



Legislation Text

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Int. No. 504

By Council Members Eugene, Chin, Koo, Lancman, Treyger, Constantinides, Reynoso, Williams, Cumbo, Rodriguez, Van Bramer and Ulrich

A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to including information about candidates for federal, state, and county offices in the New York City voters guide.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Subdivision b of section 1052 of the New York city charter is amended to read as follows:

b. The board shall take such actions as it deems necessary and appropriate to improve public awareness of the candidates, proposals or referenda in all elections in which there are contested elections for the federal offices of president and vice president of the United States, United States senator for the state of New York, and representative of congress for districts wholly or partly in the city of New York; the state offices of governor, lieutenant governor, comptroller, attorney general, member of the state senate and member of the state assembly for districts wholly or partly in the city of New York, delegate to a constitutional convention, or ballot proposals or referenda pursuant to the state constitution; the city offices of mayor, public advocate, borough presidents, comptroller, or city council or ballot proposals or referenda pursuant to this charter or the municipal home rule law[.]; the county offices within the city of New York of district attorney, justice of the supreme court, judge of the civil court, judge of the surrogate court; and the party offices within the city of New York including delegates to judicial conventions, state committee, county committee and district leader, including but not necessarily limited to the publication of a non-partisan, impartial voters guide providing information on candidates, ballot proposals and referenda, and the distribution of one copy of such guide to each household in which there is at least one registered voter eligible to vote in the election involved; except that, the board shall

establish procedures to enable households to opt out of receiving such guide via hard copy and to receive such guide electronically instead. Such guide shall also be provided in an online interactive format that allows a user to locate his or her poll site, a sample ballot, and any other information on voting or candidates that the board determines to be necessary or useful to improve public awareness of upcoming elections. In any year in which the board publishes a voters guide, if the board determines that the amount of money in its budget is insufficient or likely to be insufficient for the publication and distribution of the voters guide, it shall report such determination to the director of the office of management and budget, who, after consultation with the board, shall, without an appropriation, transfer to the board a reasonable amount, as the director shall determine, to cover the cost of publishing and distributing the voters guide.

§ 2. Section 1053 of the New York city charter is amended to read as follows:

§ 1053. Voters guide. Each voters guide published by the board shall contain: (a) material explaining the date and hours during which the polls will be open for that election and how to find the location of poll sites ; when, where, and how to register to vote; when a citizen is required to reregister; when, where, and how absentee ballots are obtained and used; instructions on how to vote; maps showing the boundaries of congressional districts, state senate districts, state assembly districts and council districts, as appropriate; and any other general information on voting deemed by the board to be necessary or useful to the electorate or otherwise consistent with the goals of this charter; (b) such tables of contents, graphics, and other materials which the board determines will make the voters guide easier to understand or more useful for the average voter; (c) biographical information on each candidate, including but not limited to name, party affiliation, present and previous public offices held, present occupation and employer, prior employment and other public service experience, educational background, and a listing of major organizational affiliations and endorsements; (d) concise statements by each candidate of his or her principles, platform or views; and (e) where there is a ballot proposal or referendum, concise statements explaining such proposal or referendum and an abstract of each such proposal or referendum. The guide shall be prepared in plain language using words with common

and everyday meanings. No later than the first day of [January]July of [nineteen hundred eighty nine]two thousand twelve, the board shall promulgate such rules as it deems necessary for the preparation and publication of the guide in English, Spanish and any other languages the board determines to be necessary and appropriate, and for the distribution of the guide. The purpose of such rules shall be to ensure that the guide and its distribution will serve to fully, fairly and impartially inform the public about the issues and candidates appearing on the ballot.

§ 3. This local law shall take effect ninety days following enactment.

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