Kavanagh Votes in Support of Nine Election Reform Bills

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| ISSUE: **ELECTIONS**, **VOTING**, **PROTECTING NEW YORK VOTERS**, **VOTER TURNOUT**, **VOTING RIGHTS**

On Monday, January 12, 2021, Senator Kavanagh voted in Albany in support of nine election reform bills that he had previously co-sponsored. The nine bills passed the Senate and will soon be voted on in the Assembly.

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The following bills advanced by the New York State Senate Majority, build on the historic election reforms passed during the 2019 and 2020 Legislative Session. The legislation include:

- Speeding Up the Absentee Ballot Counting Process: This bill, S.1027, sponsored by Deputy Majority Leader Senator Michael Gianaris, amends various provisions of the Election Law in order to allow for expedited review and canvassing of absentee ballots without compromising the integrity of elections.

- Preventing Disenfranchisement of Absentee Voters: This bill, S.253, sponsored by Senate Elections Committee Chair, Senator Zellnor Myrie, prohibits voiding absentee ballots on technicalities where intent of voters is clear and the law has been substantially complied with, including where there are stray marks or the ballot is undated but is time stamped by the Board of Elections.

- Permanently Authorizing Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes: This bill, S.492, sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman, authorizes the Board of Elections to establish absentee ballot drop-off locations or drop-boxes to provide voters with a convenient and secure option for delivering their absentee ballots.

- Increasing Transparency and Information about Absentee Ballots through a Tracking System: This bill, S.1028, sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, ensures that all voters in the state have access to absentee ballot tracking by requiring the New York State Board of Elections to create a statewide absentee ballot tracking system for absentee voters ensure that their vote is counted in the election while allowing counties and the New York City Board of Elections to also maintain their own absentee tracking systems.

- Implementing Permanent Authorization for Applying for Absentee Ballots Online: This bill, S.632, sponsored by Senator Robert Jackson, permanently allows voters to apply for absentee ballots online and allows absentee ballots postmarked through Election Day by making permanent Chapter 91 of the Laws of 2020, which sunset on December 31, 2020. Under current Election Law, applications may only be made by mail or fax.

- Creating Accountability for Timely Receipt of Absentee Ballots: This bill, S.516, sponsored by Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris, establishes a mandatory timeframes for

processing of absentee ballot applications and ballots by Boards of Elections based on when the application was received.

- Enabling Earlier Applications for Absentee Ballots: This bill, S.631, sponsored by Senator Julia Salazar, permits Boards of Elections to receive absentee ballot applications earlier than thirty days before the applicable Election Day by making permanent Chapter 138 of the Laws of 2020, which sunset on December 31, 2020.

- No-Excuse Absentee Voting Constitutional Amendment: This legislation, S.360, sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, amends the State Constitution to allow for any voter to vote by absentee without an excuse.

- Ensuring Voters Timely Receipt of Absentee Ballots: This bill, S.264, sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, sets deadline for absentee ballot applications sent by mail to 15 days before the election, up from 7 days, to better allow for voters timely receiving their absentee ballots.

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