



**MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT – S.1616 (Valesky)/A.3734 (Gianaris)  
May 15, 2009**

**TITLE:**

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY proposing an amendment to section 5 of article 2 of the constitution, in relation to the ten day advance registration requirement

**SUMMARY:**

Amends the constitution to delete the requirement that registration for purposes of voting be completed at least ten days before election day and provides that laws be made to adequately safeguard against deception in the exercise of the right of suffrage; enables the legislature to enact legislation permitting persons to register to vote on election day and also to implement adequate safeguards against fraud.

**STATEMENT OF SUPPORT:**

Citizens Union supports this bill because it would amend the constitution to remove the ten day voter registration deadline from the New York State Constitution and allow the legislature to implement Election Day voter registration (EDR, also known as same-day registration).

Citizens Union of the City of New York is an independent, nonpartisan civic organization of New Yorkers that works to ensure fair elections, publicly financed campaigns, and open, effective government that is accountable to the citizens of New York. Citizens Union Foundation (CUF), Citizens Union's affiliated nonprofit research and education organization, published a 2005 report titled "*Election Day Registration: Simplifying the Voting Process and Increasing Voter Turnout in New York City*," which found that implementing EDR can boost voter participation, particularly in New York City which is home to a number of populations that would greatly benefit from implementing the practice. Allowing voters to register and vote on Election Day would positively impact frequently mobile, late-interest, marginally interested, and new voters.

Implementing EDR would streamline registration and voting into a single process, diminishing administrative burdens associated with registration procedures and affidavit ballots. Furthermore, it would allow eligible voters with uncertain registration status to re-register, therefore decreasing the number of provisional ballots cast. Additionally, same-day registration would eliminate confusion and uncertainty over voter registration status and generally enfranchise and turn out more citizens to vote.

We believe that creating a system that allows people to more easily participate at the fundamental level of voting not only will increase voter turnout, but may also encourage their greater involvement in other areas of elections and government. It is time for New York to take measurable steps to modernize and streamline the voting experience. Removing barriers will allow and in fact encourage voters to participate in greater numbers. With advances in technology, and a greater capacity to allow voters to participate through different processes, approaches aimed at boosting voter participation should be explored.

We urge the Legislature to promptly pass this constitutional amendment during this session so that New York can take steps toward implementing positive pro-voter reforms. Citizens Union appreciates the opportunity to share its views and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Legislature to take steps to advance meaningful election reform to ensure that all eligible voters are able to participate in elections and have faith that their votes will be accurately counted.