



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## As Deadline to Register for General Election Approaches, Kennedy & Wallace Join WNY Advocates to Fight to Fix New York's Election Laws

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY October 12, 2018

| ISSUE: **ABSENTEE VOTING, EARLY VOTING, ELECTION REFORMS**



*Senator and Assemblymember Call for State Legislature to Consider Three Critical Reforms Designed to Streamline Access to Voting and Increase Voter Participation*

*According to a Statewide Report, 79% of Surveyed New Yorkers Said They Would Be More Likely to Vote in an Election if Reforms Such as Early Voting Were Enacted*

ALBANY, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) and Assemblymember Monica Wallace (D-Lancaster) joined local labor and community leaders Thursday to remind Western New Yorkers of Friday's deadline to register to vote in November's general election, and launched a public push for stronger voting reforms statewide. Representatives from WNY AFL-CIO, NAACP's Buffalo Branch, Partnership for the Public Good (PPG), and Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ) were all in attendance. Key bills included in the legislative package outlined include a measure to enact early voting as well as no-excuse absentee voting, and a step towards moving the deadline to change party enrollment, allowing voters to make the switch just 25 days after filing paperwork.

"When we see low voter turnout statewide, more often than not, people want to get out to vote and exercise their right as Americans, but are hampered by arcane election laws that hinder voter participation rather than encourage it," said Senator Tim Kennedy. "When legislative session resumes, these reforms should be a top priority, because this is truly a bipartisan issue; it has nothing to do with who you're voting for, and everything to do with how accessible your right to vote should be."

"Our democratic system works best when voters participate in elections," said Assemblymember Monica Wallace. "However, our current voting system makes it difficult for working families to make their voices heard. Common sense reforms like early voting, moving of the party change deadline, and a constitutional amendment eliminating the requirement of an excuse to vote by absentee must be approved by the Legislature next session."

Kennedy and Wallace highlighted a report, *Why Don't More New Yorkers Vote? A Snapshot Identifying Low Voter Turnout*, which details a survey conducted with New Yorkers who did not participate in the 2016 General Election despite being eligible to vote.

Key findings from the survey include:

- 79% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote in an election if early voting was enacted.
- 76% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote in an election if no-excuse absentee voting was enacted.
- 28% of respondents said they have missed an election because of work or school obligations

The reforms co-sponsored by Kennedy and Wallace include:

- Early Voting (S.7400-A/A.9608) - This bill would establish an Early Voting system to permit eligible voters in New York State to vote in person during a designated period prior to any primary, special, or general election day. This bill will also establish an Early Voting Fund to cover the expenses of early voting so that local governments are not unfairly burdened.
- No-Excuse Absentee Voting (S.840/A.7623) - This bill would amend the state Constitution to allow for any voter to request to vote by mail without declaring reason.
- Moving Party Change Deadline (S.7109/A.10842) – This bill would shorten the registration time requirement from before the previous general election to 25 days after filing paperwork. Currently, any registered voter who wishes to change his or her party enrollment, enroll in a party, or end enrollment in a party must do so at least 25 days before the previous general election.