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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

REQUIRING CERTAIN ELECTIONS, INCLUDING CITY ELECTIONS, BE HELD IN EVEN-NUMBERED YEARS

Bill Number: S9126 (Skoufis)/A10466 (Walker)

Title: Concurrent resolution of the senate and assembly proposing amendments to section 21 of article 6, article 13, and section 6 of article 4 of the constitution, in relation to requiring certain elections be held in even-numbered years at the general election.

Date: May 30, 2024 (updated)

The organizations signed below strongly support legislation to move New York’s odd-numbered year elections to even-numbered years. Aligning local elections, including elections for city government, with presidential or gubernatorial/midterm elections will strengthen our democracy by significantly increasing the number of people who vote for local offices and reducing racial and age-based gaps in voter participation.

We applaud the Legislature for passing legislation in 2023 that moves most county and town elections in the state to even-numbered years, starting in 2026 (S3505B/A4282B, Ch.741/2023). We now urge lawmakers to complete this reform by moving the election dates of other offices, which could not be included in last year’s bill because of the state constitution, and passing S9126 (Skoufis).

This bill would amend the state constitution to require elections for city officers, judicial officers, county sheriffs, clerks, district attorneys, and certain elections for filling vacancies, to be held on Election Day in even-numbered years. Incumbents in those offices during the amendment’s enactment would be able to complete their term. To adjust to the new even-year election cycle, the next odd-numbered-year election after the approval of this amendment would be for a shortened term. Like all proposed constitutional amendments, it must be approved by the voters before it can go into effect.

New York’s odd-year election cycle severely depresses voter turnout, with disproportionate effects on voters of color and young voters. Voter fatigue, lack of information, and increased “cost of participation” drive the majority of voters away from our off-cycle, odd-year local elections. In NYC, turnout in mayoral elections is now almost a third of presidential elections, reaching a record low of 23% in 2021. In other large cities in the state, turnout is halved in odd-year mayoral elections. [Virtually all academic studies](#) on this topic have found that off-cycle elections significantly depress voter turnout.

Voters who historically face barriers to the ballot box, including voters of color and young voters, are most affected by the odd-year election cycle. A [recent statewide study](#) found that the average reduction in turnout for Black, Latino, and Asian voters from even-numbered years to odd-numbered years is substantially higher than for white voters. In 2020, nonwhite turnout was 85% of the white turnout rate; in 2021, it was only 54%. [A study of New York City turnout](#) comparing elections in odd and even years found the sharpest turnout gains in even-year elections occurred in majority-minority districts, with Latino-majority districts seeing increases of up to 250% compared to their odd-year turnout. The disparities are even more severe for young New Yorkers. In the last two open New York City mayoral elections, turnout among 18- to 29-year-olds was around 11%, compared to average turnouts of 57% and 33% during presidential and gubernatorial elections, respectively.

Moving local elections from odd to even-numbered years is a well-tested policy that has improved voter turnout and equity in participation everywhere it has been adopted. Los Angeles, Baltimore, Phoenix, El Paso, San Francisco, Austin, and dozens of smaller cities have moved their elections to even-numbered years in the recent decade. California, Arizona, and Nevada have adopted statewide measures. These jurisdictions have seen immediate and dramatic increases in voter turnout for local offices and down-ballot races, even after accounting for ballot drop-off. Moreover, reforms have made the electorate for local offices more representative of the population as a whole: [younger](#), [more racially diverse](#), and [less wealthy](#).

Moving local elections to even-numbered years has strong public support. A [statewide Siena College poll](#) found voters across party lines support moving local elections to even years, by wide margins. And recent [survey of New York City voters](#) found even stronger support for moving NYC’s elections, with nearly three-to-one approval rates regardless of age, race and ethnicity, education, or party affiliation.

Because this change requires amending the state constitution, it would take several years before it goes into effect. This means that the first New York City even-year mayoral election, for example, would likely occur in 2032. **This gradual, long-term implementation process provides ample time for lawmakers, election officials, and the public to prepare for the new election calendar with necessary administrative and educational measures.**

Given the democratic benefits associated with moving elections to even-numbered years, we urge lawmakers to pass S9126 (Skoufis).

Sincerely,

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)

Brennan Center for Justice
Brooklyn Voters Alliance
Citizen Action of NY
Citizens Union
Common Cause/NY
Disabled In Action of Metropolitan NY
Downstate New York ADAPT
Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance (DCPAA)
El Puente de Williamsburg
Election Reform Committee, Ulsters Activists
Faith in New York
Generation Vote
Greater New York Council of the Blind of the American Council of the Blind of New York State
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LatinoJustice PRLDEF
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