



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

Tkaczyk Measure Would Repay Taxpayers for Wasteful Second Primary Election

CECILIA TKACZYK January 29, 2014

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(ALBANY, NY) -- While the Federal courts have forced New York to move its Congressional primaries from September to June, the State Senate's coalition leaders have failed to move State Primaries to coincide with the June date. In response, State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk has introduced legislation (S.6417) that would require the State to pay back local governments and taxpayers for the costs of the second, unnecessary and wasteful Primary -- estimated to be up to \$50 million for every two-year election cycle.

Senator Tkaczyk earlier this year co-sponsored legislation (S.6204) to move the State Primary elections from September to coincide with Congressional Primaries. This measure would protect the voting rights of military members serving overseas and save taxpayers the massive costs of the second Primary. That legislation has already passed the State Assembly, but the Senate has failed to act.

Moving the State primary from September to June would bring New York into compliance with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. MOVE was enacted to ensure that ballots from military personnel and Americans living abroad are sent and returned in time to be counted.

“There are 11,000 active duty military men and women serving overseas who may not have their vote counted because the Senate’s coalition leadership has refused to consolidate our Primary Day elections,” **Senator Tkaczyk** said.

“Our state should not be in the unconscionable position of wasting 50 million taxpayer dollars and preventing military members from having their ballots counted. But if the Senate’s coalition leadership refuses to act, then we should not force taxpayers and local governments to pay for another wasteful mandate.”

In addition to the 11,000 New Yorkers currently serving in the military overseas, there are also more than 30,000 New Yorkers who are working, and attempting to vote, overseas.

Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy said, “As a member of the Armed Forces, I want to thank Senator Tkaczyk for her efforts to protect the voting rights of our service men and women serving overseas. I am still hopeful the Senate will put aside politics and act on her bill to consolidate Primary Day elections. If they do not act, and local governments are forced to pay for a second Primary, Senator Tkaczyk's new bill to reimburse local governments

would relieve the burden of an additional mandate on the county and our taxpayers."

Tom Quackenbush, chair of the Montgomery County Legislature, said, "Just last night the Montgomery County legislature unanimously passed a resolution in support of Senator Tkaczyk's legislation. At a time when we are desperately trying to cut back on expenses and stabilize property taxes, it is absolutely outrageous that we would have to pay for a second and unnecessary primary."

Tony Jasenski, Chair of the Schenectady County Legislature, said, "This unnecessary, unfunded mandate would cost Schenectady County taxpayers more than \$100,000 in addition to the huge administrative burden to our County Board of Elections. Thank you

1. The State Legislature has failed to address the problem, so they should have to pay for it."

Brian Quail, election commissioner for Schenectady county, said, "There is no good reason to hold a second Primary election for State offices. It is unnecessary, irresponsible and wasteful at a time when we're all struggling to do more with less. If the Senate's coalition leadership cannot or will not pass Senator Tkaczyk's bill to consolidate Primary Day elections, then it is imperative that they pass her legislation to reimburse local governments and our taxpayers for the costs of their inaction."

Vic Work, election commissioner for Ulster County, said, "When you analyze the costs of a second Primary for Ulster County, you get a sense of just how much of a burden this places on local taxpayers. In 2012, the Federal Primary in June cost the county \$72,609.66 and the State primary in September cost an additional \$62,432.69. Those costs were relatively low because there was not a full slate of Primaries, in which case the costs increase to nearly \$120,000 for the Federal primary and another \$120,000 for the State primary elections.

Having more than one primary is a wasteful expense, especially when we are trying to reduce mandates and property taxes.”

“The State Senate cannot ignore its responsibility in light of the Federal court’s decision,” **Senator Tkaczyk** said. “Every vote counts, and it is appalling that the Senate coalition leadership is willing to disenfranchise the very people who are overseas protecting our nation and our right to vote.”

Senator Tkaczyk is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Election Law Committee, and a member of the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security and Veteran’s Affairs Committee.