



# Budget Priority

## ELECTION REFORM PACKAGE

### 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.

In addition, 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.

### COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Early Voting Reform**

Counties DO NOT support this early voting proposal, UNLESS there is a full state funding commitment to support its implementation.

#### **“No Excuse” Absentee Ballot Solution**

Counties 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 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](http://www.nysac.org) or call 518-465-1473 to speak to Ryan Gregoire, NYSAC Legislative Coordinator.*