



New York City Campaign Finance Board
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FOR THE RECORD

**Testimony of Amy Loprest
Executive Director
New York City Campaign Finance Board**

**City Council Committee on Governmental Operations
May 3, 2018**

Good afternoon Chair Cabrera, and the members of the Governmental Operations Committee. My name is Amy Loprest and I am the Executive Director of the New York City Campaign Finance Board.

Thank you for the invitation to provide testimony.

Part of the Campaign Finance Board's core mission is to increase voter turnout in our elections and create a more transparent democratic process. We take pride in educating citizens about their elections, as we constantly hear from voters each year about the difficulty they have participating. In the past year alone, we launched a revamped 2017 Voter Guide, developed the "Vote for the City You Want" GOTV ad campaign, and orchestrated debates and community forums for citywide elections. As you know, the CFB is now working to build an online voter registration system, as a result of Local Law 65 passed by the City Council in 2017. With this platform, we are moving New York City into the 21st century with online voter registration for all eligible voters.

While the City Council has led election reform in New York City, it is clear our elections need a fundamental upgrade at the state level. We need more action in Albany. That's why we're coordinating our fifth annual Voter Day effort, to bring concerned citizens to Albany on May 8th to call for changes to our outdated election laws. Many of the items under consideration by the committee today are ones we support in our just-released 2017-2018 Voter Assistance Annual Report.

We believe it is critical that every eligible citizen be able to register to vote and cast a ballot with ease. Current state laws make it difficult for busy New Yorkers to get to the polls when they also need to juggle work or childcare responsibilities. That's why we support early voting (T2018-1885). Voters need more opportunities to cast their ballot, and one way we can provide that is through early voting. New York is one of only 13 states that does not offer early voting, and it's time for us to catch up with the rest of the country. Like early voting, no excuse absentee ballots could also offer voters more flexibility when it comes to voting, and also reduce the long lines that often plague polls on Election Day.

While New York City has taken action to make online voter registration a reality, Albany is still lagging behind. It is long past time we discarded the pen-and-paper registration system we currently use and bring voter registration into the 21st century for all New Yorkers. The current statewide registration system through the DMV prevents New Yorkers without a driver's license from registering online. The CFB supports the Voter Enfranchisement Modernization Act of 2018 (T2018-1882), which would bring our outdated voter registration system into the 21st century by leveraging technology to get more people registered and keep their registrations up-to-date. In addition to requiring the state BOE to build an online platform for all eligible voters to be able to use, passage of this legislation would also clarify state election law to allow acceptance of electronic signatures. This system is similar to the online voter registration system we're currently building, but it would also obviate the need for data entry by boards of election. Same day voter registration (Res. 307) would further reduce barriers to registration by eliminating confusion regarding registration deadlines, getting more voters to the polls on Election Day, and ensuring that those who go to the polls have a failsafe if they do not appear in the poll books.

By setting a deadline for political parties to be included on the ballot, we can ensure new voter registration forms are issued in a timely manner. By passing A7404 (T2018-1884), voters will have access to updated registration forms, which will ultimately increase the number of potential voters.

One of the complaints we often hear is that the ballot is too complex to understand. A9923 (T2018-1886) would add a clear visual instruction, informing the voter that the ballot is two-sided. We fully support this measure, which has now passed the Assembly multiple times. This would lead to an increase in more citizens voting on ballot proposals, which are often on the back of the ballot.

Here in New York City where LLCs have been banned from donating to city campaigns since 2007, a majority of contributions to city campaigns come from individuals. The LLC loophole in the state election law has allowed special interest groups and large contributors to funnel millions of dollars into state political campaigns, circumventing contribution limits. With the passing of A9758/S7149 (T2018-1883), we can close the LLC loophole, by making sure individuals aren't donating through multiple LLCs, and let New Yorkers see who is putting money into their elections.

The CFB thanks you for your help in making our election system work for everyone. Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

TESTIMONY OF SUSAN LERNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BEFORE NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

May 3, 2018

Common Cause is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded to serve as a vehicle for citizens to make their voices heard in the political process. Accordingly, the orderly administration of elections and insuring that our elections are accessible and fair is part of our core mission to promote civic engagement and accountability in government. We support measures which strengthens democracy by increasing participation in our elections. Democracy works well when a citizens participate. Accordingly, we work to remove the many unnecessary barriers to participation which New York State's antiquated Election Law contains.

SUPPORT FOR RES 0307-2018

Common Cause/NY is a longtime supporter of Same Day Registration. It is a reform which has been shown to reliably have a significant positive impact on voter turn-out. Accordingly, we support this resolution and will continue to work at the state level for the passage of Same Day Registration for all New York voters.

SUPPORT FOR RES T2018-1882

Common Cause/NY supports the Voter Enfranchisement Modernization Act (A5382A) as a measure which is designed to remove an unnecessary barrier to voting. Utilizing the convenience of the internet for voter registration and allowing voters to register without printing out, signing and mailing a paper form is an obvious improvement to our antiquated voter registration procedures. Experience with true online voter registration in other states shows that it saves money and improves the accuracy of the voter rolls. While New York City is to be commended for doing what it can to establish online registration for the **city's voters**, it is still, at heart, a paper system. A5382A would streamline online registration for all New York voters. We support this resolution.

SUPPORT FOR RES T2018-1883

The fact that New York is the only state that treats campaign contributions from Limited Liability Companies as if they were contributions from individuals, rather than subjecting those contributions to the same limits and requirements as contributions from other business entities is nothing short of scandalous. It has allowed **campaign contributors to make a mockery of New York State's already sky-high contribution limits**, with documented instance of individuals misusing the LLC form to give over

\$1 million to an individual gubernatorial candidates. It is long past time for the LLC Loophole to be closed. We strongly support A9758A and support this resolution.

RES T2018-1884

Common Cause/NY has not taken a position on A7404. We note that S2792 , which removes the requirement for party emblems to be shown on ballots, is on the NY **Senate's Floor Calendar**.

PARTIAL SUPPORT FOR RES T2018-1885

This resolution supports state bills which would establish no excuse absentee ballot voting (A7623/S840) and Early Voting (A9608B). We support amending the state constitution to permit no excuse absentee voting. We believe that it is a necessary change to our state constitution which further removes barriers to voting. There are many reasons to support no excuse absentee voting, not the least of which is that it assists election administrators in disaster planning.

Common Cause/NY and the Let NY Vote coalition of which it is a leader have both made passage of an **Early Voting bill establishing Early Voting for New York's voters their highest priority for this legislative session**. Nevertheless, we do not support A9608B. The Let NY Vote Coalition has 2 criteria for Early Voting bills which it will support: 1) that the bill provide for some evening hours of early voting and 2) That it provide for at least 2 week-ends of Early Voting before Election Day. A9608B satisfies our first requirement. It does not however, provide for 2 week-ends of Early Voting. Nor does it provide for funding to help counties defray the cost of setting up and running early Voting. Accordingly, A9608B does not garner our full support.

We support only that portion of this Resolution which calls for the passage of A7623/S840.

RES T2018-1884

Common Cause/NY has not taken a position on A9923. We note that the Voter Friendly Ballot Act, S7538, is pending, which in modernizing the design of all aspects of the ballot would obviate the need for piecemeal changes like A9923.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL SUSAN LERNER, 212-691-6421



**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/03/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jorge E. Ortiz

Address: 75-23 113St Apt 3c Forest Hills NY 11375

I represent: 32BJ

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆