



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

As Trump Attacks Post Office And Mail-In Voting Ahead Of 2020 Election, Senator Hoylman, Assembly Member Gottfried, And Advocates Rally To Establish Secure Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes Across New York State

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL August 31, 2020

| ISSUE: **ABSENTEE BALLOTS, VOTING, 2020 ELECTION, SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN, VOTING RIGHTS**

NEW YORK, N.Y. - As President Trump repeatedly makes false claims about the security of mail-in voting and the U.S. Postal Service warns of delays that could compromise election results in November, state legislators and election reform advocates rallied in front of the Farley Post Office Building in Manhattan to build support for new legislation from Senators Brad Hoylman and Rachel May and Assembly Member Richard Gottfried (S.8902 / A.10942) that would allow local Boards of Elections to establish absentee ballot drop box locations across the state.

Ballot drop boxes have been proven to be a secure, reliable option as they are in use in at least 33 states, and have been widely used for years in states that conduct their elections entirely by mail such as Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. Recent analyses show miniscule rates of possible fraud in those states (0.0025%).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security recently issued guidance to state and local election officials on how to conduct secure elections during the pandemic that called drop

boxes a “secure and convenient means for voters to return their mail ballot.” Washington’s Republican Secretary of State, Kim Wyman, also called them “very secure” and said “(w)e haven’t had any issues with lost ballots or fraud - and our voters love them. I don't share the president's concerns about ballot drop box fraud.”

Senator Brad Hoylman, Senate prime sponsor of the bill, said: “New York won’t allow Donald Trump’s relentless attempts to undermine our elections and spread misinformation to succeed. As his administration’s attacks on the USPS create postal delays across the country and New York grapples with historic numbers of absentee ballots, we need to ensure New Yorkers that their votes will be counted. The Senate Democratic Majority continues to take bold steps to reform our election laws, protect New Yorkers’ constitutional right to vote, and expand access to our democracy, and I’m proud to sponsor this legislation with my colleagues Senator May and Assembly Member Gottfried to provide voters a convenient, secure way to submit their ballots directly to their local Boards of Elections and protect their health during the pandemic.”

Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, Assembly prime sponsor, said: “The Trump administration is undermining the mail system, while a surge of New Yorkers will be voting by absentee ballot because of COVID-19. Secure drop boxes will make it easier to vote and make sure ballots are honestly and quickly delivered and counted. Drop boxes have been proven to work in states from Connecticut to Oregon. Our bill will give New Yorkers the same convenient and safe option.”

Senator Rachel May, Senate co-prime sponsor, said: “We owe it to all New Yorkers to make sure that their vote gets counted this November. The continued threat of COVID-19 means that a record number of absentee ballots are expected this fall and yet we see the federal government actively dismantling the service on which these ballots rely: the United States Postal Service. One way we can promote safe, fast, and efficient voting, without worrying

about postal issues, is to allow folks to drop their ballots off in secure drop boxes around their communities. I am proud to partner with Senator Hoylman to safeguard New Yorkers' health and democratic right to vote.”

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer said: “Albany must pass State Senator Brad Hoylman and Assembly Member Richard Gottfried’s bills to permit ballot drop boxes to be used in New York as an alternative to mailing in absentee ballots through the postal service. We must safeguard our democracy against Postmaster General Louis DeJoy's attempts to slow the swift and secure delivery of our ballots.”

State Senator Robert Jackson said: “Our colleagues at the federal level must step in to save our beloved US Postal Service. But, in the meantime, we have to face the fact that the June primaries were a disaster of voter disenfranchisement. We must create alternatives at the state level to ensure November’s election is fair and accessible for all. I am proud to support this legislation of Senators Hoylman and May to create safe ballot drop boxes. It’s the smart, secure, and cost-effective solution we need right now.”

Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick said: “We need to provide committed voters with as many secure opportunities to vote as possible. People want to vote, but during a pandemic many voters may not be able to stand on long lines due to their health issues, or those of family members. Thanks to Senator Hoylman & Assembly Member Gottfried we may have secure ballot drop boxes other states have had for years.”

Assembly Member Yuh-Line Niou said: “For the November election, it is essential that our New Yorkers have the opportunity to safely and easily vote amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Most New Yorkers might opt to vote absentee for the sake of their health and we need to ensure that Federal efforts to undermine our vote by mail system are fully refuted. I fully support my colleagues Senator Brad Hoylman, Senator Rachel May and Assembly Member Richard

Gottfried in their legislation that allows for the establishment of absentee ballot drop box locations across the state. Expanding accessible voting methods is a critical measure that will allow New Yorkers to exercise their right to vote while staying safe from COVID-19.”

New York City Council Member Keith Powers said: “We all know that the upcoming election is one of the most consequential of our lifetimes. As we all have learned, voter turnout and getting ballots counted is going to be critical. As we continue to fight COVID-19, we have to make it safer and easier for New Yorkers to vote, including with the ability to securely place your ballot at a drop box. I am glad to call for the passage of Senator Hoylman and Assemblymember Gottfried’s legislation to make this happen while easing the burden on the USPS.”

New York City Council Member Carlina Rivera said: “The Trump White House continues to sow doubt about our upcoming presidential election, both by making false claims regarding the legitimacy of absentee ballots and by supporting leadership at the United States Postal Service that may be acting more out of political fealty to the President than adherence to the mission of the agency. New York State and its boards of elections must do everything possible to make voters confident in submitting their absentee ballots, and drop boxes are one substantial way we can provide a safe, reliable vehicle for votes to be counted. I am happy to support Senator Hoylman and Assemblyman Gottfried as they move this bill forward.”

Jennifer Wilson, Deputy Director of the League of Women Voters of New York State, said: “As voters prepare to cast their ballot during the ongoing pandemic, lawmakers should do whatever possible to ensure access to remote voting options. Allowing for the use of drop boxes for absentee ballots is a common sense way to give voters peace of mind that their ballot will be received for the general election, without risking contracting COVID-19. We applaud Senator Hoylman and Assemblyman Gottfried for introducing this legislation and

hope to see it passed and signed into law in time for the 2020 election.”

Jarret Berg, Co-Founder of VoteEarlyNY, said: “To ensure the resiliency of our democracy and elections during a pandemic, we must provide voters with better options for casting a ballot that will count. By authorizing secure dropboxes, this reform would provide New Yorkers who choose to vote remotely this Fall with more ways to return their ballot on time and we encourage election officials to embrace it.”

Sally Greenspan, Member of the Board of Directors of Downtown Women for Change, said: “DWC enthusiastically supports Senator Hoylman’s ballot drop box bill. Ballot boxes are a critical component of this election season. Ballot drop boxes have been successfully used for years in many states and during this pandemic, they are the essential tool to help protect our health, protect our right to vote, and then be sure that our votes are counted. It is imperative that this legislation is passed, funded and implemented prior to the start date for mailing in absentee ballots. The overwhelmed USPS needs them, New Yorkers need them, our democracy needs them.”

Betsy Gotbaum, Executive Director of Citizens Union, said: “As our democracy is being threatened by the occupant of the White House, who has admitted he's willing to sabotage the postal service to prevent Americans from voting, it is our duty to do everything we can to protect and expand the right to vote. Installing ballot dropboxes throughout the state is a convenient, cost-effective way to ensure that all voters have the opportunity to safely submit a ballot and ensure that it arrives on time to be counted. We applaud Senator Hoylman for introducing this common-sense legislation, and hope it can be passed and signed into law immediately.”

Megan Ahearn, Program Director at NYPIRG, said: “Ballot drop boxes check off all the boxes for New York voters -- they are safe, accessible, and give people confidence that their vote

will be counted. Hardly a novel idea, two-thirds of the country has used ballot drop boxes during elections. Given the many challenges posed by COVID-19, and laid bare during the June Primaries, New York lawmakers must step up and provide smart election day solutions. Ballot drop boxes must be at the top of the list."

Danielle Brecker, Co-lead Organizer of Empire State Indivisible, said: "Empire State Indivisible supports any measure that ensures every vote counts in the upcoming and all future elections. We urge the New York State legislature to return to session and pass Senator Hoylman's bill to set up ballot boxes so voters have one more convenient way to safely drop off their absentee ballot instead of relying on the mail. Furthermore we are asking the legislature to use their power to pass additional measures to help register voters; make voting easy, accessible, and safe for all; and to fully fund and support Boards of Elections across New York State. Everything is at stake in November. We must get it right.

The legislation, S.8902 / A.10942, would do the following:

- Authorize local Boards of Elections to establish locations with secured absentee ballot drop boxes for voters to return their marked absentee ballots;
- Require local BOEs to post the locations of absentee ballot drop boxes on their websites the same day the locations are established;
- Direct the State Board of Elections to promulgate rules and regulations to implement the establishment of absentee ballot drop-off locations, including, but not limited to the location, chain of custody, pick-up times, proper labeling, and security of the drop boxes; and
- Deem an absentee ballot to be timely received by a Board of Elections if a voter deposited their ballot in a drop box before the close of polls on Election Day.

Although President Trump has repeatedly questioned the security of mail-in voting and of ballot drop boxes, he voted by absentee ballot in 2018 and 2020.

More than 84,000 absentee ballots were invalidated during the June Democratic primary election in New York City: a stunning 21% of all ballots received by the NYC Board of Elections. Many ballots were invalidated for reasons related to the mail-in process, such as lack of an appropriate postmark or late arrival due to delays.