

STATE OF NEW YORK

2056

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 15, 2025

Introduced by Sens. WEBB, MAY -- 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:

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

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

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

21 ~~[(i)]~~ (b) Each such institution shall, at the beginning of the school
22 year, and again in January of a year in which the president of the
23 United States is to be elected, provide an application for voter regis-
24 tration and an application for an early mail ballot to each student in
25 each such institution. Each institution shall be considered in compli-

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

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1 ance with the requirements of this ~~[subparagraph]~~ paragraph for each
2 student to whom the institution electronically transmits a message
3 containing the link to the webpage for voter education, the link to an
4 application for voter registration and the link to an application for an
5 early mail ballot, if such information is in an electronic message
6 devoted exclusively to voter registration.

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

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

20 (b) The student voting action plan shall include:

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

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

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

39 (iv) Dissemination of information about voter registration and voting
40 opportunities to all students on the website created pursuant to subdivi-
41 sion eighteen of this section, including:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 (H) the assistance for language-minority groups as provided by section
5 17-208 of this chapter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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