2019 EARLY VOTING AND ELECTION REFORMS: THE LAWS THAT TRANSFORMED NEW YORK’S ELECTORAL PROCESS.

Kristen Zebrowski Stavisky
Commissioner
The Board of Elections in the County of Rockland
OUR GOAL: ENSURE EVERY ELIGIBLE VOTER HAS UNFETTERED ACCESS TO THE POLLS.
Early Voting
- Consolidated Federal and State/Local Primary in June.
- Universal Registration Transfers.
- Pre-Registration of 16 & 17 year olds.
- LLC Loophole closed.
- Constitutional process begins for
  1. No Excuse Absentee Voting
  2. Same Day Voter Registration
New York joins 38 other states and Washington DC.

Law provides for 9 days of early voting prior to every Primary, Special, or General Election.

New York’s Early Voting Law includes two weekends and will begin on the tenth day prior to each election and end on the Sunday before each election.

Early Voting begins with the November 5, 2019 General Election.
Hours for early voting: Minimum of 8 hours on weekdays and 5 hours on the weekends.

At least two weekday nights must remain open after hours, until 8PM.

Issue: County hours vary. What if counties share a media area? Will voters be confused by different hours in different counties?

Should we think about uniform hours in the future? For example: Hudson Valley counties coordinate hours.
Counties are required to have 1 early voting site for every 50,000 voters.

The law encourages vote centers, allowing all county voters to vote at all sites. Counties can limit voters geographically if it is impracticable to open vote centers.

Electronic Poll Books are necessary for Vote Centers. Traditional paper poll books require regional centers. We cannot have multiple poll books.
Vote Centers: Voters do not need to identify by Election District.


Eventually, this will lead to cost savings. We will be able to move to ballot on demand and eliminate waste.

Transition to Vote Centers for all Elections. May cut down on poll sites and other costs.

E-POLL BOOKS AND BALLOT ON DEMAND
ROCKLAND EARLY VOTING HOURS

- Saturday, October 26, 2019 From 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- Sunday, October 27, 2019 From 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- Monday, October 28, 2019 From 12 Noon to 8:00 PM
- Tuesday, October 29, 2019 From 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- Wednesday, October 30, 2019 From 12 Noon to 8:00 PM
- Thursday, October 31, 2019 From 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- Friday, November 1, 2019 From 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- Saturday, November 2, 2019 From 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- Sunday, November 3, 2019 From 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM
UNIFORM PRIMARY AND CALENDAR CHANGES

- Moved the State and Local Primary from September to June.
- Prior to 2019, New York was the only state to have separate primaries for Federal Offices and State and Local Offices.
- The September Primary was the latest in the nation and was in violation of the MOVE (Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act) for over a decade.
- The benefits:
  1. Cost. The consolidation will save up to $25 Million State Wide.
  2. Voter Fatigue. Turnout is always an issue. We want more voters to participate. They do not understand multiple primaries.
THE 2019 POLITICAL CALENDAR: CHANGE, CHANGE, CHANGE!

- Well, we don’t have to worry about soaring temps during petitioning! Petitioning shifted from June to Late February. Tip: Bring extra pens. The ink freezes!
- More space between the Primary and the General Election.
- Additional time to register voters.
Universal Transfers took effect on March 25, 2019.

- Recognizes a State Wide system for registration.
- Eliminates the need to re-register when crossing county lines.
- Registration is now portable: party enrollment, voter history, and address changes move with the voter.
- Affidavit ballots will be easier to process from county to county. More Affidavit ballots will be valid.
PRE-REGISTRATION OF 16 & 17 YEAR OLDS

- Allows Board of Elections to accept registrations from citizens who are least 16 years of age. Current law: 17 year olds who turn 18 within the calendar year can pre-register.
- Registrations are kept in inactive status until they turn 18.
- Eliminates first barrier for young person to register and now DMV and social agencies can register them.
- Captures 16 year old new drivers.
MONEY, MONEY, MONEY: THE INFAMOUS LLC LOOPHOLE

- Treats LLCs the same as Corporations.
- Previously, LLC were treated as individuals, with a higher contribution limit than corporations.
- LLCs are:
  - Limited to an aggregate $5,000 annual contribution limit.
  - LLC contributions are attributed to each member in proportion to the member’s ownership interest.
  - Required to file a yearly statement of identity of all direct and indirect owners.
FIRST STEPS: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

No Fault Absentee

Same Day Registration
Both are New York State Constitutional Amendments.

Amendments must pass two separate legislatures: passed 2019, will need to pass again in 2021.

After passing two legislatures, the amendments will need to go before the voters via referendum.

Cannot take effect until 2022.
NO FAULT ABSENTEES

- Removes the excuse from absentee voting.
- Current Law: Voters must fall within one of six categories.
- 30 States and Washington DC have No-Fault Absentee voting.
ADDITIONAL CHANGES IN 2019

- Time off for Employees to Vote: 3 hours.
- Uniform Primary Hours: Begins in 2020. 6AM-9PM throughout NYS.
- Online Voter Registration. Chapter 55 Part CCC. Requires research and funding for State Board of Elections.
- Special Ballots may be mailed to victims of domestic violence.
PENDING LEGISLATION

- County Boards must publish local office contribution limits on the county website.
- Arrow to indicate two-sided ballot.
- Eliminate duplicate financial filings (county and state).
- Voter Friendly Ballot Act.
- Presidential Primary Date.
- Changes Inspector Special Ballots: May be mailed the same time as Regular absentees.
- Ward, Town, City or County Committee races on absentee ballots.
PENDING LEGISLATION

- Affidavit Ballot Substantial Compliance.
- Committee to Receive Notices: Members must file acceptance.
- Special Election Notice.
- Independent Body Name: Cannot be changed.
- Political Communication Disclosure.
- Poll Site Staff Plan.
Commission Established.
First meeting last week.
May address Fusion Voting.
FUNDING

- Capital Grant Program: $14 Million
- Aid to Localities Grant: $10 Million
- Cost considerations:
  - scanners (life).
  - maintenance agreements.
  - additional costs.
We need a real conversation about how we fund elections.

- Strain on counties.
- Chargebacks to towns.
VOTING = VOICE

- Change is always challenging. We want to facilitate voting and increase turnout.
- Success requires cooperation across election professionals, counties, towns, and other municipalities.