



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Senate Passes Klein Bill to Facilitate Voter Registration Process

JEFFREY D. KLEIN | April 14, 2010

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Klein Bill Revises Affidavit Ballots to Increase Number of Registered Voters

ALBANY, NY – State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) announced Wednesday that the Senate passed legislation to expand the democratic process by making it faster and easier for New Yorkers whose affidavit ballots are ruled invalid to become properly registered for future elections.

Senator Klein's bill (S.5988/NYS Assembly companion bill A.4015) requires that the reverse side of the envelope in which a voter submits an affidavit ballot contain a voter registration form. This legislation will ensure that any eligible, unregistered New Yorker who fills out the ballot and form and whose vote is ruled invalid in that election becomes registered to vote in future elections.

"I am wholly committed to creating a more open, accessible, and responsible electoral process for all New Yorkers. First and foremost, this means breaking down barriers that keep eligible New Yorkers from becoming registered voters," said State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

Under current law, a person who believes he/she is registered to vote is allowed to vote by affidavit ballot if he/she is at the correct polling place, but poll workers are unable to find his/her name on the list of registered voters. Affidavit voters, however, rarely confirm their registration status following the election. Many erroneously assume that their vote was counted, and that they are registered to vote in future elections.

In the 2001 general election, more than thirty thousand (31,116) affidavit ballots were received in New York City, with nearly half later ruled to be invalid. This included 3,622 affidavit ballots in Bronx County, of which nearly two thousand (1,995) were found to be invalid.

Earlier this year, the Senate passed Senator Klein's legislation to shorten work shifts for election-day poll workers. The bill (S1836) permits local Boards of Elections to hire election inspectors for half-day shifts, preventing fatigue and increasing flexibility for workers whose shifts often start before the polls open at 6 AM and end after they close at 9 PM. This bill greatly expands the opportunity for seniors and the physically disabled to participate in the democratic process.