

News from Senator George M. Borrello

57th Senate District

Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County

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Contact: Lisa Hill (518) 496-2882

WITH GENERAL ELECTION IN 78 DAYS, SENATOR BORRELLO URGES GOVERNOR CUOMO TO REFRAIN FROM ENACTING CHANGES TO VOTING PROCESS

Testimony from Boards of Election officials last week underscored the constraints of current system

ALBANY, NY—Following last week’s joint legislative hearing examining the problem-plagued June 23rd primary, Senator George M. Borrello is urging Governor Cuomo to refrain from implementing any changes to the voting process for the November 3 election to help avoid a repeat of the chaos and delays that marred the primary. In making the request, Senator Borrello cited the testimony of elections officials who stated that the short timeline before Election Day would make it impossible for them to successfully implement any widespread changes.

“Last week, we heard directly from state, county and city elections commissioners that the directives from the Executive pertaining to the primary election fueled a massive expansion of absentee voting that overwhelmed the capacity of the system,” said Senator Borrello. “Particularly in New York City, the results were disastrous, ranging from absentee ballots delivered to voters after Election Day, to weeks-long delays in counting votes and determining winners, to the invalidation of 23 percent of the ballots, disenfranchising tens of thousands of voters.”

In response to concerns over COVID-19 risks at polling places, the Governor issued an Executive Order on April 8 allowing all eligible New Yorkers to vote by absentee ballot for the June 23 primary. Two weeks later, he followed that with another Executive Order mandating that the Boards of Elections automatically mail every eligible voter a postage-paid application for an absentee ballot.

“As we look ahead to the general election on November 3rd and the exponentially higher turnout of presidential election years, there is great concern that the voting process in New York could be even more chaotic than the primary if there is an attempt to enact eleventh-hour changes to the process,” Senator Borrello said. “All of the election professionals that testified, without exception, stated that there simply isn’t enough time to successfully implement broad directives such as mailing all eligible voters absentee ballot applications. Even if the state had extra funds to accompany any such initiatives – which it doesn’t – our election infrastructure can’t be changed before November 3rd.”

“In April, New York State was still experiencing very difficult days and high infection rates in many areas. The Governor’s actions were understandable given the situation at that time,” said Senator Borrello. “Thankfully, things have changed drastically since then. We’ve gone from having the highest infection rate in the nation to one of the lowest. The emergency actions that were taken in April don’t merit repeating, particularly in light of the calamity surrounding the primaries.”

He added that with benefits such as early voting, the majority of New Yorkers should be able to vote in person safely over the 10-day period by exercising the same safety precautions they take in the course of their daily routines.

“There is too much at stake to risk undermining the functioning and integrity of our electoral process. We can have bitter political battles during campaigns, but in the end the voters must have faith that their vote will count. They must believe that despite the politics, the process is sound.”

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