



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elijah Reichlin-Melnick

## Senator Reichlin-Melnick and Assemblyman Zebrowski Introduce Bill to Allow Ward Systems for Rockland School Districts

ELIJAH REICHLIN-MELNICK January 19, 2021



State Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick and Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski announced today they have introduced legislation to allow any school district in Rockland County to create wards for the purposes of school board elections, subject to voter approval (S.2053/A.249)

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*“Ensuring that all communities are fairly represented is a cornerstone of democracy,” said Senator Reichlin-Melnick. “This legislation would give school districts in Rockland County the authority to determine for themselves if a ward system is right for the children and families they serve.”*

“Every Rockland school district should have the ability to determine their own election system. If wards/districts will increase voter participation, accountability and diversity on the board, they should not have to ask a Judge for an order. Every student in Rockland deserves an excellent education and that starts with parents being heard and represented by the School Board,” said Assemblyman Zebrowski.

“Our local school boards take on one of the most important civic responsibilities out there, caring for the education of our students”, said Kevin O’Connor, President of the Rockland County Teachers Association. “We need to ensure our local school board members are elected in the most fair and democratic process out there. A ward system allows for every member of the school community to have a voice and feel more invested in the board. All politics is local and a ward system will ensure everyone has access.”

The legislation would allow districts to create ward systems of between 3-9 wards, ensuring that all or a majority of members of a school board are not elected from the same neighborhood of a district. Under the terms of the bill, the creation of a ward system by a school district would require voter approval in a referendum. A nearly identical bill allowing school districts in Orange County to create ward systems was passed by the Senate in 2020.

Ward systems are already used by many cities, towns, and villages in New York to ensure fair representation for all communities. The East Ramapo Central School District in Rockland County is preparing to conduct its first election under a new court-ordered ward system,

following litigation by the NAACP.

Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick represents the 38th State Senate District, which covers four towns in Rockland and Westchester.

Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski represents the 96th Assembly District, which covers the towns of Clarkstown and Haverstraw, and parts of Ramapo.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2021-S2053A**

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- 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

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Establishes school election wards in Rockland county union free and central school districts

January 19, 2021

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by [Elijah Reichlin-Melnick](#)

Do you support this bill?