



NYSAC
NEW YORK STATE
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

2017

Budget Priority

ELECTION REFORMS

PROBLEM

County Boards of Elections are responsible for managing and paying for all or most of the costs of election operations. Depending on the year, multiple primary dates may occur for local state and federal races. More primary elections increase operational costs for counties. Election Law Section 8-100 permits the date of the New York primary to be changed by an act of the State Legislature to allow these dates to coincide with Federal primary election dates, thereby lowering county election costs.

2017 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL

The Executive Budget proposes early voting authorization in all special, primary, and general elections. This proposal would require early voting polling sites to be open for a period of 12 days prior to all elections; require that the number of early voting polling sites be based on the number of registered voters in each county, and that each county offer at least one site; and provide that any registered voter in a county can vote at any early voting polling place within their county. Last year under a similar proposal, DOB estimated this would increase local costs by \$3-\$4 million. Any new mandated costs cannot be absorbed by counties under the current property tax cap environment.

Election Law Section 8-100 permits the date of the New York primary to be changed by an act of the State Legislature to allow these dates to coincide with Federal primary election dates, thereby lowering county election costs. The current budget does not include either moving future State primary dates or compensating counties for not making this adjustment. Having multiple primary election dates is estimated by the state to cost local governments between \$25 and \$50 million.

2017 LEGISLATIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Senate's Budget rejects the election proposals listed above.

The Assembly's Budget rejects or modifies the Executive Budget Election proposal as follows.

- Early voting commencing eight days before a special, primary, or general election.
- Allow for online voter registration and application system.

The Assembly also requires limited liability companies (LLCs) to be capped at contribution levels of \$5,000 and require LLCs to identify all owners and attribute all contributions to such owners.

COUNTY SOLUTION

Establishing a policy of early voting is a matter of state policy. However, counties oppose being required to expand election responsibilities with early voting without state fiscal support for those services. Any new mandated costs cannot be absorbed by counties under the current property tax cap environment. In terms of primary elections, counties urge state lawmakers to consolidate primary elections to reduce costs to county taxpayers.