



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

ADDABBO: NO MONEY FOR NOVEMBER 3rd POLL WORKERS? GET RID OF RUNOFF ELECTIONS!

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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Queens, NY, Monday, October 26, 2009 – State Senator **Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.**, Elections Committee Chair for the State Senate, reacted to reports in Friday's editions of the *Daily News* and *New York Post* that the City's Board of Elections Director warned, during Thursday's testimony before a panel of three Assembly committees dealing with the coming conversion

to electronic machines statewide, the Board has no money to pay 30,000 poll watchers for the November 3rd general election. Noting his recently announced plans to start the legislative process to eliminate runoff elections in New York State because of usually abysmally low turnouts, Addabbo responded, "We agree, we told you so!"

The Senator has joined with senior Committee member, Senator Bill Perkins (D-Manhattan), to sponsor the bill, S.6248, eliminating runoff elections statewide. The Elections Committee will continue its series of hearings on improving the state's voting process, begun earlier this month, with another public hearing in Manhattan next week. The Committee began an extensive series of state-wide hearings in March dedicated to increasing awareness about election policy and voting and continued the hearings through June, before resuming them this month, to cover voter registration, voting/casting a ballot and poll-sites and campaign finance reform.

Senator Addabbo said his Elections Committee will explore a primary election replacement option suggested by Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan), calling for Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) for municipal elections in the State.

Addabbo cites such IRV supporters as Gene Russianoff, a staff lawyer with the New York Public Interest Research Group, who explains, "Primary voters would cast ballots to indicate their top choices by ranking them No. 1, No. 2, No. 3. If no candidate received at least 40 percent of the No. 1 rankings, an instant runoff would take place between the top two vote-getters by allocating the ballots from the defeated candidates to whichever of the top two candidates was ranked next on that ballot. The candidate with more votes would win."

More IRV support is found on the non-partisan *FairVote* Web site:

Instant runoff voting allows for better voter choice and wider voter participation by accommodating multiple candidates in single seat races and assuring that a "spoiler effect" will not result in undemocratic outcomes. IRV allows all voters to vote for their favorite candidate without fear of helping elect their least favorite candidate, and it ensures that the winner enjoys true support from a majority of the voters. Plurality voting, as used in most American elections, does not meet these basic requirements for a fair

election system that promotes cost-saving elections with wider participation.

Adds Addabbo, “I agree with today’s news stories that the city’s seeming inability to pay poll workers on November 3 very likely was caused by the \$15 million cost to hold a primary runoff election on September 29 following a record low primary turnout (11%) on September 15 and was a waste of taxpayer money.”

New Yorkers were alerted to the runoff debacle by Sam Roberts’ articles in *The New York Times*, who noted on October 6 that ‘Fewer than 8 percent of the city’s roughly three million enrolled Democrats voted in an election that cost the city \$15 million and the four candidates millions more. The low turnout...is likely to lead to renewed calls for a change in how runoff elections are done.’

Addabbo concluded, “The chorus keeps growing and getting louder -- it’s time to get rid of wasteful runoff elections for a more sensible approach, especially when the city is poised to introduce optical scan voting equipment. My goal as Elections Committee Chair is to increase voter turnout and make the voting process more accessible and efficient.”

For more information, please call Senator Addabbo’s office at 718-738-1111.

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