



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1060-2016, **Version:** *

Preconsidered Res. No. 1060

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, the Voter Empowerment Act of New York (A.5972 and S.2538-B), to streamline the voter registration process.

By Council Members Kallos, Vallone and Constantinides

Whereas, New York State consistently has one of the lowest voter turnout rates, ranking 49th among states in the 2014 General Election, according to the United States Elections Project; and

Whereas, Data from the New York State Board of Elections show that only 10.7% of voters eligible to vote in the 2014 gubernatorial primary actually voted; and

Whereas, Steps can be taken to modernize the voter registration process, which will increase the number of potential voters and the chance of higher voter turnout; and

Whereas, New York State Assembly Member Brian Kavanaugh introduced A.5972, and New York State Senator Michael Gianaris introduced S.2538-B, a package of needed electoral reforms called the Voter Empowerment Act of New York; and

Whereas, The bills aim to streamline the voter registration process by addressing current challenges faced by potential voters, including ease of registration, timing of registration, address change, and registration status; and

Whereas, Potential voters often find it challenging to register, due to confusing rules and/or lack of time, resulting in nearly 25% of eligible voters not being registered, according to the public policy group Demos; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would allow voters to register online through a secure website established by the New York State Board of Elections, on condition that such voters provide their signatures at their poll sites; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would allow consenting eligible voters to be automatically registered when they interact with participating agencies, including the Department of Motor Vehicles, the New York City Housing Authority, the City University of New York, the Department of Labor, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, and many others; and

Whereas, College and university students are an important electoral demographic, but the primary reason they do not vote is that they are not registered, often due to lack of clear and accurate information; and

Whereas, When registered, students are an active and involved part of the electorate, as shown by the Campus Vote Project, which found that 87% of 18- to 24-year-old college students who were registered in 2008 actually voted; and

Whereas, Finding a way to get young voters, ages 18 to 29, involved in the voting process is extremely important given that, once registered and voting, people are more likely to continue this practice throughout their lives, according to a Yale University study; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote, increasing the likelihood they take part in the electoral process once they turn 18; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would mandate that all universities, colleges, and public school districts make registration forms available to students eligible for registration or pre-registration; and

Whereas, The current process for registration demands that the registration be completed several weeks before an election, causing many hopeful registrants to not be eligible to vote in the election that they were interested in taking part; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would allow eligible voters to register closer to the date of an election, moving the registration deadline from 25 to 10 days prior, allowing voters who have only recently become interested the chance to participate; and

Whereas, Many previously registered voters, due to having moved, have outdated voter registration information on file; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would streamline the process so that when voters move and file change of address forms with the United States Postal Service, their registrations stay current with automatically updated new addresses; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would direct the Board of Elections to send an annual “Address Correction Requested” form to every registered voter in active status who has not filed a change of address that year; and

Whereas, Due to complications at registration facilities, some eligible voters are turned away because they have not been properly recorded as eligible to vote at that poll site; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would prevent voters from being turned away if they can prove that they live in the area, are voting at the proper polling place, and are willing to swear to those facts; and

Whereas, Voters are sometimes discouraged from voting due to uncertainties regarding whether and where they are registered; and

Whereas, A.5972 and S.2538-B would allow voters easy online and phone access to their current registration status, and the option to submit a confidential request to correct or update information; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, the Voter Empowerment Act of New York (A.5972 and S.2538-B), to streamline the voter registration process.

LS #3341
4/28/2016
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