



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Simcha Felder

Felder-Silver Bill Extends Petition Season to Accommodate Orthodox Jewish Voters

SIMCHA FELDER May 6, 2014

| ISSUE: **ELECTIONS, VOTER PROTECTION**

Legislation introduced by Senator Simcha Felder (D-Brooklyn) and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) which amends the election law to accommodate Orthodox Jewish voters has passed the State Legislature. With the unanimous passage of this bill, the first day to sign a designating petition for state and local primary elections in 2014 is now Thursday, May 29. Bill number S7097/A9407 has been sent to Governor Cuomo for his signature.

The need for the legislation arose as a result of a conflict with Shavuos. Currently, Election Law §6-134 states that the first day to sign designating petitions for a primary election should be thirty-seven days before the last day to file. This year, the last day to file designating petitions is July 10, making the first day to sign petitions June 3, which is also the first day of Shavuos. The total number of days to sign a petition has been increased from 37 to 42 days.

Felder said he sponsored this legislation to prevent the potential disenfranchisement of Orthodox Jewish voters.

“All New Yorkers should have every opportunity to actively participate in the election process and should not be hindered from doing so because of their religious beliefs or observance. This legislation ensures that no one will be deprived of their fundamental right,” said Senator Felder. “I want to thank Senate Majority Republican Co-Leader Dean Skelos for his support of this legislation and for seeing it through to passage.”

Senate Co-Leader Dean G. Skelos said, “Widening the petitioning window by five additional days to accommodate those who observe Shavout will ensure that every New Yorker can fully participate in the political process. I commend Senator Felder for highlighting this important issue and for his outstanding work in achieving passage of the measure in both the Senate and Assembly. I look forward to this bill being swiftly signed into law.”

Speaker Sheldon Silver said, “This change, in recognition of the Shavuot observance, will help ensure that all interested New Yorkers may participate equally in our State's political process. It is essential that we respect and accommodate the religious views and practices of all our citizens when it comes to our elections.”

The amendments made by this legislation will only impact state and local elections in 2014, and the bill will be repealed on September 10, 2014.