

New York faces a voter participation crisis. Nearly two million voting age citizens in our state are not registered to vote, and New York consistently ranks near the bottom in voter turnout. In 2014, just 20% of New York's voting age citizens voted—46th in the nation.

It doesn't have to be this way. We live in a smartphone world, but our election laws are stuck in the past. We need fundamental change to make the way we vote reflect the way we live our lives today.

We want to make sure that every eligible New Yorker is registered to vote, that voters have more than one day to get to the polls, and that every voter can cast a ballot that counts. It's time to bring New York elections into the 21st century.

How will the Voter Empowerment Act improve voter registration?

Right now, most of us register by filling out a pen-and-paper registration form and mailing it to the Board of Elections. This system is prone to errors, including typos and lost registration forms. We have the technology to add nearly two million New Yorkers to the voter rolls and keep them up to date. The Voter Empowerment Act:

- Makes it the government's responsibility to ensure that every citizen who wants to be registered is a registered voter.
- Allows agencies who interact with voters to automatically register them with the Board of Elections—unless a voter opts out.
- Expands online registration, so that more people can register and update their information online.
- Updates a voter's registration automatically if he or she moves within the state.
- Allows 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister so that their registrations turn active once they turn 18.
- Creates an Election Day failsafe for voters who show up at the polls to find they are not registered, so they will be able to cast a regular ballot.

Why does New York need early voting?

New Yorkers lead busy lives, and they deserve more than one day to get to the polls. Early voting gives voters more opportunities to incorporate voting into their lives and make their voice heard. Over two-thirds of other states allow voters to cast a ballot before Election Day, and it's time that we catch up. By allowing two weeks for early voting, including Saturdays and Sundays, we can ease long lines on Election Day, give voters flexibility while they juggle work and family obligations, and help businesses so that their workers can make it to the polls without missing work.

Why do we need the Voter Friendly Ballot Act?

New York voters switched from using the old lever machines to newer optical scanners in 2010—but we are still voting on ballots for the old machines. This leads to ballots with confusing layout and small font size. Thousands of voters accidentally vote for more than one candidate, which leads to their votes getting tossed out. The Voter Friendly Ballot Act solves these issues by setting clear requirements for how ballots should look. It's a commonsense fix that the Assembly has passed unanimously three times—now the Senate needs to pass the bill to ensure that every voter can be confident in casting a ballot that counts.

How do I get involved?

First off, you can get on the bus to Albany with us on May 3rd, to tell your legislators in person about why New Yorkers need better elections. To sign up, visit www.nycffb.info/voterday.

Don't have time to get on the bus? You can help by signing our online petition at www.change.org.

Want to help us grow our efforts? Share this with your friends and ask them to sign the petition and come up to Albany.

Know of organizations that might want to join the coalition? Let us know who we should reach out to!

E-mail nycvotes@nycffb.info with suggestions.

You can also get involved on social media. Follow @nycvotes on Twitter and Instagram, and like our Facebook page. Tell your legislators why you want better elections using #VoteBetterNY.