



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo: Election Reforms Ensure Absentee and Affidavit Votes Are Counted and Improve Election Administration

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR May 19, 2010

| ISSUE: **ELECTIONS, GENERAL, INITIATIVES & REFERENDUMS**

Addabbo: Election Reforms Ensure Absentee and Affidavit Votes Are Counted and Improve Election Administration

Queens, NY, May 18, 2010 -- Recently, the New York State Senate passed a package of election reforms to improve the absentee and affidavit voting process and have since been signed into law by Governor Patterson. These bills underscore the Senate Majority's commitment to delivering an inclusive, reliable and efficient electoral process to the voters of New York . "The Elections Committee has made common sense reforms a priority because, under no circumstance, should voters question their role in our democracy," said Senator Joseph Addabbo (D-Queens), Chair of the Senate Elections Committee.

Legislative Summary:

S2868-B/ Addabbo:

- Simplifies the absentee ballot application process by eliminating private and superfluous information requirements and shortening the time for application.

- Removes questions about why a voter cannot make it to the polls, including if they have a permanent or temporary disability. Also eliminates provisions requiring voters with permanent illness or physical disability to list on the application the particulars of their illness.
- Removes the requirement that the Boards of Elections investigate whether such voter is being truthful as it pertains to said illness or disability.

S4960B/ Krueger:

- Allows voters to request an absentee ballot by fax for the first time ever.
- Reduces the time it takes voters to receive their absentee ballot, while making it easier for voters who are out of town or abroad, including military personnel, to return their ballots in time for them to be counted.

S5988/ Klein:

- Provides for a dual affidavit ballot, voter registration and change of enrollment form. Ensures that those who vote by affidavit ballot are properly registered for the next round of elections.
- Eliminates cost of postage for local Board of Elections.

S3252/ Addabbo:

- Includes space for an e-mail address on voter registration forms.
- Provides voters with the option of an additional means of communication with local Board of Elections.

- Promotes administrative efficiency by allowing the Board of Elections to determine how changes to mailing addresses are made (Passed in the Senate on 5/17).
- Allows individuals to update their mailing address by additional methods such as telephone, email and fax.
- Requires candidates who file campaign disclosure reports to provide the name and address of the bank where they maintain campaign accounts.

"New York voters deserve a simple and easy way to request materials to participate in our democratic process," said Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan). "Voters will now be able to take advantage of more convenient, faster technologies including fax and email to request absentee ballots, which will encourage people to exercise their right to vote."

"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 York voters from being counted," said State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

"The League of Women Voters of NYS applauds the Senate for passing these bills which improve the voting process for New York voters. Removing obstacles to absentee voting and expanding opportunities for eligible voters to participate in choosing their elected representatives, especially in this statewide election year, is a positive step," added Aimee Allaud, Elections Specialist, League of Women Voters of New York State.

Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY noted, "Common Cause/NY applauds the Senate for passing these long overdue election reforms. They remove unnecessary impediments and inconveniences that make it harder for New Yorkers to be

able to vote and help streamline election and campaign procedures. As long-time supporters of no-excuse absentee voting, we are particularly pleased by the passage of S2868-B (Addabbo), which simplifies the absentee ballot application process, and by its being signed into law by Governor Paterson on April 28."

"This package of reform bills individually and collectively will help remove some of the obstacles to voting that get in the way of New Yorkers casting their ballots," said NYPIRG Legislative Counsel Russ Haven. "This moves us in the direction of making it easier to participate in the most essential part of our democracy: voting to choose our designated representatives."

Concluded Dick Dadey, Executive Director of Citizens Union, "Citizens Union commends the Senate for the passage of a number of election reform bills that aim to provide voters with greater ease in registering to vote and casting their ballots. In particular, S2868-B, simplifies the process of receiving an absentee ballot and S5988, which streamlines the process of registering or changing voter enrollment through an affidavit ballot, and was also signed into law by the governor on April 28. Both of these bills provide voters with an easier process for ensuring they are registered and are able to cast their ballot. In addition, allowing voters to include their email addresses on voter registration forms as provided in S.3252, is a smart step toward harnessing today's technology to provide voters with necessary information and make communicating with the public as widespread and easy as possible. Citizens Union has long advocated for election processes that maximize participation and increases access to voting, and these bills take us in that direction."

# # #