



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Senate Majority Protects Election Integrity Against Ongoing Pandemic

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS January 26, 2021

| ISSUE: **ELECTION REFORMS COVID-19**



(Albany, NY) The Senate Majority will advance election system reforms to protect New Yorkers' health and our state's democratic process ahead of the 2021 elections despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The bills that will be passed by the Senate Majority build on the major legislation passed earlier **this month**, and the historic reforms enacted during the **2019** and **2020** Legislative Session. The legislative package that will be advanced by the Senate Majority includes expanded access to absentee ballots, lower petition requirements for the

2021 elections, remote participation for political party designation conferences, and protections for nursing and long-term care facility residents.

“Just as the work of government must continue despite this pandemic, we must also ensure our democratic processes and elections are protected,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “Citizen participation in government, on all levels, is the very bedrock of our democracy. The legislation advanced by the Senate Democratic Majority will help ensure that the 2021 Elections are able to run smoothly and be conducted with every effort taken to protect New Yorkers’ health. I thank the bill sponsors for their commitment to our democratic processes, and thank my colleagues for advancing these bills and protecting our elections’ integrity.”

The legislation advanced by the Senate Democratic Majority includes efforts to:

- **Protect New Yorkers’ Health by Expanding Access to Absentee Ballots:** This legislation, Senate Bill [S.1632](#) sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer, will allow voters to request an absentee ballot for upcoming village elections if they are concerned about contracting or spreading a disease that may cause illness to the voter or to other members of the public.
- **Reduce Petition Numbers to Help Protect Public Health:** This legislation, Senate Bill [S.2733](#) sponsored by Senator Rachel May, will reduce the number of signatures for designating and nominating petitions to thirty percent of the number required by law.
- **Enable Remote Participation for Political Party Designations:** This legislation, Senate Bill [S.1705A](#) sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, will enable political parties to use video or telephone conferencing to conduct party designations and nominations for village, town, and political party elections.
- **Protect Nursing and Long-Term Care Facility Residents’ Health while Guaranteeing Access to Absentee Ballots:** This legislation, Senate Bill [S.1644](#) sponsored by Senator Jeremy Cooney,

will ensure that absentee ballots can be delivered to New York nursing homes and long-term care facilities without Board of Elections inspectors having to physically enter the premises. This will help avoid accidental exposure to COVID-19 for residents of these facilities.

Bill Sponsor, Senator Jeremy Cooney said, “This legislation will help our senior citizens exercise their right to vote while staying safe during these unprecedented times. I am proud to be in a majority that works to expand the absentee ballot process and ensure every New Yorker has a voice.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “During a public health crisis like COVID-19, we need to ensure that every step of our electoral process is pandemic-proof. I’m proud that my first sponsored bill has passed as part of the election package advanced today and will allow party designations and nominations for village caucuses to be made remotely via teleconference. This COVID-19 safety measure joins a slate of other protections that will make our voting system safer and more accessible for everyone during this pandemic.

Bill Sponsor, Senator Rachel May said, “Over the last two years, the Legislature has taken bold action to make it easier for New Yorkers to vote and to have their votes counted. Now we also need to make sure that candidates can get on the ballot in the midst of a pandemic. The normal process, in which campaign volunteers go door to door collecting petition signatures, goes against all health guidelines at this time. Therefore, I am pleased to sponsor this bill to reduce the number of signatures needed in 2021 to a level that can protect public safety while still respecting the requirement that candidates demonstrate initiative and broad support in order to secure a ballot line.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, "I am pleased that my bill, S.1632 to allow for applications for absentee ballots in village elections based on concern for personal health was in today's package of bills to expand voting access. It is especially critical that voters in village elections are able to exercise their right to vote safely and without fear for their personal health. This bill will conform absentee ballot availability in local village elections to the rules for other elections, and encourage participation in these critically important local races."

RELATED LEGISLATION

2021-S1632

- 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

-

Relates to absentee voting during village elections

January 14, 2021

In Senate Committee [Elections](#)

Sponsored by [Shelley B. Mayer](#)

Do you support this bill?

2021-S2733

- 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
-

[Reduces the number of signatures for designating petitions](#)

January 23, 2021

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by [Rachel May](#)

Do you support this bill?

2021-S1705A

- 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
-

[Authorizes party designations and nominations for all elections to be made via video teleconference or web conference](#)

January 14, 2021

In Senate Committee [Elections](#)

Sponsored by [Michelle Hinchey](#)

Do you support this bill?

2021-S1644

- 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
-

[Relates to absentee voting by residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities](#)

January 14, 2021

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Jeremy A. Cooney**

Do you support this bill?