

# STATE OF NEW YORK

6457

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

June 11, 2019

Introduced by Sen. GIANARIS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Rules

AN ACT to amend the election law, in relation to establishing an automatic voter registration process integrated within designated agency applications

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

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as  
2 the "New York automatic voter registration act of 2019".

3 § 2. Article 5 of the election law is amended by adding a new title 9  
4 to read as follows:

### TITLE IX

#### AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

5  
6  
7 Section 5-900. Integrated personal voter registration application  
8 required.

9 5-902. Failure to receive exemplar signature not to prevent  
10 registration.

11 5-904. Presumption of innocent authorized error.

12 5-906. Forms.

13 § 5-900. Integrated personal voter registration application required.  
14 1. In addition to any other method of voter registration provided for by  
15 this chapter, state and local agencies designated in subdivision twelve  
16 of this section shall provide to the state board of elections voter  
17 registration qualification information associated with each person who  
18 submits an application for services at such agency, or who notifies the  
19 agency of a change of address or name. Such designated agencies shall  
20 ensure agency applications substantially include all of the elements  
21 required by section 5-210 of this article, including the appropriate  
22 attestation, so that persons completing such applications shall be able  
23 to also submit an application to register to vote through the electronic  
24 voter registration transmittal system. For purposes of this section,

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

LBD05948-04-9

1 "agency" shall mean any state or local agency, department, division,  
2 office, institution or other entity designated by the state board of  
3 elections pursuant to subdivision twelve of this section.

4 2. For each application submitted to the agency, whether electron-  
5 ically or on paper, the agency shall transmit to the state board of  
6 elections through an interface with the electronic voter registration  
7 transmittal system established and maintained by the state board of  
8 elections that portion of the application that includes voter registra-  
9 tion information. The state board of elections shall electronically  
10 forward such application to the applicable board of elections of each  
11 county or the city of New York for filing, processing and verification  
12 consistent with this chapter.

13 3. An integrated voter registration form submitted to an agency in  
14 paper format shall be transmitted to the state board of elections  
15 through an electronic voter registration transmittal system by convert-  
16 ing the paper form to an image file or a portable document format file  
17 which shall thereafter be deemed the original form for voter registra-  
18 tion and enrollment purposes. The agency shall retain the complete  
19 original paper application for no less than two years. The transmittal  
20 of the converted paper application may include or be accompanied by data  
21 elements and transmittal information as required by the rules and regu-  
22 lations of the state board of elections.

23 4. An integrated voter registration application submitted to an agency  
24 in an electronic format shall be transmitted to the state board of  
25 elections through the electronic voter registration transmittal system  
26 and shall include all of the voter registration data elements, including  
27 electronic signature, as applicable, and record of attestation of the  
28 accuracy of the voter registration information and any relevant document  
29 images.

30 5. The voter registration related portion of each agency's integrated  
31 application for services or assistance shall:

32 (a) include a statement of the eligibility requirements for voter  
33 registration and shall require the applicant to attest by his or her  
34 signature that he or she meets those requirements under penalty of  
35 perjury unless such applicant declines such registration;

36 (b) inform the applicant, in print identical to that used in the  
37 attestation section of the following:

38 (i) voter eligibility requirements;

39 (ii) penalties for submission of a false registration application;

40 (iii) that the office where the applicant applies for registration  
41 shall remain confidential and the voter registration information shall  
42 be used only for voter registration purposes;

43 (iv) that if the applicant applies to register to vote electronically,  
44 such applicant thereby consents to the use of an electronic copy of the  
45 individual's manual signature that is in the custody of the department  
46 of motor vehicles, the state board of elections, or other agency desig-  
47 nated by this section, as the individual's voter registration exemplar  
48 signature if the individual voter's exemplar signature is not provided  
49 with the voter registration application; and

50 (v) if the applicant declines to register, such applicant's declina-  
51 tion shall remain confidential and be used only for voter registration  
52 purposes;

53 (c) include a box for the applicant to check to indicate whether the  
54 applicant would like to decline to register to vote along with the  
55 statement in prominent type, "IF YOU DO NOT CHECK THIS BOX, AND YOU  
56 PROVIDE YOUR SIGNATURE ON THE SPACE BELOW, YOU WILL HAVE ATTESTED TO

1 YOUR ELIGIBILITY TO REGISTER TO VOTE AND YOU WILL HAVE APPLIED TO REGIS-  
2 TER TO VOTE.";

3 (d) include a space for the applicant to indicate his or her choice of  
4 party enrollment, with a clear alternative provided for the applicant to  
5 decline to affiliate with any party and a statement in prominent type  
6 "IF YOU DO NOT CHOOSE A PARTY YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN  
7 PRIMARY ELECTIONS FOR THAT PARTY".

8 (e) include a statement that if an applicant is a victim of domestic  
9 violence or stalking, he or she may contact the state board of elections  
10 in order to receive information regarding the address confidentiality  
11 program for victims of domestic violence under section 5-508 of this  
12 title.

13 6. Information from the voter relevant to both voter registration and  
14 the agency application shall be entered by the voter only once upon an  
15 application.

16 7. The agency shall redact or remove from the completed integrated  
17 application to be transmitted to the state board of elections any infor-  
18 mation solely applicable to the agency application.

19 8. Information concerning the citizenship status of individuals, when  
20 collected and transmitted pursuant to subdivision one of this section,  
21 shall not be retained, used or shared for any other purpose except as  
22 may be required by law.

23 9. A voter shall be able to decline to register to vote using an inte-  
24 grated application by selecting a single check box, or equivalent, which  
25 shall read "I DECLINE USE OF THIS FORM FOR VOTER REGISTRATION PURPOSES.  
26 DO NOT FORWARD MY INFORMATION TO THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS".

27 10. The voter shall be able to sign the voter registration application  
28 and the agency application by means of a single manual or electronic  
29 signature unless the agency requires more than one signature for other  
30 agency purposes.

31 11. No application for voter registration shall be submitted if the  
32 applicant declines registration or fails to sign the integrated applica-  
33 tion, whether on paper or online.

34 12. Designated agencies for purposes of this section shall include all  
35 agencies designated as voter registration agencies in sections 5-211 and  
36 5-212 of this article, as well as any other agency designated by the  
37 state board of elections. Each agency shall enter into an agreement  
38 with the state board of elections finalizing the format and content of  
39 electronic transmissions required by this section. The state board of  
40 elections shall prepare and distribute to designated agencies written  
41 instructions as to the implementation of the program and shall be  
42 responsible for establishing training programs for employees of desig-  
43 nated agencies listed in this section. Any such designated agency shall  
44 take all actions that are necessary and proper for the implementation of  
45 this section, including facilitating technological capabilities to allow  
46 transmission of data through an interface with the electronic voter  
47 registration transmittal system in a secure manner.

48 13. The state board of elections shall promulgate rules and regu-  
49 lations for the creation and administration of an integrated electronic  
50 voter registration process as provided for by this section.

51 § 5-902. Failure to receive exemplar signature not to prevent regis-  
52 tration. If a voter registration exemplar signature is not provided by  
53 an applicant who submits a voter registration application pursuant to  
54 this title and such signature exemplar is not otherwise available from  
55 the statewide voter registration database or a state or local agency,  
56 the local board of elections shall, absent another reason to reject the

1 application, proceed to register and, as applicable, enroll the appli-  
2 cant. Within ten days of such action, the board of elections shall send  
3 a standard form promulgated by the state board of elections to the voter  
4 whose record lacks an exemplar signature, requiring such voter to submit  
5 a signature for identification purposes. The voter shall submit to the  
6 board of elections a voter registration exemplar signature by any one of  
7 the following methods: in person, by mail with return postage paid  
8 provided by the board of elections, by electronic mail, or by electronic  
9 upload to the board of elections through the electronic voter registra-  
10 tion transmittal system. If such voter does not provide the required  
11 exemplar signature, when the voter appears to vote the voter shall be  
12 entitled to vote by affidavit ballot.

13 § 5-904. Presumption of innocent authorized error. 1. Notwithstanding  
14 subdivision six of section 5-210 of this article or any other law to the  
15 contrary, a person who is ineligible to vote who fails to decline to  
16 register to vote in accordance with the provisions of this section and  
17 did not willfully and knowingly seek to register to vote knowing that he  
18 or she is not eligible to do so:

19 (a) shall not be guilty of any crime as the result of the applicant's  
20 failure to make such declination;

21 (b) shall be deemed to have been registered with official authori-  
22 zation; and

23 (c) such act may not be considered as evidence of a claim to citizen-  
24 ship.

25 2. Notwithstanding subdivision six of section 5-210 of this article or  
26 any other law to the contrary, a person who is ineligible to vote who  
27 fails to decline to register to vote in accordance with the provisions  
28 of this section, who then either votes or attempts to vote in an  
29 election held after the effective date of that person's registration,  
30 and who did not willfully and knowingly seek to register to vote knowing  
31 that he or she is not eligible to do so, and did not subsequently vote  
32 or attempt to vote knowing that he or she is not eligible to do so:

33 (a) shall not be guilty of any crime as the result of the applicant's  
34 failure to make such declination and subsequent vote or attempt to vote;

35 (b) shall be deemed to have been registered with official authori-  
36 zation; and

37 (c) such act may not be considered as evidence of a claim to citizen-  
38 ship.

39 § 5-906. Forms. The state board of elections shall promulgate rules  
40 and regulations to implement this title. All agency forms and notices  
41 required by this title shall be approved by the state board of  
42 elections. All applications and notices for use by a board of elections  
43 pursuant to this title shall be promulgated by the state board of  
44 elections, and no addition or alternation to such forms by a board of  
45 elections shall be made without approval of the state board of  
46 elections.

47 § 3. The election law is amended by adding a new section 5-308 to read  
48 as follows:

49 § 5-308. Enrollment; automatic voter registration. 1. The board of  
50 elections shall, promptly and not later than twenty-one days after  
51 receipt of a voter registration application submitted pursuant to title  
52 nine of this article by a voter registering for the first time, send any  
53 such voter who did not enroll in a party a notice and a form to indicate  
54 party enrollment, with return postage paid by the board of elections.  
55 Such notice shall offer the voter the opportunity to enroll with a party  
56 or to decline to enroll with a party and contain a statement in promi-

1 nent type "IF YOU DO NOT CHOOSE A PARTY YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PARTIC-  
2 IPATE IN PRIMARY ELECTIONS FOR THAT PARTY." Such form shall provide a  
3 clear alternative for the applicant to decline to affiliate with any  
4 party. If the board of elections has not received a response to the  
5 party enrollment notice and form within forty-five days of the applica-  
6 tion, the board shall mail a second similar notice and form to the  
7 voter.

8 2. Notwithstanding subdivision two of section 5-304 of this title, if  
9 a voter who registered to vote for the first time pursuant to title nine  
10 of this article responds to the notice required by subdivision one of  
11 this section and elects to enroll in a party, such enrollment shall take  
12 effect immediately.

13 3. If a voter appears at a primary election and votes by affidavit  
14 ballot indicating the intent to enroll in such party, such affidavit  
15 ballot shall cause the voter to be enrolled immediately in that party if  
16 the board of elections determines that the voter registered to vote for  
17 the first time pursuant to title nine of this article.

18 4. If a voter appears at a primary election and votes by affidavit  
19 ballot indicating the intent to enroll in such party, such affidavit  
20 ballot shall be cast and counted if the board of elections determines  
21 that the voter registered to vote at least twenty-five days before that  
22 primary pursuant to title nine of this article and such voter is other-  
23 wise qualified to vote in such election.

24 § 4. Paragraph (a) of subdivision 2 of section 9-209 of the election  
25 law is amended by adding a new subparagraph (v) to read as follows:

26 (v) If the board of elections finds that the voter registered to vote  
27 for the first time pursuant to title nine of article five of this chap-  
28 ter at least twenty-five days before a primary, appeared at such primary  
29 election, and indicated on the affidavit ballot envelope the intent to  
30 enroll in such party, the affidavit ballot shall be cast and counted if  
31 the voter is otherwise qualified to vote in such election.

32 § 5. This act shall take effect on the earlier occurrence of: (i) two  
33 years after it shall have become a law; provided, however, the state  
34 board of elections shall be authorized to implement necessary rules and  
35 regulations and to take steps required to implement this act immediate-  
36 ly; or (ii) five days after the date of certification by the state board  
37 of elections that the information technology infrastructure to substan-  
38 tially implement this act is functional. Provided, further that the  
39 state board of elections shall notify the legislative bill drafting  
40 commission upon the occurrence of the enactment of the legislation  
41 provided for in this act in order that the commission may maintain an  
42 accurate and timely effective data base of the official text of the laws  
43 of the state of New York in furtherance of effectuating the provisions  
44 of section 44 of the legislative law and section 70-b of the public  
45 officers law.