



LetNYvote.org

Sample Letter to the Editor

GET IN THE NEWS

Opinion Piece Sample | Sample Letter to the Editor

Help us keep voting rights front and center in the news by writing op-eds & letters to the editor for your local papers. This toolkit makes it simple.

Local papers and media - free weeklies, neighborhood papers, etc. - are generally happy to get submissions, especially if you can link it to current events or recent articles. They're a great place to inform your friends and neighbors about Let NY Vote, and to get a message to your representative that people in their district care about voting reform.

Use the following sample, but remember that the most persuasive argument is always the one you make in your own words, talking about your own experience. If there's a personal story or a reason why these laws would affect you, your family and your community, share your story.

To The Editor,

The right to vote is fundamental to our democratic process. New York state consistently has one of the lowest voter turnout rates in the country. We were 41st for the 2016 election. The voting process in this state should be more accessible, and we should be a leader in voting rights and participation, not an embarrassment.

A December 2016 report issued by Attorney General Schneiderman illustrated the problems motivated New Yorkers encounter when they attempt to exercise their right to vote. These were suggestions for improvement:

1. **Automatic Voter Registration** will increase the reliability and security of voting rolls, reduce human error and chances of fraud, and help voter turnout. Ten states and D.C. have adopted AVR, many along bipartisan lines, to successful results. Oregon experienced a 10% increase in voter participation as a direct result.
2. **Early voting:** New York is one of only thirteen states that does not allow early or no-excuse absentee voting. Early voting would allow registered NY voters who are unable to appear at their local poll site on Election Day the opportunity to vote. Early voting also reduces long lines at the polls, improves poll worker performance, and ultimately saves time and money.
3. **New York has the most restrictive change of party deadlines** in the country. To change from a Democrat to a Republican to vote in the 2016 primary, you would have had to register this change more than 6 months earlier, before a candidate had even been solidified. This restriction disenfranchised up to 3 million registered New York voters.

For our system to work, every eligible voter should be able to participate. NY State's current system doesn't support this, and it's time to change that.

Sincerely,

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Sample Op-Ed

In the aftermath of the election in November 2016, political pundits scrambled to explain what had happened to make their predictions so off the mark. In the months since, it's become clear a big part of the problem is in the voting process itself.

New York consistently ranks among the lowest of states in voter turnout. A main reason for that is backward voting laws that include the most restrictive voter registration deadline in the country. The deadline to enroll in or change your party affiliation was 11 days before the 2016 primary election, before the candidates had even been decided. That primary saw a dismal 29% voter turnout in the state. Add in excuse-only absentee ballots, a complete lack of early voting, and no same-day registration for eligible voters and the result is a frustrated voter base with over 4 million people eligible to vote remaining unregistered, and therefore unheard.

In December 2016 the New York District Attorney's office issued a report into voter complaints that came in during the November election. The majority of complaints cite voters required to wait for hours in long poll lines only to find they were not registered and which point they were turned away. These are determined voters, people who wanted to make a difference and to have their opinions be heard. Had there been electronic pollbooks and — as Governor Cuomo at one time proposed — automatic voter registration linked through the DMV and other state agencies, election participation could have been very different. More importantly, they would have reflected the wishes of a majority of New York state citizens, not just those savvy or patient enough to navigate the our antiquated voting system.

It's been proven time and again that an increase in eligible voter registration produces an increase in voter turnout. In Oregon—the most successful example—the number of registered voters increased by over 300% once the procedure was initiated, and that registered into a record high number of voters at the polls. Last November's 70.4% of the eligible voting-age population sent in ballots in Oregon. In New York, it was 56%—41st in the nation, per the State Board of Elections.

Early voting would also help. Currently, New York does not allow early voting at all, an absentee voting only in approved circumstances such as a disability, severe illness, or being out of town. For a state that prides itself on being progressive, this is a decidedly non-progressive approach. This may have worked in the 1890s when our voting laws were passed, but they do not work in 2017. Extenuating circumstances are not taken in consideration at a time when modern lives are increasingly complicated and fraught. Given how enormously important it is to participate in the process, shouldn't it be as easy as possible to do so?

Efficient voting systems benefit everyone, across party lines and across every income bracket. It's long past time for legislative action to ensure every eligible New Yorker's vote is counted.