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## NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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# Senate Majority to Pass Board of Elections Reforms

(Albany, NY) The Senate Democratic Majority today will advance Board of Elections reforms to target shortfalls in the current BOE system. This bill package includes provisions to require a mandatory training curriculum for BOE staff and commissioners; prohibit commissioners and deputies from holding public office; increase the compensation of election inspectors; prohibit conflict of interests among board employees; make commissioners full-time employees of the Board; develop and provide county materials for a model poll worker training program; update minimum employee requirements; update requirements for holding public hearings before BOE appointments, as well as the time frame for making such appointments; update the qualifications of a commissioner to be appointed; remove a commissioner under certain circumstances, and split shifts for election inspectors or poll clerks.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, “The Senate Democratic Majority has taken great steps to fix our antiquated electoral system to make it fairer and more accessible. We are building on that progress today through needed Board of Elections reforms that will enhance how they function across the entire state. By improving their ability to perform elections, we better the process for everyone and help make New York a beacon for democracy. I commend Senator Zellnor Myrie, Chair of the Senate Elections Committee, and the bill sponsors for their efforts.”

Senator Zellnor Myrie, bill sponsor and Chair of the Senate Elections Committee said, “Last year, the Elections Committee held statewide hearings to listen to voters, poll workers, elections administrators and advocates. Our report last fall detailed the concerns many New Yorkers shared about how our elections are run and what a better system might look like. I'm grateful to Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and my Senate colleagues for advancing this meaningful package of legislation that will improve our system of election administration at a time when democracy is under attack across this nation.”

The legislation being passed by the Senate Majority includes:

- **Mandatory Training Curriculum:** This bill, S263, sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, requires the State Board of Elections to develop a mandatory training curriculum for election commissioners and key staff of boards of elections.
- **Supporting Voters While In Line:** This bill, S7382A, sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, allows for the distribution of snacks and refreshments to those waiting in line to vote.

- **Prohibit Commissioners from Holding Office:** This bill, S7442, sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, prohibits election commissioners and deputy commissioners from holding a publicly elected office.
- **Pay Raise for Election Inspectors:** This bill, S823A, sponsored by Senator Liz Krueger, increases compensation of election inspectors to \$300 and coordinators to \$350 in New York City. It also sets minimum pay rate of \$300 per day and increases pay for training sessions from \$25 to \$50.
- **Reforming the NYC Board of Elections:** This bill, S6226E, sponsored by Senator Liz Krueger, reforms the New York City Board of Elections by reducing its size and delegating more authority to an Executive Director who will be chosen following a nationwide search. The bill also requires the NYCBOE to develop personnel policies with the City's Department of Citywide Administrative Services in order to ensure that staff hired and promoted by the NYCBOE are qualified.
- **Prohibiting Conflicts of Interest:** This bill, S4542A, sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer, prohibits conflicts of interest among board of elections employees by preventing a board of elections employee from remaining on the board of elections payroll while also running for office with an election overseen by the board at which they are employed.
- **Make Commissioners Full-Time Board Employees:** This bill, S8311, sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer, requires election commissioners to be full-time employees of each county's Boards of Elections.
- **Model Poll Worker Training Program:** This bill, S5800B, sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, requires the State Board of Elections to establish a poll worker training curriculum and a "train-the-trainer" program that emphasizes professionalism, confidence, and comfort in serving a diverse electorate.
- **Full-Time Employee Minimums:** This bill, S6684A, Senator John Mannion, requires every board of elections to employ a minimum of four full time employees and two additional employees for every twenty thousand active registered voters above forty thousand active registered voters.
- **Appointment Requirements:** This bill, S8289, sponsored by Senator Jim Gaughran, requires the legislative body responsible for appointing election commissioners to hold a public hearing before commissioners can be appointed.
- **Requirements for Commissioner Qualifications:** This bill, S8292, sponsored by Senator John Mannion, requires a Board of Elections commissioner to meet certain qualifications set by the State Board of Elections before his or her appointment.
- **Removal of Commissioners:** This bill, S8337, sponsored by Senator Rachel May, allows the State Board of Elections to remove a local election commissioner an affirmative majority vote of duly confirmed commissioners of the state board of elections for incompetence, misconduct, or other good cause, provided that prior to removal, such election commissioner is given a written copy of the charges against them and have an opportunity to be heard in their defense.
- **Splitting Shifts Among Inspectors and Clerks:** This bill, S424A, sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman, allows poll clerks to work split shifts with adjusted compensation to reflect the reduced hours worked.

**Bill sponsor Senator Leroy Comrie** said, "We must continually work to strengthen our democracy. Despite the incredible strides we've made, now more than ever, our effort to empower voters remains necessary. I am proud to sponsor legislation that will build on our progress by improving poll worker training and emphasizing professionalism in this critical role. This will go a long way towards ensuring trust among voters, and rebuilding the integrity of the BOE. I thank Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for bringing this package to the floor, and our conference for continuously raising the bar on electoral protections for New Yorkers."

**Bill sponsor Senator Brad Hoylman** said, “Our rights are being attacked from all directions—including the right to vote. It is vital New York enact protections that ensure access to the ballot for all New Yorkers, especially in light of the backsliding occurring nationally. This comprehensive Board of Elections package covers everything from strengthening poll workers’ training to providing entertainment on poll lines to incentivize voting. This package also includes my bill to allow boards of election the flexibility to implement split shifts for poll clerks, which will assist poll worker recruitment. I am very proud of our collective efforts here, which have been guided by the strong leadership of Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Liz Krueger** said, "With our democratic processes under constant attack across the country, it is more important than ever that we ensure that voters can have the utmost confidence when they cast their votes in New York State. I'm proud to join my colleagues in this important package of bills, which includes my legislation to increase pay for elections inspectors and to professionalize the New York City Board of Elections so that we can avoid the fiascos that we have witnessed in several recent cycles."

**Bill sponsor Senator John Mannion** said, “The Senate’s election reform package improves our democracy by encouraging voter participation and strengthening the institutions charged with overseeing the process. My bills ensure only experienced professionals meeting strict requirements are eligible to serve as elections commissioners. They also mandate minimum staffing levels at boards of elections so they have the resources necessary to run an election in the professional and timely manner that New Yorker’s expect. I am grateful to Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and to my Senate colleagues for making election reform a top priority and for sharing my commitment to making New York State a leader in administering elections.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Shelley Mayer** said, “The integrity of our elections is critical to our democratic process. I am proud to sponsor legislation to decrease conflicts of interest among Board of Elections' employees running for office and ensure Boards across the state have the capacity to respond to voters and do the work with which they are charged. I thank Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and my colleagues for their commitment to restoring faith in voters.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Rachel May** said, “Since day one of my tenure as a Senator, the Democratic majority has made improving voting rights and election administration a top priority. Today, we continue to improve our elections by ensuring voters can be confident in election officials to carry out free and fair elections. My bill in this package, S8337, will allow a bi-partisan commission to remove an election commissioner for incompetence, misconduct, or other good cause, providing accountability and transparency in our elections.”

**Dustin Czarny, Onondaga County Board of Elections Commissioner and Chair of the NYS Elections Commissioner Association Democratic Caucus** said, “More now than ever before it is important to give resources to our local Boards of Elections. This package of bills provides for training, staffing, and reforms designed to enhance the resources Boards of Elections need to accomplish our ever-growing roles and Responsibilities. It also holds Boards of Elections accountable to the people we serve by mandating training, providing a baseline of qualifications, and a viable path to remove non-compliant commissioners. I hope the Assembly and Governor follow the Senate's lead and pass these bills this session.”

**Blair Horner, Executive Director of NYPIRG** said, "Rome wasn't built in a day and New York's notorious elections system won't be fixed in one or two sessions. But the Senate keeps bringing the

'bricks and mortar' policy changes that are needed to build an elections system in New York that is modern and fair. This package continues to help fix a broken system. NYPIRG applauds the Senate for taking up this package."

**Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/New York** said, "Common Cause/NY is glad to see the NY Senate passing a reform package that is aimed towards improving New York's notoriously problematic election administration. Krueger's legislation, which reforms the Board of Elections in New York City, is an important first step towards a professionalized election process — something we desperately need. Now, the Assembly must pass this same package. We hope this is the first step towards a wholesale recasting of election administration which continues to put voters first."

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