PROBLEM

New York State counties manage and operate elections in the state. Unfortunately, we have some of the lowest voter turnout rates in the country. State leaders are proposing to institute early voting in New York State to boost turnout and make it easier for New Yorkers to vote. Recent proposals would require every county to offer residents access to at least one early voting poll site during the 10 days leading up to Election Day. The bipartisan county Board of Elections would determine the specific location of these early voting polling places, subject to standards of accessibility and convenience.

The reform package includes legislation that consolidates the federal and state primaries into one election day. Since enactment of the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, which says federal primaries need to be held with enough time for overseas absentee ballots to be returned 45 days before the general election, New York has held two primaries in federal election years: September’s state and local primary, and a federal primary in June.

2020 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL

Early Voting: The Governor proposes a twelve day early voting period (not applicable to village elections) to take effect on the first January succeeding the date on which it shall have become law. If passed in the budget, the first eligible date would be around May 1, 2020.

Primary Election Consolidation: Primaries must be held on the 4th Tuesday in June before every general election. The Governor sets an effective date of December 31, 2019.

Pre-Registration of Minors: The legislation adds a section on the voter registration form for pre-registering applicants, so an individual turning 18 years of age will be registered to vote.

Voter Registration Transfers: This bill allows a voter who moves anywhere within the State to vote in his or her new election district. BOE’s would automatically transfer registrations for a voter as they currently do for voters when they move within their county or within NYC. The effective date is the first day of July succeeding the date on which it becomes law.

Closing the LLC Loophole: LLC’s cannot exceed a $5,000 contribution limit.

No Excuse Absentee Ballot Voting: This election reform be done via a constitutional amendment. The concurrent resolution language removes the provision that a qualified voter must prove their absence from the county of residence to be eligible to mail in a ballot.

Removes Ten Day Advance Voter Registration: This reform needs a constitutional amendment. It says that “citizens shall be entitled to apply for registration to vote on any day prior to and including the day of each election, and...shall be entitled to vote at such election.”
**Public Campaign Finance Reform:** Candidates running in the 2020 primary election would be eligible for public financing.

**Online Voter Registration:** The Executive Budget requires the State Board of Elections to develop an on-line portal for eligible voters to register to vote.

**Agency-Based Automatic Voter Registration:** This bill implements automatic voter registration at state and local agencies to provide voter registration services.

**Election Day as a Holiday:** If a registered voter does not have sufficient time outside of his/her work hours, within which to vote for an election, he/she may without loss of pay for up to three hours take time off to vote.

**Upstate Primary Voting Hours:** This bill would make all county polling hours from 6am to 9pm, which is consistent with Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Putnam, Dutchess counties and New York City. This legislation would take effect in 2020.

**Electronic Poll Books:** The Executive Budget authorizes county BOEs to use of electronic poll books.

**Automatic Voter Registration- DMV:** This legislation would automatically enroll individuals who have applied for registration and enrollment of a driver’s license, a change of address, or an identification card. There will be an opt-out option. Takes effect on April 1, 2020.

### COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Early Voting Reform**
Counties outside of New York City support early voting with state funding commitment to support its implementation.

**“No Excuse” Absentee Ballot Solution**
Counties outside of New York City believe that the most cost-effective early voting option is to implement a new “no excuse” absentee ballot application, so that registered voters who are unable to vote on election day, for any reason, can vote by absentee ballot. Counties support this constitutional amendment, which needs passage by two consecutive State Legislatures and voter approval.

**Consolidating the Federal and State Primaries on the Same Day**
Counties outside of New York City fully support the combining of the separate primaries, but we believe that it would be disingenuous for the Legislature to claim this as a savings for counties that can offset the cost of early voting. Consolidating the primary dates simply reverses an unfunded mandate that the Legislature imposed on county taxpayers in 2012, as we are the only state in the country to place such a burden on its counties.

*For more information on the county position regarding this issue, visit www.nysac.org or call 518-465-1473 to speak to Ryan Gregoire, NYSAC Legislative Coordinator.*