

STATE OF NEW YORK

885

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 11, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. WALKER -- read once and referred to the Committee on Election Law

AN ACT to amend the election law, the education law, the civil practice law and rules, and the state finance law, in relation to regulating public data maintained by county and city boards of elections and establishing the New York voting and elections database and institute to maintain a statewide database of voting and election data

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The election law is amended by adding a new section 3-112 to read as follows:

§ 3-112. State board of elections; uniform standards for processing data requests and duty to send data and information to statewide database. 1. The state board of elections shall promulgate regulations within one hundred eighty days of the effective date of this section standardizing across each county and city boards of elections the method of processing freedom of information law requests and providing for timely distribution of such data to the public.

2. Upon the certification of election results and the completion of the voter history file after every election, each board of elections shall transmit copies of: (a) election results at the election district level; (b) contemporaneous voter registration lists; (c) voter history files; (d) maps or other documentation of the configuration of districts in any format or formats as specified by the state board of elections; and (e) lists of election day poll sites and early voting sites and maps or other documentation of the configuration of districts in any format or formats as specified by the state board of elections of the election districts assigned to each election day poll site or early voting site. For the purposes of this subdivision, the term "election authority" refers to the agency primarily responsible for maintaining the records listed in this subdivision and includes any board of election, as well

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 as general purpose local governments or special purpose local govern-
2 ments that administer their own elections or maintain their own voting
3 and election records.

4 § 2. The education law is amended by adding a new article 117 to read
5 as follows:

6 ARTICLE 117

7 NEW YORK VOTING AND ELECTIONS DATABASE AND INSTITUTE

8 Section 5801. Statement of objectives and legislative findings.

9 5802. Establishment of the New York voting and elections data-
10 base and institute.

11 5803. Function of the New York voting and elections database and
12 institute.

13 5804. Co-directors and chairs on voting and elections.

14 5805. Annual report.

15 § 5801. Statement of objectives and legislative findings. New York's
16 existing system of voting and election administration has developed over
17 the course of two centuries and has evolved in response to changing
18 understandings of civil rights and the importance of equitable partic-
19 ipation in government. The legislature hereby finds that equitable,
20 efficient, and accountable elections require transparency and reliable
21 data to better inform the public and the legislative process in decision
22 making regarding election administration and voting rights in the state.
23 Therefore, the legislature finds that it is in the public interest to
24 establish a central institution to reduce the burden on boards of
25 elections, local governments and school districts with regard to storing
26 and sharing election data, provide a nonpartisan and accurate set of
27 data that the public can rely upon, encourage the enactment of
28 evidence-based election policies and legislation, and improve transpar-
29 ency and allow voters to detect inequitable election policies and racial
30 discrimination.

31 § 5802. Establishment of the New York voting and elections database
32 and institute. There is hereby established jointly within the state
33 university of New York and city university of New York the "New York
34 voting and elections database and institute", referred to in this arti-
35 cle as the "database and institute", to maintain and administer a
36 central repository of elections and voting data available to the public
37 from all political subdivisions in the state of New York and to foster,
38 pursue, and sponsor research on existing laws and best practices in
39 voting and elections. For the purposes of this section, "political
40 subdivision" shall mean a geographic area of representation created for
41 the provision of government services, including, but not limited to, a
42 county, city, town, village, school district, or any other district
43 organized pursuant to state or local law.

44 § 5803. Function of the New York voting and elections database and
45 institute. 1. The database and institute shall provide a center for
46 research, training and information on voting systems and election admin-
47 istration. The database and institute is hereby empowered:

48 (a) to conduct classes both for credit and non-credit;

49 (b) to organize interdisciplinary groups of scholars to research
50 voting and elections in the state;

51 (c) to conduct seminars involving voting and elections;

52 (d) to establish a nonpartisan centralized database in order to
53 collect, archive, and make publicly available at no cost an accessible
54 database pertaining to elections, registered voters, and ballot access
55 in the state;

56 (e) to assist in the dissemination of such data to the public;

1 (f) to publish such books and periodicals as it shall deem appropriate
2 on voting and elections in the state; and

3 (g) to provide nonpartisan technical assistance to political subdivi-
4 sions, scholars, and the general public seeking to use the resources of
5 the statewide database.

6 2. (a) Data to maintain. The database and institute shall maintain in
7 electronic format and make available to the public online at no cost at
8 minimum the following data and records for at least the previous twelve
9 year period:

10 (i) Estimates of the total population, voting age population, and
11 citizen voting age population by race, color, and language-minority
12 group, broken down to the election district level on a year-by-year
13 basis for every political subdivision in the state, based on data from
14 the United States census bureau, American community survey, or data of
15 comparable quality collected by a public office.

16 (ii) Election results at the election district level for every state-
17 wide election and every election in every political subdivision.

18 (iii) Contemporaneous voter registration lists, voter history files,
19 election day poll site locations, and early voting site locations, for
20 every election in every political subdivision.

21 (iv) Contemporaneous maps or other documentation of the configuration
22 of districts in any format or formats specified by the director for
23 election districts.

24 (v) Election day or early voting poll sites including, but not limited
25 to, lists of election districts assigned to each polling place, if
26 applicable.

27 (vi) Districting or redistricting plans for every election in every
28 political subdivision.

29 (vii) Any other data that the director deems advisable to maintain in
30 furtherance of the purposes of this title.

31 (b) Public availability of data. Except for any data, information, or
32 estimates that identifies individual voters, the data, information, and
33 estimates maintained by the statewide database shall be posted online
34 and made available to the public at no cost.

35 (c) Data on race, color, and language-minority groups. The statewide
36 database and institute shall prepare any estimates made pursuant to this
37 section by applying the most advanced, peer-reviewed, and validated
38 methodologies.

39 § 5804. Co-directors and chairs on voting and elections. Two chairs
40 are hereby established in the New York voting and elections database and
41 institute. One chair shall be within the state university of New York.
42 One chair shall be within the city university of New York. The chairs
43 shall also act as co-directors of the database and institute.

44 § 5805. Annual report. Not later than ninety days following the end of
45 the state fiscal year the New York voting and elections database and
46 institute shall annually submit to the governor, the majority leader of
47 the senate and the speaker of the assembly a report on the priorities
48 and finances of the New York voting and elections database and insti-
49 tute.

50 § 3. The civil practice law and rules is amended by adding a new rule
51 4550 to read as follows:

52 Rule 4550. New York voting and elections database and institute. The
53 data, information, and estimates maintained by the New York voting and
54 elections database and institute shall be granted a rebuttable presump-
55 tion of validity by any court concerning any claim brought.

§ 4. The education law is amended by adding a new section 2614 to read as follows:

§ 2614. Transmission of publicly available data to the New York voting and elections database and institute. Upon the certification of election results and the completion of the voter history file after each election, each school district that holds elections pursuant to this article shall transmit copies of the following to the New York voting and elections database and institute within ninety days after such election: (a) school board election results; (b) contemporaneous voter registration lists; (c) voter history files; (d) maps or other documentation of the configuration of districts in any format or formats specified by the director; (e) lists of election day poll sites, maps or other documentation of the configuration of districts in any format or formats specified by the director assigned to each election day poll site; and (f) any other publicly available data as requested by such database and institute.

§ 5. Section 2038 of the education law is renumbered section 2039 and a new section 2038 is added to read as follows:

§ 2038. Transmission of publicly available data to the New York voting and elections database and institute. Upon the certification of election results and the completion of the voter history file after each election, each school district that holds school board elections pursuant to this article shall transmit copies of the following to the New York voting and elections database and institute within ninety days after such election: (a) school board election results; (b) contemporaneous voter registration lists; (c) voter history files; (d) maps, descriptions, and shapefiles for election districts; (e) lists of election day poll sites, shapefiles, or descriptions of the election districts assigned to each election day poll site; and (f) any other publicly available data as requested by such database and institute.

§ 6. Section 2553 of the education law is amended by adding a new subdivision 2-a to read as follows:

2-a. Upon the certification of election results and the completion of the voter history file after each election, each school district that holds school board elections pursuant to this article shall transmit copies of the following to the New York voting and elections database and institute within ninety days after such election: (a) school board election results; (b) contemporaneous voter registration lists; (c) voter history files; (d) maps or other documentation of the configuration of districts in any format or formats specified by the director; (e) lists of election day poll sites, shapefiles, or descriptions of the election districts assigned to each election day poll site; and (f) any other publicly available data as requested by such database and institute.

§ 7. The state finance law is amended by adding a new section 97-ss to read as follows:

§ 97-ss. New York voting and elections database and institute fund. 1. There is hereby established in the joint custody of the state comptroller and the commissioner of taxation and finance a fund to be known as the New York voting and elections database and institute fund.

2. The New York voting and elections database and institute fund shall consist of all moneys credited or transferred thereto from any other fund or source, including any federal, state, or private funds, pursuant to law for the maintenance of the voting and elections database repository and for research conducted by such database and institute.

1 3. Moneys in the New York voting and elections database and institute
2 fund may be invested by the comptroller pursuant to section ninety-
3 eight-a of this article, and any income received by the comptroller
4 shall be used for the purposes of such fund.

5 4. The moneys held in or credited to the New York voting and elections
6 database and institute fund shall be expended for the purposes set forth
7 in this section, and may not be interchanged or commingled with any
8 other account or fund but may be commingled with any other fund or
9 account for investment purposes.

10 5. Moneys in the New York voting and elections database and institute
11 fund, following appropriation by the legislature, shall be available to
12 the New York voting and elections database and institute for maintenance
13 of the database and research and education programs as set forth in
14 article one hundred seventeen of title seven of the education law.

15 § 8. This act shall take effect immediately.