



REQUIRE PLAIN LANGUAGE FOR STATEWIDE BALLOT MEASURES

2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES: LET NEW YORK VOTE

S1381A (Comrie)/A1722 (Zinerman)

Current law requires that ballot measures be “clear and coherent”, but voters complain that what appears on the ballot is confusing and full of legalese. Making sure that voters can understand the description on the ballot will make it easier to pass the measures which the Legislature places before the voters. Voters who don’t understand what they are asked to vote on, often do not vote on the measure at all or vote against it. This bill would:

Set Clear Standards for Readability and Uniformity

Recent ballot proposals have required that voters read at a college level in order to understand the proposal. This bill would ensure that language on the ballot would be no more complicated than an 8th grade reading level (it could be even simpler) and that the question would always be in an easy-to-understand Yes or No format.

Allow for Public Comment Before Ballot Language is Finalized

Currently, voters and advocates have to file a lawsuit to correct inaccurate ballot language. Allowing for public comment before ballot language is finalized will help improve the clarity and accuracy of what appears on the ballot and avoid litigation.

How this bill would work

Proposal 3 from November 2021

What appeared on the 2021 ballot (grade 14 reading level):

The proposed amendment would delete from the current provision on absentee ballots the requirement that an absentee voter must be unable to appear at the polls by reason of absence from the county or illness or physical disability. Shall the proposed amendment be approved?

What the bill would require (Grade 7 reading level):

Should New York State allow no-excuse absentee voting?

This change in the constitution allows all eligible voters to use an absentee ballot. It removes the requirement for an excuse of absence from the county, illness or physical disability.

A YES vote allows any voter to use an absentee ballot

A NO vote keeps the excuse for absentee voting