



MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF A2070 BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

SPONSOR: Assembly Member Cusick
BILL NUMBER: A2070 (same as S0508 (Myrie))
TITLE OF BILL: AN ACT to amend the election law , in relation to authorizing computer generated registration lists; in relation to the list of supplies to be delivered to poll sites.
PROVISIONS: Authorizes counties to employ computer generated registration lists; updates the list of supplies to be delivered to poll sites
DATE: January 28, 2019



The Let NY Vote coalition supports A2070 which would revise the Election Law to permit – but not require – counties to use electronic poll books instead of paper based pollbooks. Changing New York’s Election Law to permit the use of electronic poll books has been among our coalition’s priorities for several years. Electronic poll books range from laptops to tablets which can be used simply and securely as look-up devices for voter roll information on Election Day to help facilitate the voting process. Now that early voting will take place for New York’s elections, the use of electronic poll books is essential for the efficient conduct of early voting, particularly in urban counties. Use of electronic poll books will also facilitate the newly enacted registration portability law. Their use can allow poll workers to look up voter registration records for any voter who is registered in the New York State Board of Election system.

Allowing the use of electronic pollbooks for counties that choose to use them would help both voters and election officials. Electronic pollbooks are operated in similar ways to a paper poll book except paper poll books need to be split into alphabetically-divided sections to provide multiple stations for voters to check in. Electronic pollbooks are simpler, pulling up a voter’s information which avoids data entry errors. They also notify poll workers if a voter already voted during the early voting period or absentee, as well as quickly and economically produce turnout numbers and lists of who voted. Electronic poll books are usually loaded with voter registration information in the days before an election to capture any last minute voter registration or absentee voting activity. Then, the electronic poll-books are given to polling places along with other polling supplies. They also allow poll workers to easily redirect voters in the wrong location to the correct polling place. Electronic pollbooks allow for faster check in as well as less need for affidavit ballots because updated registration records can be accessed quickly. They also eliminate printing and shipping costs for paper poll books, reduce data errors since it is easier for poll workers to find voter information, and allow for better managed, more accurate voter lists by reducing the data entry errors in updating voter rolls before the printing and delivery deadlines.

There are jurisdictions in 34 states that currently use or plan to use some form of electronic poll books for checking in pre-registered voters, recording voter signatures, processing Election Day registrations, updating voter history and/or looking up a voter's correct polling place. The recommended statutory change would permit New York counties who wish to do so to follow the lead of successful demonstration projects using electronic poll books in Chautauqua and Onondaga Counties.

One of the main hesitations for the implementation of electronic poll books is the monetary costs that would seem to come with the advancement of technology. However, numerous states report that the costs of implementing and maintaining electronic poll books are minimal. In Iowa, the initial costs of implementing the system were modest and ongoing costs are minimal. Michigan estimates that it pays about \$600 per laptop that serves as an electronic poll book and the costs for development of the electronic poll book system were less than \$100,000. They have also found that while some poll workers were initially hesitant about electronic poll books, they have become comfortable with the current system and would resist going back to paper poll books. In Colorado, various counties hold down the cost of using electronic poll books by renting, rather than buying, laptops to use at polling places. With volume pricing, this technique dramatically reduces the cost and guarantees that the equipment will be the most up to date. The Let NY Vote coalition strongly supports providing funding for the purchase of electronic pollbooks and early voting in the state budget this year.

By passing A2017/S580 as quickly as possible, will permit the state Board of Elections to certify electronic pollbooks in time for interested counties to have electronic pollbooks available for early voting this fall. In the interest of efficient and economically administered elections, and the successful implementation of early voting, we urge your support of this bill.

The Let NY Vote Coalition supports the passage of A2017 and urges your support of the bill.

Let NY Vote is a statewide coalition of grassroots groups and legacy organizations working together to modernize NY's voting laws. Our mission is to ensure that common-sense solutions are passed to protect and expand the freedom to vote for every eligible New Yorker.

Please contact Susan Lerner, Common Cause/NY at (212) 691-6421 with any questions.