

STATE OF NEW YORK

5758

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

May 14, 2019

Introduced by Sen. STEWART-COUSINS -- read twice and ordered printed,
and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Elections

AN ACT to amend the election law, in relation to prohibiting the
suppression of voters

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

1 Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "deceptive
2 practices and voter suppression prevention act".

3 § 2. The election law is amended by adding a new section 17-151 to
4 read as follows:

5 § 17-151. Deceptive practices. 1. Any person, political committee,
6 labor organization, corporation, or other entity, whether acting under
7 color of law or otherwise, who knowingly communicates or knowingly caus-
8 es to be communicated deceptive information, knowing such information to
9 be false and, in acting in the manner described, prevents or deters
10 another person from exercising the right to vote in any election, is
11 guilty of a misdemeanor.

12 2. The following definitions are applicable to this section: (a)
13 "deceptive information" means false information regarding: (i) the time,
14 place, or manner of any election; (ii) the qualifications for or
15 restrictions on voter eligibility for any election, including any penal-
16 ties associated with voting by ineligible voters; (iii) information
17 regarding a voter's registration status or eligibility; or (iv) the
18 political party affiliation of any candidate; and

19 (b) "election" as used in this article shall be deemed to apply to and
20 include all elections administered by the state or city of New York
21 boards of elections, or any county board of elections, including any
22 general, primary, run-off, or special election for any state or local
23 office or ballot proposition.

24 3. Any person aggrieved by a violation of subdivision one of this
25 section may institute a civil action or other proper proceeding for

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

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1 preventative relief, or may apply for a permanent or temporary injunc-
2 tion, restraining order, declaratory judgment, or other order in any
3 court with jurisdiction pursuant to section 16-100 of this chapter.

4 4. Any attempt to commit an offense described in subdivision one of
5 this section, in accordance with the applicable provision of the penal
6 law, is a class B misdemeanor.

7 5. The provisions of article twenty and article one hundred five of
8 the penal law, relating to criminal liability for conduct of another and
9 conspiracy, shall apply to prosecutions under this section.

10 6. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the attorney general
11 shall have concurrent jurisdiction with any district attorney in the
12 prosecution of any offenses under this section relating to deceptive
13 practices as well as any offenses arising out of such prosecution.

14 § 3. The election law is amended by adding a new section 17-153 to
15 read as follows:

16 § 17-153. Suppression of voters. 1. Any person, political committee,
17 labor organization, corporation, or other entity who suppresses or
18 threatens to suppress the right of any person to lawfully exercise their
19 franchise, or in any other manner compels such person to vote or to
20 refrain from voting for or against a particular candidate for public
21 office or for or against a particular ballot proposition is guilty of a
22 class A misdemeanor.

23 2. For purposes of this section, the term "suppress" shall mean to use
24 force, authority or an abuse of power to prevent, restrain, inhibit or
25 compel another from acting in his or her own interests or intentions, or
26 into not acting at all.

27 3. Any person, political committee, labor organization, or corporation
28 who attempts to commit an offense described in subdivision one of this
29 section is guilty of a class B misdemeanor.

30 4. The provisions of article twenty and article one hundred five of
31 the penal law, relating to criminal liability for conduct of another and
32 conspiracy shall apply to prosecutions under this section.

33 5. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the attorney general
34 shall have concurrent jurisdiction with any district attorney in the
35 prosecution of any offenses under this section relating to deceptive
36 practices as well as any offenses arising out of such prosecution.

37 § 4. Section 17-166 of the election law is amended to read as follows:

38 § 17-166. Penalty. Any person convicted of a misdemeanor under this
39 article shall for a first offense be punished by a sentence of imprison-
40 ment for not more than one year, or by a fine of not less than one
41 hundred dollars nor more than five hundred dollars, or by both such fine
42 and imprisonment. Any person who, having been convicted of a misdemeanor
43 under this article, shall thereafter be convicted of another misdemeanor
44 under this article, shall be guilty of a felony.

45 Any person convicted of a felony under this article shall be convicted
46 of a class E felony for a first offense and for any subsequent felony
47 offense under this article, a class D felony.

48 § 5. This act shall take effect immediately.