2020 ELECTIONS: LESSONS LEARNED AND MOVING FORWARD

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HOW WE ENGAGED IN THE 2020 ELECTIONS

• **Voter Education**: Produced educational materials on new voting changes

• **Voter Engagement**: Virtual trainings and limited in person voter registration forums

• **Voter Protection**: Partnered with Election Protection Hotline in New York State
2020 Voting Rights Partnerships

- Let NY Vote
- Disability Rights NY
- Election Protection
- Language Access Advocates
Voters like **options**.

Lack of **funding** is the number one barrier when implementing new reforms.

Lack of **uniformity** is an additional barrier for voters and election officials.
2020 TURN OUT BREAK DOWN

**Absentee**
1.2 Million

**Early**
2.5 Million

**Total Votes for 2020**
8.7 Million
OPTIONS FOR VOTERS

Absentee Voting

• Ballot Tracking
• Pre-Paid Postage
• Universal Ballot Drop Boxes
• Maintaining Current Return Deadlines

Early Voting

• Additional Early Voting Site Locations
• Additional Early Voting Hours
Lack of Funding is the number one barrier to implementing new election reforms.
2021-2022 BUDGET SUCCESS

**State Board Funding:**
- $1 million additional operational funds
- $5 million for implementation of new election programs

**County Boards Funding:**
- $2 million for early voting expansions
- $20 million to reimburse the cost of technology and equipment upgrades
ADDITIONAL FUNDING NEEDS

- Need for annual state investment in early voting.
- Need for investment in voting equipment upgrades.
- Potential need for investment in county boards of elections.
**LACK OF UNIFORMITY**

- **Inconsistent Transparency**
  - Some CBOE websites are great, some not so much.

- **Inconsistent Reporting**
  - Difficulty finding election results.

- **Inconsistent Implementation of New Policies**
  - CBOEs did not all follow the new rules.

- **Inconsistent Staffing**
  - Big divide between part-time and full time CBOE workforce.

- **Inconsistent Funding**
  - CBOEs with unsupportive county governments have an even worse time modernizing procedures.
IS IT TIME TO REFORM NEW YORK’S BOARDS OF ELECTIONS?

The League’s Perspective:

• **Staffing and salary standards** that include mandating commissioners serve as full time employees and that counties provide adequate funds to hire experienced staff;

• **Transparency and accountability** in the CBOE decision making and operational processes that includes regularly scheduled open meetings, transparency in election results reporting, and a directive to maintain accurate and up to date public information on their websites and social media;

• And, uniform standards and practices that **allows the State Board of Elections to serve as an oversight authority** to safeguard compliance with these procedures.
2021 Board Recommended Study

Structure of Election Administration in New York State
RATIONALE FOR NEW STUDY

• Most current state election advocacy based on LWVUS Position on Voting Rights
• Examples: same day registration, early voting, ballot simplification.
• Impact on Issues references LWVNYS 1973 position recognizing state responsibility for uniform and efficient administration of elections.
• 1974 Four-member bipartisan state Board of Elections established.
• 2020 brought new attention to concerns with New York’s poorly functioning elections.
• Agreement state and local boards in need of reform
CURRENT STRUCTURE

• State constitution mandates any boards or officers that run elections “shall secure equal representation of the two political parties.”

• State Board has two commissioners per party; each county gets one commissioner per party; that NYC consists of 5 Counties, but Election Law specifies that they function as one board of 10 Commissioners.

• With certain exceptions for technical positions, County BOE responsibilities must be carried out by two employees, one from each of the major political parties.

• Practical impact of this has been politically controlled patronage system, gridlock and lack of accountability.
OUTLINE OF STUDY

- Other state election structures and state League positions
- Academic and other good government group critiques
- What can be done legislatively vs. constitutional amendment
- Process vs. specific structural recommendations
- Criteria/standards for evaluating specific proposals for how elections should be run and who should be responsible
THANK YOU