



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

## Senate Passes Election Reform Bills that Save Taxpayer Dollars and Increase Voter Participation

FRED AKSHAR May 24, 2017

| ISSUE: **ELECTIONS, VOTING REFORM, VOTING**



This week, the New York State Senate passed a series of election reform bills increasing voter participation and education, while also saving county taxpayers an estimated \$25 million on primary elections. The bills would consolidate state and Congressional primary elections to one date in August, assist local election officials in recruiting poll inspectors to help ensure election day activities run smoothly, and increase information available to voters about candidates, among other measures.

## **Consolidating State and Congressional Primaries:**

The Senate passed a bill that creates one August primary date for state and Congressional races - saving taxpayers at least \$25 million and bringing the state into compliance with federal election requirements for overseas balloting. Bill S1115, sponsored by Senator Fred Akshar (R-C-I-Ref, Colesville), designates the third Tuesday in August as the date to merge the current federal non-presidential primary held in June and the state primary held in September.

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*Senator Akshar, Chairman of the Senate's Elections Committee, said, "Having the right to vote and having access to vote are very different, and we want to make sure that everyone who has the right to vote has the capability and access to vote as well. These reforms not only cut costs to save taxpayers money, they ensure that our men and women serving in the Military have their vote counted."*

An August primary election date also ensures that military personnel and New Yorkers living abroad have an opportunity to vote and have their votes counted. Currently, New York State's September primary is not compliant with the 45-day Military Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act that requires states to transmit validly-requested absentee ballots to Military and overseas voters no later than 45 days before a federal election.

At least 14 other states held state and/or Congressional primaries in August last year. Setting a date for these elections earlier in the year would interfere with the state budget and end-of-session state legislative work that takes place, making it more difficult for current elected officials to perform their legislative responsibilities in Albany.

Other election reform measures passed today include:

### **Recruiting Election Inspectors:**

- Bill S443A would help with the recruitment of election inspectors by enabling counties to split the election workday into shifts. During most elections, polls are open for an average of 16 hours and election workers are not only required to work during polling hours, but the additional time required to prep and close down polling sites;

### **Removing the election notification requirement to publish the residence of a candidate seeking office:**

- Bill S2786, sponsored by Senator Akshar, would help save publishing costs by reforming a measure originally put in place to ensure voters could distinguish between two candidates with the same name. Other measures in the state's election law would prevent any potential confusion should such a situation occur, and;

### **Voter access to candidate websites:**

- Bill S1567A would provide a gateway for voters to find candidate information more easily by identifying a website designated by a candidate. Candidates for the governor, lieutenant governor, state comptroller, attorney general, state senate and assembly would be able to notify the state Board of Elections (BOE) about their campaign website and BOE would then publish the sites on their website.

The bills have been sent to the Assembly.

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## 2017-S1115

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to primary elections and the timely transmission of ballots to military voters stationed overseas

January 06, 2017

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

Sponsored by [Fred Akshar](#)

Do you support this bill?

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## 2017-S443A

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Permits boards of elections to engage election inspectors to split shifts, their compensation to be adjusted accordingly

January 03, 2017

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by [Catharine Young](#)

Do you support this bill?

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## 2017-S2786

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Removes the requirement of publishing a candidate's residence prior to an election

January 17, 2017

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Fred Akshar**

Do you support this bill?

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## 2017-S1567A

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- Introduced
    - ◦ In Committee Assembly
      - In Committee Senate
    - ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
      - On Floor Calendar Senate
    - ◦ Passed Assembly
      - Passed Senate
  - Delivered to Governor
  - Signed By Governor
  -

Requires the state board of elections and local boards of elections to publish the campaign website addresses of certain candidates for public office

January 10, 2017

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Tony Avella**

Do you support this bill?