it easier to submit absentee ballots through the use of drop boxes. This is important because in prior elections up to one in five absentee ballots were invalidated due to errors in the mailing process. Our bill ([S.610](#)) permits drop boxes where voters can easily and conveniently return their absentee ballots and help ensure every vote is counted. I’m grateful to Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for continuing to prioritize legislation that protects our democracy.”

Bill sponsor, **Senator Rachel May** said, “Our democracy works best when everyone participates, and it is our job as legislators to make that participation as easy as possible. My portable polling locations bill will do just that by providing boards of election an option to help remove those barriers, giving New Yorkers easier access to the ballot box. The Democratic Majority has made improving voting rights a top priority, and I look forward to continuing our efforts this legislative session.”

Bill sponsor, **Senator James Skoufis** said, “While some states across the country jockey to suppress the vote, I am gratified that my colleagues and I have come together to protect and enshrine this foundational right for New Yorkers. Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy, and my bill to enroll New York in a multi-state voter list maintenance organization will ensure the integrity of our voter rolls while building confidence in election outcomes. I applaud my colleagues for advancing this and other efforts to make voting more fair, accessible, and trusted.”

Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY said, “Common Cause/NY is pleased the New York State Senate is starting session the same way it has the past three years: putting New York voters first. As we head into a hugely consequential election cycle, it’s critical that the Assembly passes these same bills immediately. We look forward to working with the Legislature to pass even more crucial election reforms this year, including informing voters they can now vote by mail and encouraging truthful campaigning.”

Perry Grossman, Director of the Voting Rights Project at the New York Civil Liberties Union said, “By again putting its day one focus on bills to strengthen our state’s democracy, the Senate is showing its commitment to fulfilling the New York State Constitution’s promise that ‘No member of this state shall be disfranchised.’ The New York Voting and Elections Database and Institute bill will make it easier for policymakers, advocates, and voters to access the critical data they need to expand voting access. In the midst of nationwide efforts to diminish voting rights, New York continues its march from worst-to-first to become a beacon for democracy.”

Karen Wharton, Democracy Coalition Coordinator, Citizen Action of NY said, “Citizen Action of NY applauds Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Elections Chair Zellnor Myrie, and the other bills’ sponsors for prioritizing the protection and expansion of democracy by passing this package of pro-democracy, pro-voter, anti-disenfranchisement bills. Our state is stronger when its residents can fully participate in its democratic system. We look forward to working with the State Legislature and the Governor during this legislative session to build on these important steps and to solidify New York’s government as a model for the nation.”

Jarret Berg, Co-Founder and Voting Rights Counsel at Vote Early New York said, “With America facing significant challenges to its democratic character from threats at home and abroad, New Yorkers are incredibly fortunate to have State Senate leadership that is focused on protecting and advancing our voting rights. We applaud the Senate Majority for once again putting fundamental rights first—by prioritizing this critical package of ten pro-civic election reform measures—and look forward to working with lawmakers in both chambers to enact modern voting policies that will continue to improve the fairness and quality of our elections.”

Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director, League of Women Voters of New York State said, “The League of Women Voters of New York State applauds the Senate for taking meaningful action on bills to protect our democracy. As the 2024 election approaches, it is critical that we safeguard our election system and ensure that every New Yorker can cast their ballot. We applaud the inclusion of bills that would allow for New York to join ERIC (a multistate voter list maintenance organization), expand access to the polls, and create the Doctor John L. Flatau Voting and Elections Database and Academic Center of New York Act. This database will increase transparency in our elections and provide the information needed to fight voter suppression more effectively across the state. We urge the Assembly to take similar action to protect voters and the democratic process.”

Betsy Gotbaum, Executive Director of Citizens Union said, “In the last few years, the legislature has passed a number of crucial reforms that protect and expand the right to vote for all New Yorkers. The bills passed today expand on this work. This is especially important in a Presidential election year, with high voter turnout anticipated. We applaud Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Chair Zellnor Myrie and all the bill sponsors for their ongoing commitment to improving access to the ballot and strengthening our democracy.”

Joanna Zdanys, Senior Counsel in the Elections and Government Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law said, “We applaud the Senate for its continued commitment to strengthening New York’s democracy through today’s slate of pro-voter reforms. We are pleased to see important changes, including the establishment of an academic center to maintain voting and election data, allowing New York to join a bipartisan initiative that has made state voter registration lists more accurate, and permitting voters braving long lines to receive food and drink while they wait in line to vote. The reforms passed today build on the state’s significant recent achievements, including the historic John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York, the nation’s strongest small donor public campaign financing program, automatic voter registration, and early voting. In this pivotal year for our nation’s democracy, we commend Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Elections Chair Zellnor Myrie, and the bills’ sponsors for their leadership in the effort to make New York a national model for a free, fair, and inclusive democracy.”

Sharon Sewell-Fairman, President & CEO, Women Creating Change said “Enacting legislation that fosters an inclusive and transparent democracy is imperative for fortifying civic engagement and empowering residents across New York. Women Creating Change proudly support these bills, aiming to boost democratic participation, especially among women who encounter barriers to engagement.”

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