

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie  
Speaker of the Assembly  
LOB 932  
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Senate Majority Leader  
188 State Street Room 907 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Brian M. Kolb  
Assembly Minority Leader  
LOB 933  
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable John J. Flanagan  
Minority Conference Leader  
Room 315, State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Re: State Budget Proposals Relating to Voting

Dear Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Minority Leader Kolb, and Senate Minority Leader Flanagan:

We write to share our strong support for adequate funding for voting in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget currently being negotiated. The Governor and the Legislature are to be commended for the voting reforms which have been enacted into law this year, bringing long-overdue modernization and improvements to our Election Law. However, passing these reforms is only the first step. For New Yorkers to benefit from the reforms you have adopted, these reforms must be effectively implemented, which requires adequate funding of election administration as well as new election technology.

We are gravely concerned that the Executive Budget proposed by the Governor would slash the New York State Board of Elections' appropriation. Our groups are far from uncritical of the State Board, but reducing the Board's resources when it is facing increased, rather than reduced, responsibilities as a result of the reforms which we have applauded the Legislature and Governor for enacting, is illogical. The proposed reduction in funding would require the immediate elimination of 35% of the employee positions at the state board.

All agency program services would see a negative impact, including oversight of voting systems and election operations, and NYSVoter compliance. If, as we believe is necessary, the budget contains an authorization and funding for the counties to purchase electronic pollbooks, the

State Board will lack the resources to approve such equipment for purchase. Equally concerning, it is our understanding that all Hourly Based Information Technology (HBITS) workers will need to be terminated effective April 1, 2019. This would necessitate stopping, among other projects, the NYSVoter (statewide voter registration list) update and bringing the contract in house to provide online/email delivery of absentee ballots to Military and Overseas voters (MOVE ACT). The cut in budget would mean that technology related improvements to implement new legislation adopted in 2019 would be deferred until such time as resources become available. This would have significant negative impacts on the implementation of widely hailed reforms including pre-registration of 16 year olds, statewide registration portability, changes in reporting necessitated by closing the LLC Loophole, and early voting. Accordingly, we support the recommendation in the State Assembly's budget summary under State Operations to provide \$14.64 million to maintain the State Board of Elections' current operations.

Our groups strongly support providing funding to assist the counties' implementation of the new early voting law. NYSAC and individual counties have provided strong arguments for the need for this funding. We urge you to adopt the State Senate's recommendation of \$10 million for "early voting and other voting reforms" contained in the State Senate's budget resolution under Aid to Localities.

Our groups have long supported allowing counties the ability to use electronic pollbooks in place of requiring printed paper pollbooks. We believe that the election commissioners and counties have persuasively made the case that such authorization is necessary for the successful implementation of Early Voting, as now required by state law. Accordingly, we urge you to include such authorization in the budget bill. We support the Assembly's recommendation of an appropriation of \$27 million in grants to counties to allow the purchase of electronic pollbooks.

We look forward to working with you and with the state and county boards of elections to insure the successful implementation of the voting reforms which you have provided for the benefit of New York's voters.

Sincerely,

Citizens Union

Common Cause/NY

League of Women Voters of New York State

New York Civil Liberties Union