

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

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May 4, 2016
Start: 12:38 p.m.
Recess: 01:07 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
16th Fl.

B E F O R E:
BEN KALLOS
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
David G. Greenfield
Mark Levine
Carlos Menchaca
Antonio Reynoso
Ritchie J. Torres
Joseph C. Borelli

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

2 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Good afternoon,
3 welcome to this meeting of the Committee on
4 Governmental Operations [gavel] now called to order.

5 We are going to start off, because we
6 have multiple hearings happening at once, with a call
7 of the roll for members who are on their way to the
8 committee, specifically David Greenfield, who has
9 recessed his committee for five minutes; I now direct
10 the Clerk to call the roll for David Greenfield.

11 [background comments] Hm?

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
13 Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on
14 Governmental Operations, Introduction 0062-A, 0463-A,
15 0659-A, and Resolutions 0553-A, 0848 and
16 Preconsidered Resolution in relation to streamlining
17 the voter registration process, Council Member
18 Greenfield.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you
20 Mr. Chairman for the courtesy; I vote aye.

21 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Wait, hold on; we'll
22 need you to hold one second; we need to change the
23 Preconsidered Resolution on which you are voting.

2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Excuse me;
3 Preconsidered Resolution in relation to the no-excuse
4 absentee voting. Council Member Greenfield.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you
6 Mr. Chairman for the courtesy; I still vote aye.

7 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you; you're
8 now excused to please continue chairing the Committee
9 on Land Use.

10 Good morning and thank you for coming to
11 this hearing of the Committee on Governmental
12 Operations; I'm Council Member Ben Kallos, Chair of
13 the committee. You can tweet me where, Council
14 Member Borelli?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: That's
16 @BenKallos and also tweet me at @BorelliJoe.

17 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you,
18 @BorelliJoe. Committee members include @BorelliJoe,
19 David Greenfield, Carlos Menchaca and Ritchie Torres;
20 feel free to shout out your Twitter names.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: @CMenchaca.

22 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Please follow the
23 Twitter to get Ritchie Torres' Twitter name from
24 Twitter.

2 Today we're voting on three bills and
3 three resolutions related to improving the voting
4 experience. Civic engagement is a top priority of
5 this committee and this Council, as Speaker Melissa
6 Mark-Viverito highlighted in her State of the City
7 speech in February. This committee recognizes the
8 need for improving voter participation and has held
9 three hearings this session aimed at addressing the
10 ever decreasing voter turnout in city elections.

11 Today's legislation builds on that work
12 and seeks to empower voters by ensure they're able to
13 easily access valuable information about elections;
14 like registration status and their poll site
15 location. During the April 19th Presidential
16 Primary, there were reports of voters unknowingly
17 being removed from voter rolls, poll sites opening
18 late, malfunctioning ballot scanners, and staffing
19 issues. Although some of these issues are covered
20 under State Law and must addressed by Albany, others
21 are problems at the city level and exactly what
22 happened to cause them is being looked into by this
23 committee. In the meantime, the bills we'll be
24 voting on today make needed improvements now to the
25 current system and had they been in place, would've

2 prevented some of what we saw on April 19th. Voters
3 should be able to easily access information about
4 elections at any time in order to make the process of
5 voting more accessible and efficient and avoid what
6 we saw last month, where voters showed up to vote
7 thinking they were registered or registered with a
8 political party, only to be told by election workers
9 they were not on the voter rolls; arose [sic]
10 Introduction 0659-A, which I am proud to sponsor,
11 requires the Board of Elections to provide a secure
12 website and mobile application that allows voters to
13 verify voter registration status and eligibility to
14 vote in primaries, locate the proper poll site,
15 update information, view one's voting history, track
16 an absentee ballot from request to received by BOE,
17 and access existing resources, such as downloading a
18 registration form and viewing sample ballots.

19 This one introduction is something that
20 I've been working on for nine years, since I created
21 VoterSearch.org, the first website that really
22 allowed people in New York State to verify their
23 voter registration status and I'm glad that after
24 nine years it will finally become a reality in the
25 City of New York, and for those of you not living in

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2 New York, you can visit the State Board of Elections
3 or still use the VoterSearch.org to verify your voter
4 registration status.

5 Next, Proposed Introduction 0062-A,
6 sponsored by Council Member Dan Garodnick, requires
7 the Board of Elections to post notices on election
8 day at poll sites that were in operation in the
9 previous four calendar years but which are no longer
10 in use. Although the Board of Elections sends
11 notifications by mail when poll sites have changed,
12 voters who have regularly voted at the same poll site
13 or who for some reason missed BOE's notification may
14 end up at a poll site that is no longer in operation
15 on the election day. This will help ensure that
16 voters who have made the effort to go to the polls
17 but who may have missed previous notifications about
18 changes in their poll site will have the most up-to-
19 date information and be able to cast their ballots.

20 The last introduction on today's agenda
21 is Proposed Introduction 0463-A, sponsored by Council
22 Member Vacca. Voters should be able to receive up-
23 to-date information about elections quickly and
24 efficiently so that they are aware of information,
25 such as upcoming deadlines, change of the information

2 and the dates and hours when poll sites will be open.
3 This bill allows voters to receive e-mail and text
4 message notifications regarding the dates and hours
5 of elections, poll site locations, important
6 deadlines for in-person and mailed absentee voting,
7 links to view sample ballots. The bill utilizes this
8 technology to keep voters more informed and therefore
9 engaged. Taken together, Introduction 0463-A and
10 Introduction 0659-A are the complete package that
11 voters need to get the information they need and
12 manage their notifications.

13 The committee will also vote on three
14 resolutions today and I'm proud to sponsor two of
15 those. These resolutions will aim to streamline the
16 voter registration process, as Assembly Member
17 Kavanagh reminded us when he addressed this committee
18 on Monday. Hope springs eternal and we hope that by
19 passing these resolutions we will create the momentum
20 needed to see changes at the state level.

21 Currently voter registration forms must
22 be mailed to a County Board of Elections at least 25
23 days prior to an election. Resolution 0848, which I
24 sponsored, calls on the State to amend the Election
25 Law and by referendum amend the State Constitution to

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2 establish same-day and online voter registration;
3 this resolution also advocates for same-day and
4 online voter registration to be made available at
5 poll sites.

6 Also, sponsoring one Preconsidered
7 Resolution; the first requires a constitutional
8 amendment and calls on the State to establish no-
9 excuse absentee voting so that individuals may vote
10 by absentee ballot without meeting one of the current
11 constitutional valid requirements, which in most
12 cases requires folks to be unavoidably absent or
13 permanently disabled.

14 And finally, Proposed Resolution 0553-A,
15 sponsored by Council Member Cabrera, calls on the
16 State to implement one of the most effective ways to
17 increase voter turnout; create a period before
18 election day for voters to vote early. Having only a
19 single day to vote, particularly since it's a
20 weekday, has prevented many voters from
21 participating; early voting has proved effective in
22 other states at increasing opportunity to vote,
23 particularly for those who work nontraditional hours,
24 work far from their poll site and working parents.

2 This package of legislation will ease
3 voters' ability to access information and encourage
4 them to be more civically engaged, which in turn will
5 make our city stronger.

6 At this time I'd like to invite sponsors
7 to say a few words. Council Member Garodnick.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Thank you.
9 And Chair Kallos, you went through that so quickly; I
10 think I'm just going to follow your lead and say
11 Int. 0062-A, which is the one which requires the
12 posting of former websites [sic], is done directly
13 out of constituent concerns that I have heard where
14 people go up to the site which they had gone to for
15 years and suddenly find that it has disappeared or is
16 no longer there; these voters, frequently senior
17 citizens, who have actually gone through significant
18 effort to find their way to the polls, turn around
19 and go home as opposed to knowing exactly what to do;
20 this is a simple solution which would require the
21 Board of Elections to post notification on those
22 former poll sites when that happens that the building
23 is no longer a site. It would also include
24 information about the current poll sites, website
25 address, et cetera, other information about the Board

2 of Elections, and where they should be going to vote,
3 and I believe that this will help allow people to
4 better access this information. I thank you very
5 much and this committee for your support and I
6 encourage the members of the committee to vote yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you to my
8 colleague from the east side and fellow reformer for
9 putting forth strong reforms such as this and other
10 items which have passed this committee.

11 Before we open for a vote, I would like
12 to thank you committee counsel, Smita Deshmukh;
13 Policy Analyst Laurie Wen; Finance Analyst James
14 Subudhi, and my Legislative Director Paul Westrick
15 for their work on moving this package of legislation
16 forward; we've been working on this package for
17 years.

18 Seeing that we have a quorum, I'll ask
19 the committee clerk to please call the remainder of
20 the roll.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Chair Kallos.

22 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Menchaca

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Aye.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: Torres.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Aye.

3 COMMITTEE CLERK: Borelli.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I'll be voting
5 no and if people would like to express their
6 displeasure, they can tweet me at @BorelliJoe. No,
7 aye on all except Reso. 0848 and the only remaining
8 Preconsidered Reso.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 5 in the
10 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
11 all items are adopted, with the exceptions of the
12 Preconsidered Resolution and Resolution 0848, which
13 are adopted by a vote of 4 in the affirmative, 1 in
14 the negative and no abstentions.

15 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: We will hold the
16 vote open for another 15 minutes and otherwise we'll
17 adjourn. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation roll call
19 of the Committee on Governmental Operations, Council
20 Member Levine.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I vote aye on
22 all.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation roll call
24 of the Committee on Governmental Operations, Council
25 Member Reynoso.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: I vote aye.

3 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote now,
4 Committee on Governmental Operations, [cheer,
5 clapping] all items have been adopted by a vote of 7
6 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and no
7 abstentions, with the exception of the following
8 Preconsidered Resolution and Resolution 0848, which
9 has been adopted by a vote of 6 in the affirmative, 1
10 in the negative and no abstentions. Thank you.

11 FEMALE VOICE: This hearing of the
12 Committee on Governmental Operations is now
13 adjourned.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date May 6, 2016