



NEWS FROM the NEW YORK STATE SENATE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

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****PRESS RELEASE****

SENATE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE TO BEGIN SERIES OF FIVE HEARINGS ACROSS NEW YORK ON REFORM BILLS AND OVERSIGHT

Hearings to Target Different Election-related Issues Now Through November

This month, the Elections Committee, Chaired by Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr. (D-Howard Beach), will kick-off five public hearings dedicated to soliciting public comment on recently introduced and upcoming election reform proposals. The April hearings in Buffalo (April 23rd) and New York City (April 24th), are the first in a series that will continue in May, June, September and November, and will also increase awareness about election policy and voting. Each hearing will emphasize a different theme such as: voter registration; casting a ballot and poll sites; Board of Elections oversight; election code reform; and oversight of elections in November.

“I am pleased to announce this series of public hearings, which will open the legislative process to the public,” said Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr. “We in the Senate are committed to allowing citizens’ voices to be heard on matters that are of the utmost importance to the health and vitality of our democracy. Accordingly, we will address election issues with a deliberate approach, with hearings on voter registration, absentee ballots, election day and voting issues, Board of Elections oversight, new voting machines and other related matters.”

Senate Majority Leader Malcolm A. Smith said, “Through these hearings and the work of the Elections Committee, the Senate is taking significant steps to improve the election process by proactively including voters at all stages. By soliciting feedback now, we are ensuring that as the Committee proceeds, reform is made with the best interest of New Yorkers in mind. By educating voters on important issues such as voter registration and Election Day protocol, we continue to demonstrate that above all else, this is a legislature working for the people.”

These hearings will emphasize the necessity of individual participation in the electoral process, and provide voters with critical information on election procedure. Currently, more than 33 percent of eligible voters in New York are not registered, according to US Census data compiled by Dr. Michael McDonald, associate professor of public and international affairs at George Mason University.

This new dialogue between lawmakers and the public is part of the Senate’s continued commitment to increasing the participation of Senators’ in the committee system and openness and transparency in the legislative process.

Senator Addabbo concluded, “I am hopeful that through these hearings we will assure the people that they will be able to participate in the most fundamental process in our democracy and instill confidence in the voters that their votes and voices matter.”

The bill package for the April public hearings include:

- **S1616** (Senator Valesky) —Allows voters to register and vote on Election Day through a Constitutional amendment.
- **S3372** (Senator Addabbo) —Allows voters to register and vote on Election Day (once Constitution is amended).
- **Bill Number TBD** —Reduces the deadlines for changing party enrollment to 25 days prior to an election for unaffiliated voters and 90 days for those already registered to a party.
- **S3996** (Senator Addabbo) —Reduces the deadline by which a registration must be received from 25 to 10 days before an election.
- **S3995** (Senator Addabbo) —Provides an additional opportunity for new registrants to indicate choice of party enrollment where original choice was omitted or void.
- **S1266** (Senator Montgomery) —Educates the incarcerated and those released but serving sentences about their voting and absentee ballot rights and provides for assistance in registering and voting by absentee ballot.
- **S4035** (Senator Addabbo) —Requires State Board of Elections to address forms to local county board when voter downloads from the Web-site.

The complete hearing schedule is:

April—Voter Registration

Hearings April 23rd in Buffalo at the Erie County Legislature, April 24th in NYC
at 250 Broadway
Committee meeting April 29th

May—Casting a Ballot/ Poll Sites

Hearings May 11th in Albany, May 14th in Syracuse (TBD)
Committee meeting May 19th

June—Board of Elections Oversight

June 3rd in Albany, June 12th in NYC
Committee meeting June 16th

September—Election Code Reform (TDB)

November—Election Oversight (TDB)

NEW YORK STATE SENATE

Notice of Public Hearing



New York State Senate Standing Committee on Elections

Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.

Chair

Senator Martin Malave Dilan

Senator Jose M. Serrano

Senator Brian X. Foley

Senator Thomas W. Libous

Senator Joseph A. Griffo

Senator Thomas P. Morahan

SUBJECT: To address a number of proposals to update and reform the state's voter registration laws and regulations.

April 23, 2009

10A.M. -1 PM.

The Erie County Legislature

92 Franklin Street – 4th Floor

Buffalo, New York 14202

The goal of the public hearings is to seek comment about a series of election reform proposals. The April hearings in Buffalo (April 23) and New York City (April 24), are the first in a series that will continue in May, June, September and November, and are dedicated to increasing awareness about election policy and voting. For the next three months of session, and beyond, the Committee will focus on a different issue: voter registration; voting/casting a ballot and poll sites; Board of Elections oversight; the election code; and oversight of the elections in November.

This dialogue between lawmakers and the public is part of the Senate's commitment to beginning a robust committee process, development of sound public policy through open dialogue and an overall transparent legislative procedure.

The hearing in Buffalo on April 23 will focus on the following bills:

- **S1616** (Senator Valesky) —Allows voters to register and vote on Election Day through a Constitutional amendment.
- **S3372** (Senator Addabbo) —Allows voters to register and vote on Election Day (once Constitution is amended).
- **Bill Number TBD** —Reduces the deadlines for changing party enrollment to 25 days prior to an election for unaffiliated voters and 90 days for those already registered to a party.
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- **S4035** (Senator Addabbo) —Requires State Board of Elections to address forms to local county board when voter downloads from the website.

Persons who wish to testify should so indicate on the reply form. The Elections Committee will accommodate as many witnesses as possible. The Committee also encourages the submission of written testimony; it will be considered by the Committee and will be made part of its record. Written testimony may be e-mailed as an attachment in any common format to the Elections Committee at: oliver@senate.state.ny.us.

Persons wishing to attend or testify at this hearing should complete and return the reply form as soon as possible, but no later than **Tuesday, April 21**. It is important the form be fully completed and returned so persons may be notified in the event of postponement or cancellation of the hearing. Witnesses are asked to keep oral testimony to no more than five minutes in length. If you are testifying, please submit 10 copies of their prepared statement for the Committee and bring additional copies for the public and media.

In order to meet the needs of those who may have a disability, the New York State Senate has made its facilities and services available to all individuals with disabilities. Accommodations will be provided for individuals with disabilities, upon reasonable request, to afford such individuals access and admission to Senate facilities and activities.

Questions about this hearing may be directed to Bernadette Oliver at (518) 455-2310 (oliver@senate.state.ny.us).

New York State Senate Standing Committee on Elections

Public Hearing Reply Form

Please respond by April 21

Mail to:

New York State Senate Standing Committee on Elections
Room 815 LOB, Albany, NY, 12247.
Or fax to: 518-426-6875.

_____ I would like to testify at the hearing on April 23.

_____ I plan to attend, but do not wish to testify at the hearing on April 23.

_____ I will require assistance and/or handicapped accessibility information. Please specify the type of assistance required:

NAME:

TITLE:

ORGANIZATION:

ADDRESS:

E-MAIL:

TELEPHONE:

FAX:
