



**MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT – S.5028 (Addabbo)/A.8277 (Kavanagh)
June 1, 2009**

TITLE:

Concurrent Resolution of the Senate and Assembly proposing an amendment to section 2 of article 2 of the constitution, in relation to absentee voting

SUMMARY:

Removes the current limitations on voting by absentee ballot that are required by the constitution.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT:

Citizens Union supports the passage of this bill because it would amend Article 2, Section 2 of the New York State Constitution to remove the requirement that voters who wish to cast an absentee ballot must declare a reason why they will be unable to vote at their respective poll sites on Election Day. Removing this constitutional requirement will then allow the Legislature to enact legislation implementing no-excuse absentee voting.

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. As part of its research on election administration in New York State, Citizens Union Foundation, Citizens Union's research and public education affiliate, found that twenty-nine other states have instituted "no-excuse" absentee voting, allowing voters who would prefer to vote early and through the mail the opportunity to do so. No-excuse absentee voting would also provide those who have difficulty showing up on Election Day, or do not wish to wait in line at their poll sites, to fully participate in the electoral process through these other means.

We believe that by removing the absentee ballot "excuse requirements" that intrude in to a voter's personal reasons for being unable to appear to vote in person on Election Day, New York can greatly increase access to the ballot, make voting as accessible as possible and encourage voter participation. New Yorkers lead busy lives and they would benefit from an eased process by which they can exercise their constitutional right to vote at a time and by a method that is most convenient to them.

We urge the Legislature to promptly pass this constitutional amendment during this session so that New York can move forward with its efforts to implement positive and much-needed reforms that will benefit all voters. Citizens Union appreciates the opportunity to share its views and welcomes the opportunity to work with the Legislature to take steps to implement voter-friendly election reforms to ensure that all citizens are provided an opportunity to cast their vote.