

STATE OF NEW YORK

5864

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 19, 2021

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

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY

proposing amendments to the constitution, in relation to providing the electors with the power of initiative and referendum

1 Section 1. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That section 13 of article 3 of the constitution be amended to read as follows:

2 § 13. The enacting clause of all bills shall be "The People of the
3 State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as
4 follows," and no law shall be enacted except by bill; except as otherwise
5 provided in article twenty of this constitution.

6
7 § 2. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That the opening paragraph of
8 section 14 of article 3 of the constitution be amended to read as
9 follows:

10 a. No bill shall be passed or become a law unless it shall have been
11 printed and upon the desks of the members, in its final form, at least
12 three calendar legislative days prior to its final passage, unless the
13 governor, or the acting governor, shall have certified, under his or her
14 hand and the seal of the state, the facts which in his or her opinion
15 necessitate an immediate vote thereon, in which case it must nevertheless
16 be upon the desks of the members in final form, not necessarily
17 printed, before its final passage; nor shall any bill be passed or
18 become a law, except by the assent of a majority of the members elected
19 to each branch of the legislature; and upon the last reading of a bill,
20 no amendment thereof shall be allowed, and the question upon its final
21 passage shall be taken immediately thereafter, and the ayes and nays
22 entered on the journal.

23 b. This section shall not apply to any initiative or referendum that
24 is subject to the provisions of article twenty of this constitution.

25 § 3. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That section 1 of article 19
26 of the constitution be amended to read as follows:

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

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1 Section 1. a. Any amendment or amendments to this constitution may be
2 proposed in the senate and assembly whereupon such amendment or amend-
3 ments shall be referred to the attorney-general whose duty it shall be
4 within twenty days thereafter to render an opinion in writing to the
5 senate and assembly as to the effect of such amendment or amendments
6 upon other provisions of the constitution. Upon receiving such opinion,
7 if the amendment or amendments as proposed or as amended shall be agreed
8 to by a majority of the members elected to each of the two houses, such
9 proposed amendment or amendments shall be entered on their journals, and
10 the ayes and noes taken thereon, and referred to the next regular legis-
11 lative session convening after the succeeding general election of
12 members of the assembly, and shall be published for three months previ-
13 ous to the time of making such choice; and if in such legislative
14 session, such proposed amendment or amendments shall be agreed to by a
15 majority of all the members elected to each house, then it shall be the
16 duty of the legislature to submit each proposed amendment or amendments
17 to the people for approval in such manner and at such times as the
18 legislature shall prescribe; and if the people shall approve and ratify
19 such amendment or amendments by a majority of the electors voting there-
20 on, such amendment or amendments shall become a part of the constitution
21 on the first day of January next after such approval. Neither the fail-
22 ure of the attorney-general to render an opinion concerning such a
23 proposed amendment nor his or her failure to do so timely shall affect
24 ~~the~~ the validity of such proposed amendment or legislative action ther-
25 eon.

26 b. This section shall not apply to an amendment by initiative subject
27 to the provisions of article twenty of this constitution.

28 § 4. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That section 16 of article 3
29 of the constitution be amended to read as follows:

30 § 16. a. No act shall be passed which shall provide that any existing
31 law, or any part thereof, shall be made or deemed a part of said act, or
32 which shall enact that any existing law, or part thereof, shall be
33 applicable, except by inserting it in such act.

34 b. This section shall not apply to any initiative or referendum
35 subject to the provisions of article twenty of this constitution.

36 § 5. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That section 7 of article 4 of
37 the constitution be amended to read as follows:

38 § 7. a. Every bill which shall have passed the senate and assembly
39 shall, before it becomes a law, be presented to the governor; if the
40 governor approve, he or she shall sign it; but if not, he or she shall
41 return it with his or her objections to the house in which it shall have
42 originated, which shall enter the objections at large on the journal,
43 and proceed to reconsider it. If after such reconsideration, two-thirds
44 of the members elected to that house shall agree to pass the bill, it
45 shall be sent together with the objections, to the other house, by which
46 it shall likewise be reconsidered; and if approved by two-thirds of the
47 members elected to that house, it shall become a law notwithstanding the
48 objections of the governor. In all such cases the votes in both houses
49 shall be determined by yeas and nays, and the names of the members
50 voting shall be entered on the journal of each house respectively. If
51 any bill shall not be returned by the governor within ten days (Sundays
52 excepted) after it shall have been presented to him or her, the same
53 shall be a law in like manner as if he or she had signed it, unless the
54 legislature shall, by their adjournment, prevent its return, in which
55 case it shall not become a law without the approval of the governor. No
56 bill shall become a law after the final adjournment of the legislature,

1 unless approved by the governor within thirty days after such adjourn-
2 ment. If any bill presented to the governor contain several items of
3 appropriation of money, the governor may object to one or more of such
4 items while approving of the other portion of the bill. In such case the
5 governor shall append to the bill, at the time of signing it, a state-
6 ment of the items to which he or she objects; and the appropriation so
7 objected to shall not take effect. If the legislature be in session, he
8 or she shall transmit to the house in which the bill originated a copy
9 of such statement, and the items objected to shall be separately recon-
10 sidered. If on reconsideration one or more of such items be approved by
11 two-thirds of the members elected to each house, the same shall be part
12 of the law, notwithstanding the objections of the governor. All the
13 provisions of this section, in relation to bills not approved by the
14 governor, shall apply in cases in which he or she shall withhold
15 approval from any item or items contained in a bill appropriating money.

16 b. This section shall not apply to any initiative or referendum that
17 is subject to the provisions of article twenty of this constitution.

18 § 6. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That article 20 of the consti-
19 tution be renumbered article 21 and a new article 20 be added to read as
20 follows:

21 ARTICLE XX

22 Initiative and Referendum

23 Section 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of this constitution,
24 the People reserve to themselves the power to propose laws and to
25 propose amendments to the constitution, and to adopt or reject the same,
26 at the polls, independent of the legislature, and also reserve the
27 power, at their own option, to so adopt or reject any act, or section or
28 part of any act, passed by the legislature.

29 § 2. As used in this article: a. Initiative is the power of the elec-
30 tors to propose amendments to the constitution and to propose statutes;
31 and

32 b. Referendum is the power of the electors to approve or reject stat-
33 utes or parts of statutes.

34 § 3. Initiative may be used for any measure embracing a single object
35 or purpose, except the following: calling elections; appropriating
36 funds, except for an initiative proposing an appropriation for a single
37 object or purpose; naming any individuals to hold any office; or naming
38 or identifying any private corporation or other private entity to
39 perform any function or to have any power or duty. Such measures may not
40 be submitted to the electors and shall not have the force and effect of
41 law.

42 § 4. An initiative or referendum measure may be proposed by presenting
43 to the state board of elections a petition that sets forth the text of
44 the proposed statute, constitutional amendment or referendum and that
45 has been signed by electors equal in number to at least five percent of
46 the votes cast for all candidates for governor at the last gubernatorial
47 election. Such signatures must include at least five thousand signatures
48 from each of at least three-fifths of the congressional districts of the
49 state.

50 § 5. a. Petitions for an initiative or referendum measure shall be in
51 substantially the same form as prescribed by the election law for inde-
52 pendent nominating petitions, and shall be circulated and presented in
53 the manner prescribed by such law, except that the petition shall state
54 that the registered voter desires to have the specific initiative or

1 referendum question noted on the petition placed on the ballot instead
2 of a candidate.

3 b. Petitions shall be submitted to the state board of elections. A
4 signature made earlier than one year prior to the next general election
5 shall not be counted. Challenges to such petitions shall be resolved by
6 the state board of elections, subject to judicial review as provided for
7 by law. No challenge to an initiative or referendum may be filed more
8 than ten days after submission of petitions to the state board of
9 elections, and any such challenge shall be finally resolved by the state
10 board of elections within ten days of its filing.

11 c. Measures proposing or rejecting statutes shall be placed on the
12 ballot by the state board of elections at the next general election held
13 at least ninety days after such measure is submitted. Measures propos-
14 ing amendments to the constitution shall be placed on the ballot by the
15 state board of elections at the next general election in which there are
16 candidates for the office of member of the senate or assembly held at
17 least ninety days after the measure is submitted to the state board of
18 elections and at the next such general election.

19 § 6. a. Prior to the circulation of an initiative or referendum peti-
20 tion for signatures, a copy shall be submitted to the attorney general
21 of the state of New York who shall prepare a title and summary, not to
22 exceed one hundred words, which shall appear on the petition and on the
23 ballot for each initiative or referendum and which shall give no indi-
24 cation of support or opposition to such measure, within twenty days
25 after such measure is submitted to him or her.

26 b. A copy of such initiative or referendum petition shall also be
27 submitted to the New York state legislative bill drafting commission or
28 its successor prior to circulation for signatures. Such commission shall
29 render technical comments on the form of the proposed measure, with no
30 indication of support or opposition, to the proponents of such measure
31 within twenty days of submission.

32 c. No action or inaction by the attorney general or the failure of the
33 legislative bill drafting commission or its successor to provide
34 comments with respect to an initiative or referendum petition, or to
35 timely do so, shall affect the validity of such initiative or referendum
36 petition or the action of the electors thereon.

37 d. Any action or proceeding in which any question arises as to the
38 validity of an initiative or referendum measure, whether an initiative
39 or referendum measure should appear on the ballot or which challenges
40 the title and summary of such measure prepared by the attorney general
41 as failing to accurately describe such measure, shall be heard in the
42 supreme court of the state and preferred over all other civil causes in
43 all courts of the state and shall be heard and determined in preference
44 to all other civil business pending therein. No action or proceeding
45 challenging whether an initiative or referendum measure may appear on
46 the ballot or which challenges any action or inaction by the attorney
47 general respecting the title or summary of such measure may be brought
48 more than fourteen days after action by the attorney general pursuant to
49 subdivision a of this section or, if the attorney general fails to act,
50 then no later than fourteen days after the deadline for such action
51 pursuant to such subdivision a.

52 § 7. Except to the extent required by section eight of this article, a
53 maximum of four discrete initiative measures, or four discrete referen-
54 dum measures, or any combination of discrete initiative measures or
55 referendum measures not to exceed a total of four may be submitted to
56 the electors at any one general election. If more than four measures

1 qualify, those initiative measures and referenda measures submitted to
2 the state board of elections earliest in time shall be placed on the
3 ballot.

4 § 8. Any initiative or referendum not placed on a ballot because of
5 the provisions of section seven of this article shall automatically be
6 placed on the ballot for the next general election, notwithstanding the
7 provisions of section seven of this article.

8 § 9. a. To be enacted, an initiative or referendum measure proposing
9 or rejecting a statute must be approved by a majority of the electors of
10 the state voting on the measure state-wide. An initiative or referendum
11 measure that has been approved shall take effect on the first day of
12 January of the year next succeeding its passage unless the measure
13 expressly provides otherwise. If a referendum petition is approved
14 repealing a part of a statute, the remainder of the statute shall not be
15 delayed from going into effect.

16 b. A measure amending the constitution must be approved by a majority
17 of the electors of the state voting on the measure in two successive
18 elections in which there are candidates for state senate or state assem-
19 bly on the ballot. Such measure shall take effect on the first day of
20 January of the year next succeeding its second approval unless the meas-
21 ure expressly provides otherwise.

22 c. If provisions of two or more measures approved at the same election
23 conflict, those of the measure receiving the highest number of affirma-
24 tive votes shall prevail.

25 d. A referendum measure rejecting all or part of a statute cannot be
26 repealed, amended or otherwise reconsidered by the legislature for a
27 period of two years. A measure adopted through initiative cannot be
28 repealed, amended or otherwise reconsidered by the legislature for a
29 period of two years. After two years no law to amend, repeal or other-
30 wise reconsider a measure adopted by initiative or referendum shall take
31 effect until it shall, at a general election, have been submitted to the
32 people, and have received a majority of all the votes cast for and
33 against it at such election, nor shall it be so submitted to the people
34 within three months after its passage.

35 e. Any referendum or initiative adopted by the voters may be repealed,
36 amended, or otherwise reconsidered by the people at any time through the
37 process established by this article for initiative or referendum meas-
38 ures.

39 § 10. Initiative and referendum in cities, towns, villages and coun-
40 ties. a. Initiative and referendum powers are reserved for every city,
41 town, village and county in the state as to all local matters that such
42 municipality is or shall be empowered to act pursuant to article IX of
43 this constitution.

44 b. Initiative and referendum in cities, towns, villages and counties
45 shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of this article;
46 provided, however, that:

47 (i) signatures of registered electors of such municipality equal in
48 number to at least thirty thousand or five percent of the votes cast in
49 such city, town, village or county for all candidates for governor at
50 the last gubernatorial election, whichever is less, shall be required to
51 propose any measure by initiative and referendum;

52 (ii) the affirmative vote of the majority of electors of the munici-
53 pality voting on the measure shall be required to enact such measure;

54 (iii) petitions shall be submitted to the county board of elections
55 which shall have the powers conferred and the duties imposed on the
56 state board of elections by this article; and

1 (iv) the provisions of subdivision b of section six of this article
2 shall not be applicable.

3 § 11. This article of the constitution shall be in all respects self-
4 executing, except that the manner and method of exercising the power of
5 initiative and referendum may be prescribed pursuant to law, consistent
6 with and limited by the provisions of this article.

7 § 7. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That the foregoing amendments
8 be referred to the first regular legislative session convening after the
9 next succeeding general election of members of the assembly, and, in
10 conformity with section 1 of article 19 of the constitution, be
11 published for 3 months previous to the time of such election.