



Pre- Budget Lobbying Packet on Early Voting

TO: Local League Presidents/Action Chairs
FROM: Sally Robinson, VP Issues and Advocacy, sally.s.robinson@gmail.com
Carol Mellor, Grassroots Director, carolmellor140@gmail.com
Jennifer Wilson, Legislative Director, jennifer@lwny.org

Pre-budget legislative lobbying in the district office should be scheduled between February 14th and February 26th. This year we are focusing our pre-budget lobbying exclusively on passing early voting, and funding it in the 2018-2019 budget.. What's Inside:

Materials For Legislators:

- Memo of Support for Governor's Early Voting Proposal
- Early Voting Budget Language Breakdown
- Benefits of Early Voting
- FAQ

Materials For League Members:

- Tips for Lobby Visits
- Lobby Check List
- Response Form

Governor Cuomo has estimated a cost of \$6.4 million in his executive budget to cover the cost of early voting and same day voter registration. The League supports both of these proposals and we are advocating to ensure that funding to cover these estimated costs is included in the final budget proposals of the Assembly and Senate. The attached materials outline the Governor's proposals, the benefits of early voting, and some FAQs. All of these materials can be left with your legislator(s) at the completion of your meeting(s).

This exchange of information benefits the state League in its efforts to develop strategies that promote funding for early voting. Our influence in Albany depends on your contact with your state Senator and Assemblyperson(s). They know you elect them! If you haven't done so already, set up an appointment to see your state Assemblyperson(s) and Senator. Seeing a staff person is fine.

This Packet is available on the state League homepage, www.lwny.org. Please return the attached form to the League office following your meeting, by mail, fax or email with an attachment. You should feel free to rely on the main points in this document and the handouts for your visit, but more background information is available online on our website for your reference.



Memo of Support for Governor Cuomo's Early In-person Voting Proposal

New York is one of only 13 states that does not have any form of early voting--early-in person or no-excuse absentee. The League strongly support both but is now actively advocating for early in-person voting which, not requiring a constitutional amendment, could be achieved more quickly than no-excuse absentee balloting. A good early voting system would allow ample and convenient opportunities for voters to head to the polls and cast their ballot. Governor Cuomo's proposed early voting plan allows 12 days of early voting and up to 7 polling places per county, with at least one polling location for every 50,000 residents.

County Board of Election offices will have the flexibility to decide where these polling locations will be most effective for their constituents. These local boards will also get to determine the ideal poll site hours within a reasonable time frame. The State Board will review each of the county's proposed plans to ensure that voters are being served equitably.

Governor Cuomo has estimated \$6.4 million in funding is needed to assist local boards to make these changes. Acquiring polling locations, paying for additional poll workers, and modernizing poll books and will be a significant cost on the county boards. This funding split between the counties will equate to around \$103,225 per county. This total is similar to what other states have had to pay per county for early in-person voting.

Early in-person voting will present new challenges for county boards and poll workers. The voter rolls will need to be updated, poll workers may have to work extended hours, and the public will need to be informed of the opportunity to vote early. Funding must be included in the state budget to ensure that counties are able to fulfill their new duties without having to compromise their current budgets.

We urge that sufficient funding be put in the 2018-2019 budget to ensure fair and equitable opportunities for all voters regardless of their county's population size.



Governor's Budget Language Breakdown for Early Voting

- Early voting will begin the 13th day prior to the general, primary, or special election.
- County boards shall establish their own procedures which will be approved by the State Board of Elections.
- County boards must establish one polling location per each 50,000 registered voters.
- Each county must have at least one location with no greater than seven mandated locations.
- County boards may reduce the number of mandated sites if they believe less sites to be sufficient.
- Polling sites must be determined so that voters have equitable access.
- All eligible voters may vote at their choice of polling location, as long as they do so in their own county.
- Polls for early voting must be open for at least 8 hours per day, between 7:00 am to 8:00 pm.
- At least one polling place for early voting shall remain open until 8:00 pm on at least two week days in each calendar week during the early voting period.
- Polls shall be open for at least five hours between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm on weekends and holidays during the early voting period.
- County boards must make voters aware of the designated polling hours during their early voting period.
- Ballots cast ahead of Election Day will be secured and will not be reviewed until after the completion of the election.
- County boards shall be responsible for securing both ballots and election equipment.



Benefits of In Person Early Voting

Voters in states that have early voting prefer to take advantage of their extended time to vote. The majority of these voters vote ahead of Election Day¹. States that have same day voter registration and early voting have reported an even higher increase in participation. Minnesota, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Maine, and Iowa are the top five states in terms of voter turnout. All five states have both early voting and same day registration².

A report by the Brennan Center of the states that allow early voting highlighted the benefits. This study represented a diverse group of states with both Republican and Democratic majorities. Election administrators in all states agreed that early voting makes Election Day a much smoother and more organized process. The study highlighted the following five benefits of early in person voting³

- 1) **Reduced stress on the voting systems on Election Day.** States agreed that early voting led to less errors on Election Day because of the decreased number of voters at the polls on that single day.
- 2) **Shorter lines on Election Day.** This is a major issue in New York City and some larger Upstate cities. Having additional days to vote will make a major difference in those areas.
- 3) **Improved poll worker performance.** Now that New York State has allowed for split shifts for poll workers, there will be an even greater pool of potential poll workers for the days leading up to Election Day. Because lines are reduced in the days leading up to Election Day, poll workers are much less stressed and can ensure voting systems are running smoothly.
- 4) **Early identification and correction of registration errors and voting system glitches.** This is a big concern for many election officials and legislators. States with early voting reported that they were able to catch errors more easily, particularly when their voter rolls were updated each evening after the polling locations closed.
- 5) **Greater access to voting and increased voter satisfaction.** With increased voter satisfaction, New York State should see an increase in the number of individuals voting. These voters will not be afraid of long lines or an inability to vote because they cannot get time off work. Early voting is the first step to increasing New York State's voter turnout.

¹ http://www.electproject.org/early_2016

² <http://247wallst.com/special-report/2016/10/17/states-with-the-highest-voter-turnout/2/>

³ https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/VotingReport_Web.pdf



FAQ

1) How much will early voting cost?

It is difficult to predict the cost of early voting in New York State based on other states. There is no state with a comparable population size and similar program to what the Governor has proposed. In 2016, Massachusetts allowed voters to vote early in person for the first time. The Massachusetts Auditor reported that early voting cost counties in Massachusetts an addition \$1,063,978 total in 2016⁴. Similarly to New York, counties had to have a minimum of one poll site per municipality open 12 days before an election from the hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

2) What are the costs associated with early voting?

In order to implement early voting in New York State, counties will need to secure poll site locations and hire addition poll voters to work over the 12 day period. Additional administrative costs may arrive with having to secure the voting booths and voter rolls each evening but over the long-term, costs associated with administering Election Day should decrease as voters utilize the early voting period. Electronic poll books could offset some costs associated with printing and manually updating poll books.

3) Does early voting favor one party?

No! The convenience of early voting is popular with voters across the political spectrum as well as with both Republican and Democratic election administrators. According to a January 2018 Siena poll, 65% of New Yorkers support some form of Early Voting no matter where they live. 61% of Upstate voters, 64% of Suburban voters, and 69% of New York City voters said they supported early voting in New York State⁵.

4) What are the biggest benefits to early voting?

Along with greater voter satisfaction, ease on poll workers on Election Day, shorter lines at poll sites, and increased security of election results, early voting will also help to ensure voters have access to the polls in the event of an emergency. In the case of an extreme weather event, family emergency, or personal injury, early voting will guarantee all voters have ample opportunity to cast their ballots.

⁴ http://www.masslive.com/politics/index.ssf/2017/02/auditor_suzanne_bump_state_not.html

⁵ http://auburnpub.com/blogs/eye_on_ny/siena-poll-ny-voters-support-cuomo-s-agenda/article_c2afe678-fa6d-11e7-b4b8-6fa10c06d359.html



Tips For Lobby Visits

PREPARATION

1. **Making the appointment:** Contact the legislator's district office. Ask for a ½ hour of time, but accept less if necessary, and do not overstay your welcome. Notify the legislator of the number in your group as well as their names, if possible. Send a letter or e-mail confirming the appointment, mentioning the issues you will discuss. **If you cannot meet with the legislator, ask to meet with senior staff.**

Try to arrange for three to five League members to attend. If your League meets with several assembly members or senators, be sure to have a League member who is a constituent present. At least one person should be experienced in League. League members well versed on the issues to be lobbied should be included when possible. A new member can be included in this exciting action if accompanied by experienced League members. When more than one local League is involved, try to have representatives from as many of the constituent Leagues as possible.

2. **Assigning roles:** Each member of the lobby team should be assigned a specific role. The following are possible assignments:
 - Researching the legislator. Someone should be prepared to brief the other members of the lobby team on the legislator's relationship with the League and his/her voting record (if the legislator is a re-elected incumbent). What are his/her committee assignments and/or leadership positions in the legislature? Is this legislator a member of the League? If this legislator sponsored bills that League supported, you may want to take a moment to express League's appreciation.
 - Moderator/leader. This person should be certain that each League member introduces himself/herself. The leader must also watch the clock. Knowing ahead how much time the legislator has agreed to spend with you, the leader must allot an appropriate amount of time for each issue. It is the leader's responsibility to "pace" the visit and tactfully keep everyone (including the legislator) on the subject. **Remember, opinions expressed should be those of the League, not of individuals.**
 - Researching the issue or issues to be discussed. Look to the materials on this subject on the league website.
 - Recording and reporting the legislator's response. The leader should not be the recorder.

NOTE: If you anticipate printing any part of the interview in a League bulletin or newspaper, the recorder is obligated to get the legislator's permission and specific conditions under which you may print.

Write a follow-up thank you after the visit. This is not only a gesture of politeness, but it also allows you to underscore some points made during the visit, answer any questions you were not sure about, or send a League publication to which you may have referred during the course of the visit.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF NEW YORK STATE

Lobby Check List

Before Your Visit:

- ☐ Do you know **what your “ask” is?**
- ☐ Did you pack extra copies of the **Lobby Packet materials?**
- ☐ Did you bring your **contact information** for the member/staffer?
- ☐ Are you ready to **refute opposition** arguments?
- ☐ Do you have a couple of **questions** you want to ask?
- ☐ ☐ Is there an **upcoming event** where you can invite the lawmaker? Or are you sending a student from their area to **Students Inside Albany?**

After Your Visit:

- ☐ Did you send them a **Thank You** note?
- ☐ Did you send **follow up on any questions** they had?
- ☐ Did you send your **Lobby Response Form** to the State League office?
- ☐ **Celebrate your success!**

Use this space for any additional notes:



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF NEW YORK STATE

***2018 LWVNYS LOBBY REPORT FORM
PRE-BUDGET LOBBY VISITS***

*Local League:*_____ *League Member Name:*_____

*Senator:*_____ *Assembly Member:*_____

- *What were the legislator's biggest concerns?*

- *Where did you see eye to eye?*

- *Did they ask for additional information?*

Please return completed form to LWVNY, 62 Grand Street, Albany NY 12207 or fax 518-465-0812 or save as a pdf and attach to an email to jennifer@lwny.org by **March 1, 2018.**

League of Women Voters of New York State
62 Grand Street, Albany NY 122013
(518) 465-4162 lwny@lwny.org