



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT – S.5172 (Dilan)/A.4467 (Brodsky)
June 9, 2009

TITLE:

AN ACT to amend the election law, the labor law, and the education law, in relation to authorizing persons seventeen years of age to serve as election inspectors and poll clerks and to repeal section 3207-a of the education law relating to authorizing the board of education of the city of New York to reduce the length of recitation periods

SUMMARY:

This bill would amend the election and education law to permit certain students enrolled in school, with parental consent, to serve as election inspectors or poll clerks at elections. If the student serves while school is in session, the bill would require that the student is recorded as in attendance.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT:

Citizens Union supports bill S.5172/A4467 because it would amend state Election Law and Education Law to allow students at least seventeen years of age to serve as election inspectors and poll clerks on Election Day. New York State Election Law currently requires all Election Day workers to be at least eighteen years of age to serve at a poll site.

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, has worked to assist the Board of Elections of the City of New York by recruiting New York City residents interested in serving as poll workers on Election Day. Since 2001, CUF has recruited more than 15,000 applicants from New Yorkers willing to serve. Particularly, CUF focused on encouraging young adults and college students to serve as poll workers believing that they are an underutilized pool of potential workers.

New York City, however, like many other counties throughout the state, annually experiences poll worker shortages and difficulty in engaging young people in election administration and civic participation. Allowing students to serve as an election inspector or poll clerk – with parental consent and without being marked absent on school attendance records – is a new and interactive way of including our future generation of potential voters in our elections. It also provides them the opportunity to learn about voting and civics firsthand, particularly when they are nearing voting-age and may leave the experience with a commitment to voting and participating in their democracy at the ground level. Boards of Elections across the state can benefit from this new, younger pool of potential poll workers who bring with them a greater familiarity with technology and computers, which may be increasingly useful as the State ultimately transitions to new voting systems over the next two years.

We urge the Senate Standing Committee on Elections to promptly pass this bill so that New York can take steps toward engaging its youth and securing knowledgeable, younger, more technologically-savvy poll workers during our transition to new voting machines. Citizens Union appreciates the opportunity to share its views and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Legislature to further improve poll worker recruitment, training, and employment in the future.