

Contact: Emily Parson, parson@nysenate.gov

Biaggi Helps Expand Voting and LGBTQ Rights in First Two Legislative Days as Freshman Senator

State Senator Alessandra Biaggi (D-Bronx/Westchester) joined in passing major legislation this week that makes it easier for New Yorkers to vote and expands rights for LGBTQ New Yorkers. This historic legislation is the first result from the new Democratic majority in the State Senate.

On Monday, January 14, the first regular session of the State Legislature, Democratic Senators' first priority was to fix New York State's broken electoral system. New York consistently ranks as one of the worst voter turnout states in the nation. Senator Biaggi was cosponsor of a series of bills that will empower New York voters and reform the state's electoral system. Many of these reforms have long been adopted by many other states, but had been held up in New York.

Senator Biaggi said, "There is nothing more important than having people participate in government and vote to choose their representatives at all levels. Maximizing participation and campaign finance reform are the best ways to ensure that elected officials represent their districts and not special interests. I am proud that my first votes as a new State Senator were for legislation that makes it easier to vote. And I will work hard to see that everyone in my district eligible to vote, starting with high school students, takes advantage of the new laws."

On Tuesday, January 15, the Senate passed and Senator Biaggi cosponsored the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) ([S.1047](#)), which prohibits discrimination based on gender identity or expression and adds transgender New Yorkers to those protected by the state's Hate Crimes Law. The Senate also passed legislation ([S.1046](#)) prohibiting mental health professionals from engaging in sexual orientation change efforts -- known as conversion therapy -- with a patient under the age of eighteen years.

"Equal treatment is the core of a real democratic society. I am proud that in our first week of passing legislation we are taking on the long overdue task of expanding full rights and equal treatment to the LGBTQ community by passing GENDA. Additionally, by outlawing the outrageous conversion therapy of minors, New York is finally making it clear that being gay is not and never should be treated as anything but normal," asserted Biaggi.

These bills were also passed by the Assembly and will now go to the Governor to be signed into law.

The historic election reform legislation passed by Senator Biaggi and the Senate includes:

- **Early Voting:** This bill, [S.1102](#), permits eligible voters in New York State to vote in person starting 10 days before election day. Giving more time for people to vote will make it easier for more people to vote.
- **Consolidation of Federal and State Primaries:** This bill, [S.1103](#), will save taxpayer dollars by making state primary elections the same day as federal primary elections. Now, the federal primary is in June and the state primary is in September, which discourages participation. It

also ensures that New York State's election law complies with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act.

- **Same-Day Voter Registration:** This bill, [S.1048](#), will allow voters to register and vote on election day. This change requires an amendment to the State Constitution, so it must be passed by a new Legislature in two years and then approved by the voters through a statewide referendum.
- **No-Excuse Absentee Voting:** This bill, [S.1049](#), will allow any voter to request to vote by mail without declaring a reason. It also requires an amendment to the Constitution and thus the same process described above.
- **Voter Registration Transfers:** This bill, [S.1099](#), will require the Board of Elections to transfer the registration and enrollment of a voter to wherever they move in New York State. That way, if a resident moves within the state, he/she don't have to worry about being allowed to vote from their new address.
- **Voter Pre-Registration:** This bill, [S.1100](#), will enable 16- and 17-year olds to pre-register to vote and requires local boards of education to adopt policies to promote student voter registration and pre-registration. Young people have been less likely to vote, and this is part of an effort to increase their participation and get them interested in their government.
- **Closing the LLC Loophole:** This bill, [S.1101](#), fixes serious problems with campaign contributions by LLCs, which can be paper organizations. Now, anyone can create as many LLCs as they want and use them to make unlimited contributions to a candidate for office, thus getting around the legal limits on contributions. This bill limits LLCs giving \$5,000, which is the same limit for any corporation. And the bill requires identifying the people behind the LLC.

###