



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Supports Governor's Program Bill That Ensures Overseas Military Voters Are Treated Fairly in Special Elections

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR March 8, 2011

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Bill Now in Assembly; Fixes Discrepancy Between State & Federal Laws

Queens, NY, March 7, 2011 – NYS Senator Joseph Addabbo, Jr. (D-Queens), ranking member of both the Senate's Elections Committee and its Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs Committee, supports the Governor's Program Bill #4, announced by Governor Cuomo on February 23, which has been passed by the Senate and now needs passage in the Assembly. Once passed by the legislature and signed by the governor, it would take effect immediately.

Addabbo noted, "Governor Cuomo and both of these Senate committees have made common-sense reforms a priority in an effort to count every eligible vote in special elections. This measure will make it easier for more individuals to cast a vote and have their voices heard in the most fundamental democratic process. It is especially important for those heroically serving our nation abroad, to have their voices heard at home. This year, passage of this bill is needed to ensure that all voters in the 26th Congressional District have an opportunity to cast legal ballots in a special election to fill the congressional seat vacancy. Under current law, special elections are held between 30 and 40 days from their

announcement. Governor Cuomo's measure would more than double the length to between 70 and 80 days."

The bill amends New York's Public Officers Law and the Election Law to provide county boards of elections additional time prior to special elections, in order to allow adequate time for military ballots to be mailed and counted in compliance with federal law. The bill recognizes that existing provisions of the Public Officers Law and Election Law do not provide sufficient time for the State and county boards of elections to finalize and transmit to military voters overseas the final ballot within 45 days of a special election, as required by federal law. The changes to those provisions in this bill would remedy that problem by providing additional time for election officials to finalize and transmit military ballots and requiring that such transmission occur earlier than under existing law.

The Governor's Program Bill # 4 seeks to:

Expand the period between the announcement of a special election and the date of the election by 40 days. As a result, the special election would be held between 70 and 80 days from its announcement, rather than between 30 and 40 days.

Require that military ballots be transmitted no later than 45 days before a special election.

Change the date by which the State Board of Elections must certify candidate information to the applicable county boards of elections from 13 days to 53 days before a special election, and similarly require county boards of elections to determine candidates and ballot questions to be included on the special election ballot 53 days before a special election.

Require each county board of elections to transmit to the Secretary of State election results within 20 days after a special election, instead of the 10 days required in existing law.

Senator Addabbo concluded, “Men and women serving in our military are currently in harm’s way to protect our freedoms and the right to vote. They should have every opportunity to participate in the democratic system that they risk their lives to protect, and every New Yorker should have full access to voting.”