OTHER VOTING REFORMS
PASSED BY THE LEGISLATURE IN 2019

Bills Signed into Law in 2019

Paid Time Off to Vote
This new law increases from two to three hours the amount of paid time off employees can take to vote. Registered voters may take off up to three hours of working time without loss of pay to vote at any election. Employees shall be allowed time off for voting only at the beginning or end of their working shifts, as the employer may designate unless otherwise mutually agreed. If employees require working time off to vote, they are required to notify their employer not less than two working days before the day of the election that they require time off to vote in accordance with the provisions of this new law.

Party Enrollment Deadline Change
Currently, voters must change their party enrollment 25 days prior to a General Election Day. With this new law, voters will have until February 14 to decide in which party’s primary they would like to vote during the Presidential Primary. The Presidential Primary is usually scheduled in April; the state and federal primary is scheduled for the fourth Tuesday in June. Any changes in party enrollment made after February 14 will take effect seven (7) days after the June primary.

In New York State, voters can only vote in a primary if they are enrolled in that party. Party enrollment is included in the voter registration form, and voters can change it by submitting a new form to their local county Board of Elections, or online through the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (if you have a driver’s license, Non-Driver ID, car registration, etc.)

Primary Consolidation
This election law combines federal and state primaries into one primary on the fourth Tuesday in June, eliminating the former primary day in September. This will save New York State money and, hopefully, will improve voter turnout. Primary consolidation also ensures that New York State’s election law complies with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act.

Your Annual Voter Notice – a postcard from the county Board of Elections— in most counties will now arrive in your mailbox in April rather than August.

Uniform Polling Hours during Primary Elections
This new law ensures that all New Yorkers will be able to vote from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm during a primary election. In the past, some counties, restricted voting hours in primary elections to the hours from noon to 9:00 pm. Now, all voters across New York State can vote during primaries and general elections from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm.
Bills Taking Effect on January 1, 2020

Online Voter Registration
This new law requires the State Board of Elections to establish and maintain an electronic voter registration system through which applicants may apply to register to vote online.

Preregistration to Vote for 16- and 17-year-olds
This new law allows 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. The voter registration form will be modified to include space where there is an explanation of preregistration and allow for the form to be pending. The registration will automatically take effect when the person becomes 18-years old. It also requires local boards of education to adopt policies to promote student voter registration and preregistration. Keep in mind that citizens must still be 18-years old on, or before Election Day, to be eligible to vote.

Bills Passed and Waiting for Governor to Sign (as of September 27, 2019)

Voter Friendly Ballot Act
The Voter Friendly Ballot Act requires changes to New York State ballots so that they will be easier to read, understand, and complete. Among the law’s requirements are similar size, and type of font, removal of party emblems, consistent format of candidate listings, and consistent instructions for completion. A simplified and consistent ballot should lead to more accurate voting by voters.

Concurrent resolutions regarding Constitutional Amendments passed  (Must be passed again after Assembly & Senate elections in 2020, and then put on the ballot for voter approval.)

Same Day Voter Registration
A bill passed both houses of the state Legislature in January that would allow voters to register and vote on General Election Day. In order for this to become law, the New York State Constitution, which requires registration to vote be completed at least 10-days before General Election Day, must be amended. Changing the Constitution requires the same bill that passed this year be also passed in both the Assembly and Senate in the legislative session following the 2020 General Election, and then be approved by voters when placed on the ballot in 2021. Therefore, the first time this could go into effect would be in 2022. Currently, New Yorkers need to be registered 25 days before General Election Day (10 days required in the state Constitution and an additional 15 days required by statute).

No-Excuse Absentee Ballot Voting
A bill passed both houses of the state Legislature in January that would remove the need for a cause or reason for a voter to vote by absentee ballot. Currently in New York State, you can request an absentee ballot for six reasons: absence from county on General Election Day; temporary illness or physical disability; permanent illness or physical disability; duties related to primary care of individual(s) who are ill or disabled; patient or inmate in VA; or detention in jail/prison awaiting trial, action by grand jury or convicted of crime which is not a felony. You must indicate on the absentee ballot application which of these six reasons prevents you from voting in person on General Election Day.

Currently, 28 states and the District of Columbia allow voters to vote absentee without a cause. No-excuse absentee voting would require a constitutional amendment and could not take place until also
passed in both the Assembly and Senate in the legislative session following the 2020 General Election, and then approved by voters when place on the ballot in 2021.