

# **Ten New York State Election Laws to Strengthen Democracy and Protect Voting Rights**

**By Lynn Thomas**

On September 20, 2023, Governor Kathy Hochel signed a legislative package which aims to strengthen democracy and protect voting rights.

Following is a list of the bills in that legislative package:

**Legislation (S. 6195/A. 1177)** allows absentee ballots to be counted if they have been taped and show no signs of tampering.

**Legislation (S. 5984-A/A. 6132-A)** creates a “Golden Day” on the first day of the early voting period when New Yorkers can register to vote and cast their ballots at their polling place all on the same day.

**Legislation (S. 6519-A/A. 1565-A)** establishes a deadline for changing location of a polling place for an early voting period.

**Legislation (S. 7394-A/A. 7632-A)** establishes a system for early voting by mail. This legislation will create a process allowing all eligible, registered

New York State voters the opportunity to vote early by mail in advance of an election. A new application process will be developed to facilitate vote requests for early mail ballots pursuant to this legislation. Voters will be able to request mail ballots up to ten days prior to the election in which they would like to vote early by mail; boards of election will then provide mail ballots with postage-paid return envelopes to all eligible and registered voters. Early mail ballots must be mailed back to the appropriate board of elections no later than election day and must be received by the board no later than seven days after election day. This legislation represents a significant expansion of ballot access in New York State, and will provide millions of New York voters with an easy, safe, and secure means of voting early by mail.

**Legislation (S. 5965-A/A. 4009-A)**

requires local jails to provide voter registration information to individuals of voting age being released from a local correctional facility.

**Legislation (S. 587/A. 268)** requires the New York State Board of Elections to develop and provide a training program for poll workers.

**Legislation (S. 1733-A/A. 5180-A)**

requires local boards of education, BOCES, charter schools and non-public schools to adopt policies to promote student voter registration and pre-registration.

**Legislation (S. 7550/A. 7690)**

schedules the Presidential Primary Election for April 2, 2024.

**Legislation (S. 350/A. 928)** prohibits “forum shopping” in constitutional challenges for election cases.

**Legislation (S. 438/A.928)** prohibits "faithless electors" from impacting the outcome of a presidential election. New York has 29 electoral votes that go to the presidential candidate who receives the highest number of votes within the state. However, individuals chosen as members of the Electoral College can -- and do -- subvert democracy by casting their electoral votes for a candidate who did not win the highest number of votes. Under this new law, rogue electors who try to disregard the will of the people will be forced to resign.