



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1061-2016, **Version:** *

Preconsidered Res. No. 1061

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A.2644, and the electors of the State of New York to approve and ratify the resulting constitutional amendment, to establish no-excuse absentee voting.

By Council Members Kallos and Vallone

Whereas, According to the United States Elections Project, only 29% of eligible voters in New York State cast a ballot in the 2014 General Election, making it 49th in the nation in turnout rate; and

Whereas, In the same election, only 20% of eligible voters in New York City voted, hitting a historic low, according to the New York City Campaign Finance Board; and

Whereas, While there are numerous reasons for low voter participation rates, the most common reason for not voting cited in a 2010 United States Census Bureau survey was “No time off/too busy”; and

Whereas, Many states with high voter turnout rates have instituted various electoral reforms to increase participation, including permitting voters to cast absentee ballots without citing an excuse; and

Whereas, Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia currently allow any voter to vote via absentee ballot without offering an excuse, and three states have all-mail voting where ballots are automatically sent to every eligible voter, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures; and

Whereas, New York State requires voters applying for absentee ballots to affirm that they qualify to do so due to one of several reasons, including absence from their county or New York City on Election Day, illness or disability, primary care taker responsibilities of someone ill or disabled, and detention in jail or prison; and

Whereas, Applying for an absentee ballot and falsely citing one of the qualifying reasons is a felony; and

Whereas, There are many additional reasons that make it difficult or impossible for some voters to appear in person at poll sites on Election Day, such as work hours and child care responsibilities; and

Whereas, Many advocates for increased voter participation have supported removing these limitations on absentee voting, since potential voters often miss the opportunity to cast a ballot when the voting period is confined only to certain hours of one day; and

Whereas, New York State Assembly Member Brian Kavanaugh introduced A.2644, which eliminates restrictions on absentee voting and allows every eligible voter to cast absentee ballots without offering a specific justification; and

Whereas, Establishing no-excuse absentee voting in New York State would increase voter participation by allowing all voters the option to vote from home at a time convenient to them; 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, A.2644, and the electors of the State of New York to approve and ratify the resulting constitutional amendment, to establish no-excuse absentee voting.

LS# 6953

4/28/2016

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