

Please make the first Tuesday in November a mandated holiday.

The first Tuesday in November is sacred to our democracy - essential to a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Many, primarily poor, working class Americans, are unjustly excluded from this hallmark of American citizenship as they are forced to choose between employment obligations required for the wellbeing of themselves and their families and voting on Election Day.

Making the first Tuesday in November a holiday would remove this barrier, bringing us one step closer to fair, free, open elections for all. It would also raise awareness by bringing all elections (state, county and local) to the foreground - not just federal midterms and presidential contests.

Now, I'd like to bring your attention to another date - March 16th. As campaign manager for the newly elected Village of Pittsford Mayor, I am one of just over 200 people in my community of over 30,000 who recognize the importance of this day. What happened on March 16th? Four Villages in Monroe County held elections. That's right, in the dead of winter on a seemingly arbitrary day, a minuscule segment of our community decided who would govern our municipality for the next 4 years.

Testimony by Kendra Evans for NYS Senate Public Hearing August 5th on voting experiences and issues from voters in Rochester

Village elections should be aligned with the June primary or the general election in November. Aligning the Village elections with already scheduled elections will increase voter engagement, ease the burden on the Board of Elections and Village clerks *and* save taxpayers money.

Holding Village Elections in March costs these small municipalities a great deal of money and requires additional training of site chairs and election inspectors. Aligning the Village election with the primary or general removes both the financial and personnel burden.

I assume many will testify today regarding the difficulty of securing petition signatures in the dead of winter, for that reason I won't belabor the point - only to add that in addition to gathering petition signatures for our local and county offices amid treacherous weather, feet of snow, and a global pandemic, Villages in Monroe County also had to hold outdoor caucuses or collect petition signatures in January 2020 - only to do it all again in February. It's grueling work that leads to volunteer attrition, suppresses voter turnout, and is wholly unnecessary.

I applaud recent changes in the Election Law that have endeavored to make voting in New York easier and more accessible. As a longstanding community organizer in Pittsford, I can attest to the fact that voter participation has increased substantially. I'd like to draw special attention to the Executive

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Order allowing for no fault absentee voting - please, please make no fault absentee voting permanent for all elections.

Yet despite these efforts to make voting more accessible, Village elections were overlooked in these legislative updates and have left residents crying foul. I implore you to take action to mandate the alignment of Village elections with the scheduled primary or general election. It is a critical need and an essential step in making New York's elections more efficient, transparent, and in service to the voter.

Thank you for your time and service.