STATE OF NEW YORK

9676

IN SENATE

May 17, 2024

Introduced by Sen. WEBB -- 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 enacting the "student voter empowerment act"

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

Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "student voter empowerment act".

§ 2. Subdivision 18 of section 5-211 of the election law, as amended by chapter 481 of the laws of 2023, is amended to read as follows:

18. (a) [~~(i)~~] On or before January first, two thousand twenty, all institutions of the state university of New York and the city university of New York shall create and make available to all students a webpage for voter education on each such institution's website, containing a link to an application for voter registration, a link to an application for an early mail ballot, **updated information about the location and hours of the polling place designated for students registered to vote on the contiguous property of the institution, if such polling place exists pursuant to subdivision five-a of section 4-104 of this chapter or as designated by the local board of election, key dates for voting registration, voting times, and absentee voting detailed in the state board of elections political calendar, information about the voting rights of students,** contact information for the county board of elections, and the name and contact information for the [~~administrator responsible for voter registration assistance~~] **student voting coordinator** on each campus.

[~~(ii)~~] **(b)** Each such institution shall, at the beginning of the school year, and again in January of a year in which the president of the United States is to be elected, provide an application for voter registration and an application for an early mail ballot to each student in each such institution. Each institution shall be considered in compliance with the requirements of this [~~subparagraph~~] **paragraph** for each student to whom the institution electronically transmits a message containing the link to the webpage for voter education, the link to an

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

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application for voter registration and the link to an application for an early mail ballot, if such information is in an electronic message devoted exclusively to voter registration.

[~~(iii)~~] (c) Each such institution shall provide the same degree of assistance as required of participating agencies.

[~~(b)~~] 19. (a) Each institution within the state university of New York and the city university of New York shall designate a staff member to act as a student voting coordinator. The student voting coordinator shall develop and implement a student voting action plan to increase student voter registration and voting and democratic participation among students. Such student voting action plan shall cover the two year period immediately preceding each statewide general election, provided however that the action plan following the effective date of the chapter of the laws of two thousand twenty-four that amended this subdivision shall cover the period after such effective date, and shall be updated after each statewide general election.

(b) The student voting action plan shall include:

(i) A minimum of three election outreach events to increase democratic participation and student voting during an academic year, including at least one event during the forty-five days preceding a general or primary election. At least one event shall be held in-person. Such events shall be open for all students to attend, and may be sponsored by student organizations, provided they maintain requirements in paragraph (c) of this subdivision.

(ii) Provision of informational materials on voting and voter registration, including but not limited to application and online application for voter registration as required in subdivision eighteen of this section, in central locations and high-traffic areas on campus, including during orientation events for new students and during course registration processes, and in electronic messages, social media platforms, and text messages to cellular phones, to the extent the institution uses such methods to provide information to students.

(iii) In consultation with local boards of elections, provision of pre-filled voter registration applications with relevant residential addresses on the contiguous property of the college or university.

(iv) Dissemination of information about voter registration and voting opportunities to all students on the website created pursuant to subdivision eighteen of this section, including:

(A) the dates for early voting and election day voting;

(B) the last day for voter registration, enrollment, and change of enrollment;

(C) the process to search for a voter's early voting and election day assigned poll sites and voter registration status;

(D) the location and hours of the polling place designated for students registered to vote at any address on the contiguous property of the institution, pursuant to subdivision five-a of section 4-104 of this chapter, if such polling place is designated;

(E) the process and deadlines for applying for and returning absentee ballots, early mail ballots, and for curing defects in absentee ballots;

(F) the option to use students' campus residence address to register to vote;

(G) the protections for the right to vote pursuant to title two of article seventeen of this chapter, the John R. Lewis voting rights act of New York, and the rights of voters with disabilities; and

(H) the assistance for language-minority groups as provided by section 17-208 of this chapter.

(v) Support of student organizations engaged in activities to increase voter registration and voting by students, including but not limited to professional assistance, dissemination of information of activities, or financial support.

(vi) A policy allowing a student to be excused from class or absent from a job with the institution for a reasonable period for the purpose of voting on election day, if the student does not have three hours of continuous time out of class or off from a job with the institution during the time the polls are open on election day.

(vii) Any other activities to improve access to voting and voter registration for students.

(c) The work of the student voting coordinator and the activities in the student voting action plan, including but not limited to outreach events, informational materials, and communications, shall not be conducted for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring particular candidates or political parties.

(d) The chancellor of the state university of New York and the chancellor of the city university of New York shall promulgate rules for the manner of developing the student voting action plan which shall include consultation with staff, faculty members, and student organizations with experience in civic engagement.

(e) Each institution within the state university of New York and the city university of New York shall enroll in the National Study for Learning, Voting, and Engagement by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University. Within thirty days of receiving a report from the National Study for Learning, Voting, and Engagement by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University, an institution shall send the report to the state board of elections. The state board of elections shall make such reports publicly available on the website.

(f) The state university of New York and the city university of New York, on behalf of each institution within its system, shall on or before June first, two thousand twenty, and each subsequent year, submit a report disaggregated according to each institution to the state board of elections that includes:

(i) the efforts of the institution to register voters in the preceding calendar year;

(ii) a date-stamped screen shot of the webpage for voter education that contains the required information under [~~paragraph (a) of this~~] subdivision eighteen of this section;

(iii) the number of students who were registered for course work in the preceding twelve months at such institution and the number of clicks on the links to online voter registration and early mail ballot applications; [~~and~~]

(iv) any other efforts or recommendations the institution plans to implement to improve access to voter registration and early mail ballot voting for students at the institution; and

(v) each student voting action plan developed and implemented pursuant to paragraph (b) of this subdivision.

[~~(c)~~] (g) The state board of elections shall make the reports provided pursuant to paragraph [~~(b)~~] (f) of this subdivision publicly available on its website.

§ 3. Paragraph (a) of subdivision 1 of section 17-208 of the election law, as added by chapter 226 of the laws of 2022, is amended to read as follows:

(a) more than two percent, but in no instance fewer than three hundred individuals, of the citizens of voting age of a political subdivision **or residents of a college or university** are members of a single language-minority group and are limited English proficient.

§ 4. This act shall take effect one year after it shall have become a law; provided, however, that if chapter 226 of the laws of 2022 shall not have taken effect on or before such date then section three of this act shall take effect on the same date and in the same manner as such chapter of the laws of 2022 takes effect. Effective immediately, any rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such date.