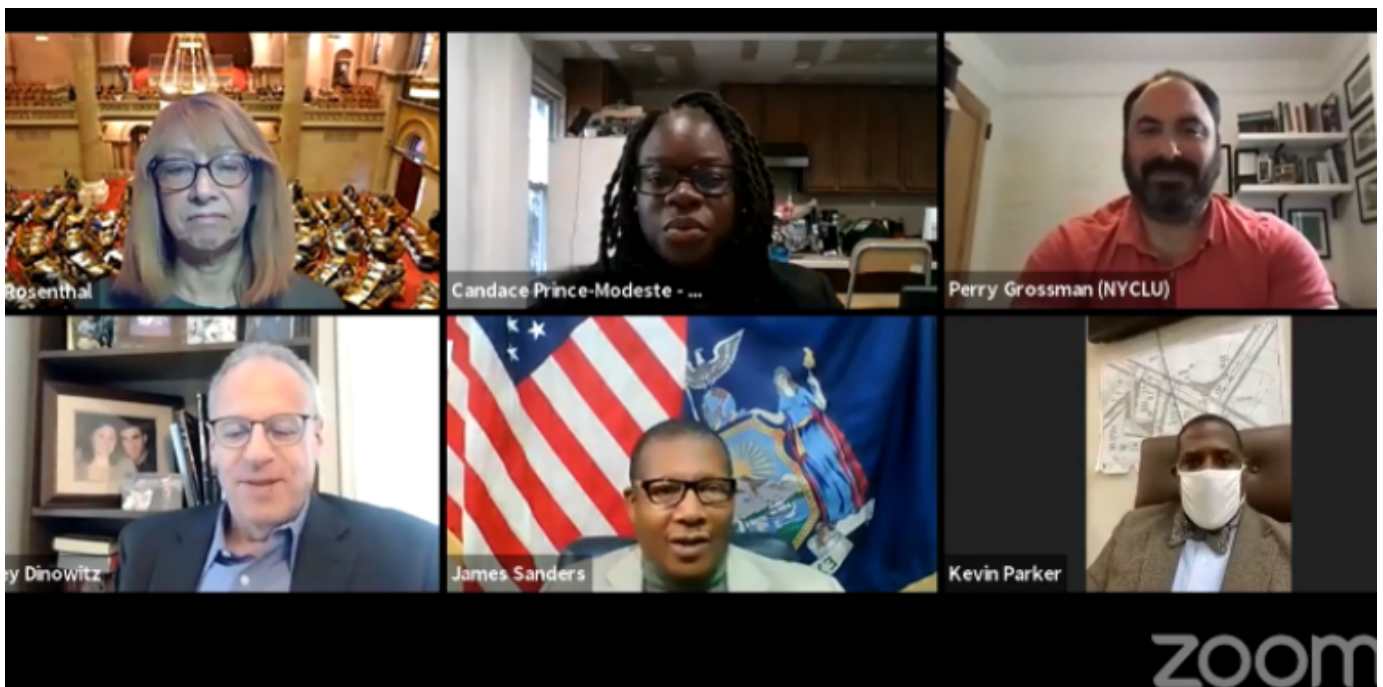




NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
James Sanders Jr.

Senator James Sanders Jr. Holds Press Conference on Legislation to Improve Ease of Voting

JAMES SANDERS JR. October 23, 2020



Senator James Sanders Jr. hosted a press conference to discuss his legislation (S8004), which would require the Board of Elections to provide a return postage guaranteed envelope with absentee ballots. Assembly Member Jeff Dinowitz, who is the sponsor of the companion bill in the Assembly, joined Senator Sanders, among other supporters and leaders.

“In this difficult time as we continue to battle coronavirus, it is absolutely necessary that we make voting and participating in the democratic process as easy and safe as possible, and

that includes fine tuning voting by absentee ballot,” Sanders said. “This legislation will remove some of the confusion and complications associated with voting by absentee ballot like having to go out and purchase postage or not knowing how much postage to use.”

"It is our jobs as stewards of democracy to ensure that there are as few barriers to voting as possible." said Dinowitz. "Requiring postage to return an absentee ballot is tantamount to a poll tax, both with respect to the actual cost of postage as well as the logistical hurdle of purchasing a stamp. I am proud to have carried this bill for a number of years, and am hopeful that we are able to get it passed as soon as possible so it can be in effect before New York State amends our constitution to allow no-excuse absentee voting in 2022. Thank you to State Senator Sanders for his support in the other chamber on this legislation, as well as to my colleagues and the advocates who have joined us in this call to ensure that all voters can participate in our democracy."

Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal expressed similar sentiments.

“The State has a responsibility to guarantee free and fair elections for every single New Yorker who is eligible and wants to vote," said Rosenthal. "Voting is neither free nor fair if the State requires voters to pay for postage. During a pandemic, when millions of New Yorkers will vote by mail to protect their health and safety, it is vital that we remove every barrier to the vote. This amounts to a poll tax: the cost of a single stamp could represent a difficult decision that no one who is barely scraping by should be forced to make.”

Dr. Hazel N. Dukes, President of the NAACP NYS Conference and Candace Prince-Modeste, President of the Jamaica NAACP agreed that paying for postage is a type of voter suppression that can be unintentional, but may still have damning effects on voter access.

"This is voter suppression," Dukes said. "Anytime we put anything in the way that doesn't encourage citizens to participate in democracy - that is voter suppression."

Also joining the press conference to show their support were Senator Kevin Parker, Assembly Member-Elect Khaleel Anderson and Perry Grossman, Senior State Attorney, Voting Rights Project, New York Civil Liberties Union.