



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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

(Albany, NY) The Senate Democratic Majority will advance legislation to improve New York State’s electoral system, expand voting on college campuses, empower New York voters to participate in democracy, and continue protecting voters at the polls amidst the ongoing pandemic. These actions continue the Senate Democratic Majority’s tradition of kicking off Session by passing major pro-voter, anti-disenfranchisement, pro-democracy legislation. The bills passed by the Senate Majority build on the historic reforms passed during the [2019](#), [2020](#), and [2021](#) legislative sessions.

“At the start of every session we pay homage to the voters of this state and take action to ensure their votes are respected and protected,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “As states around the country have rolled back voting reforms, here in New York, we have made it clear that elections matter, voting matters, and leadership matters. The bills advanced today continue our efforts to modernize our electoral system and create a fairer and more transparent system. I applaud the bill sponsors for advancing these bills and standing up for New York voters.”

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

- **COVID Absentee Voting For School District Elections:** This bill, [S.7619](#), sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer, allows voters who are concerned about voting in-person due to an epidemic or disease outbreak to request an absentee ballot for school district elections in 2022.
- **COVID Absentee Voting for General Elections:** This bill, [S.7565B](#), sponsored by Senator Alessandra Biaggi, extends legislation allowing COVID as an excuse for absentee voting for elections.
- **Voter Registration at Second residence:** This bill, [S.6214](#), sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, codifies the right of voters to register at a second residence.
- **Democracy Preservation Act:** This bill, [S.1126A](#), sponsored by Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris, prohibits corporate contributions from companies owned by foreign entities or owners.

- **Polling Place On College Campuses:** This bill, [S.4658](#), sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker, designates polling places for voting on college campuses under certain circumstances.
- **Candidate Order on Ballots:** This bill, [S.1283](#), sponsored by Senator Todd Kaminsky, adjusts the candidate order on ballots to prevent voter dropoff.
- **Portable Polling Locations for Early Voting:** This bill, [S.557](#), sponsored by Senator Rachel May, amends the election law to allow counties the option to establish two or more locations for portable polling places for early voting.
- **Absentee Ballot Drop-off Box Locations:** This bill, [S.492](#), sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman, 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.
- **Validation of Ballots:** This bill, [S.253](#), sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, requires the canvassing of paper ballots when the express intentions of the voter are unambiguous.
- **Counting of Affidavit Ballots:** This bill, [S.284A](#), sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, requires counting affidavit ballots of eligible voters if a voter appears at a polling place in the correct county but in the incorrect election district.
- **Reduction of Time for Mailing and Receipt of Registration to Constitutional Minimum:** This bill, [S.2951](#), sponsored by Senator Brian Kavanagh, reduces the time to register to vote to the Constitutional minimum, ten days before an election for primary and general elections.

Bill Sponsor, Senate Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris said, “Unlimited corporate spending has a pernicious effect on our elections and my Democracy Preservation Act will make substantial inroads in fighting the undue influence of big corporations on our democracy. Enactment of this bill would ensure that New York’s elections are decided by its people, not by big corporations.”

Chair of the Elections Committee and bill sponsor, Senator Zellnor Myrie said, “Since 2019 the Senate Majority has started every legislative session with bills to expand voting rights. That tradition has never been more important than in 2022, when states across the country are working to restrict access to the polls. New York will always defend democracy, and we're just getting started. I look forward to passing even more legislation this year to improve our elections and protect voting rights.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Alessandra Biaggi said, “COVID-19 continues to impact every aspect of our lives, especially as positivity rates and hospitalizations surge across our state — but we cannot allow it to undermine our democracy and New Yorkers’ sacred right to vote. The failure of the voting rights ballot proposals in New York and the threat to voting rights across our nation place an even greater responsibility on the Legislature to do the right thing and prioritize voting reforms. My bill, S7565B, will ensure New Yorkers concerned with in-person voting due to the pandemic have the ability to request a ballot through 2022. As the end of the pandemic continues to remain uncertain, we must prioritize public health and ensure that New Yorkers do not have to choose between safeguarding their own health and fulfilling their civic duty. I want to thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for prioritizing this issue at the very start of this legislative session.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Brad Hoylman said, “During the 2020 elections, some New Yorkers stood in line for as long as five hours to cast their ballots. With this vote, New York is one step closer to joining the at least 33 states and the District of Columbia that reduce wait times and make voting easier and safer by deploying secure drop boxes as an option for returning absentee ballots. Thank you to Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for prioritizing legislation that protects our democracy, while others desperately attempt to undermine the power of the vote. I look forward to continuing to work with Assemblymember Dick Gottfried to enshrine this legislation into law.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Todd Kaminsky said, “Voting is the hallmark of our democracy, but the confusing and illogical ballot order in our elections has been shown to stymie participation. By putting elected legislative and executive offices before judicial seats, we can bolster participation and ensure New Yorkers’ voices are heard in selecting the officials whose decisions matter most to them.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Brian Kavanagh said, “While we were disappointed the constitutional amendment to permit same-day registration was not approved in November, the legislature has an important opportunity this year to make voter registration more accessible by eliminating the early registration deadlines in current law and allowing people to register until the tenth day before each election. This and the other reforms in this legislative package will build upon our success in recent years in greatly increasing New Yorkers’ access to voting and dramatically improving virtually every aspect of the way we administer elections--at a time when there are some in our country seeking to make it more difficult for Americans to participate in elections, and in some cases to suppress the votes of communities of color. I am proud to support this election reform package and I commend Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, Elections Committee Chair Zellnor Myrie, and all of the bills’ sponsors for their leadership on this issue.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Rachel May said, “I always cherish the opportunity to participate in the annual Senate Majority tradition of protecting and strengthening our democracy here in New York State. We have made so much progress in the past 3 years, but there is always more we can do to make voting simple and easy for New Yorkers. At a time when we see attacks on voting rights fueled by brazen lies in many states around the nation, this work is made even more important. I am proud to advance this package today, and to sponsor a bill that will make it easier for voters to access early voting sites.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Shelley Mayer said, “I am pleased to sponsor legislation that will remove obstacles to participation in our 2022 school board, budget, as well as public school library trustee and budget elections. This is especially important for our most vulnerable residents. This legislation ensures that qualified voters can participate in the 2022 elections without fear of illness by requesting an absentee ballot.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Kevin Parker said, “Voting and access to the polls are the building blocks of our democracy. My bill establishing polling sites on college campuses lays a

foundation for some of our newest voters and begins the habit of participation in our representative government.”

Blair Horner, NYPIRG Executive Director, said, “New York's democracy continues to be a work-in-progress. For the last few years, the Senate Majority has consistently set the table for action to improve elections, enhance government accountability, and to plug loopholes in the state's campaign financing system. We applaud the Senate for moving this package early in session and urge the governor and state Assembly to join the effort to make New York's elections system a national leader.”

Steven Lance, Policy Counsel at NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. said, “LDF applauds the New York Senate for recognizing the urgency of protecting the fundamental right to vote and taking early action. We look forward to working with Sen. Myrie and others to pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York this session to continue the state’s journey from lagging behind to national leadership on securing and advancing the freedom to vote.”

Lurie Daniel Favors, Esq., Executive Director at the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, CUNY said, "Across the nation, voting rights are under siege as states pass voter suppression laws. These measures, which impact Black Americans, other voters of color, the elderly, students, and people with disabilities the most, make it nearly impossible for vulnerable voters to exercise their fundamental right at the ballot box. This is a backlash, pure and simple—engendered by political forces seeking to prevent the momentum from the massive 2020 voter turnout from repeating or gaining strength. CLSJ is committed to working with voting rights advocates and New York's elected leaders to ensure that we not only protect democracy and our access to the ballot for all Empire state voters - but also expand and strengthen this direct channel to representation and political power."

Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, NY Immigration Coalition , said, “At a time when voting rights are under attack in other states, New York is making it easier for New Yorkers to vote, not harder. The passage of this important slate of bills reduces obstacles to participation in our democracy by recognizing the impact of COVID on our lives by expanding access to absentee ballots and absentee ballot drop-off boxes, ensures voters aren't penalized for voting at the wrong polling sites, and much more. Collectively, these reforms will increase engagement and result in more voices to be heard in our elections---outcomes that are good for all New Yorkers."

Chisun Lee, Director of the Elections and Government Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, said, “We applaud the state Senate for prioritizing legislation that will make it easier for all eligible New Yorkers to vote. If New York follows through on these important measures and other steps to modernize elections and launch its pro-voter public campaign finance program this

year, it will lead the country in strengthening our democracy. At a time when the integrity of our elections and the right to vote continue to face dangerous and baseless attacks, the Senate is showing the leadership that this state and this nation need.”

Dustin Czarny, Democratic Caucus Chair, New York State Elections Commissioner

Association, said, "The New York Senate Democratic Majority once again is demonstrating its commitment to Democracy. The tradition of passing bills that enhance and expand the franchise on the first day of session is something I look forward to every year. These bills that protect voters against technical challenges, invest in young voters on college campuses, and protect the health of voters to ensure a path to vote by mail during this pandemic are needed reforms. We look forward to partnering with our legislative leaders to implement these vital reforms for New York voters."

Orlando Ovalles, NALEO Education Fund Northeast Director of Civic Engagement, said “It is critical that our elections are as accessible as possible for all eligible New York voters — especially amid the challenges to voting brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The New York State Senate’s proposal for innovative measures to improve the state’s election processes will fortify every eligible New Yorker’s right to vote and strengthen our state’s democracy.”

Perry Grossman, Supervising Attorney, Voting Rights Project, New York Civil Liberties Union, said, “Our state Senate Elections committee is starting off 2022 with a forward-looking package of bills designed to make elections work better for the voters of New York. In particular, moving the voter registration deadline to the latest date our state constitution currently permits, 10 days before election day, will afford thousands more New Yorkers access to the ballot each election. We look forward to working with Senator Myrie and the rest of the committee to keep advancing voting rights in New York this year, including the passage of the nation’s strongest and most comprehensive state voting rights act.”

Jarret Berg, Co-Founder of VoteEarlyNY, said, “By advancing this package of key voting reforms, the Senate Majority continues to fight for the fundamental rights of New Yorkers. When enacted, these policies will improve the quality of election administration by providing better due process and rooting out persistent forms of voter suppression.”

Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY and a founder of the Let NY Vote Coalition said, “Democracy is a verb and the Senate understands the action it's called to. New Yorkers need more access to the ballot, and this package of pro-voter reforms moves New York closer to safe and secure elections for all eligible voters. Common Cause/NY urges the Assembly to seize the moment and follow suit.”

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