



Reinvent Albany Urges State Leaders to Include Electronic Poll Books and Fully Fund Voting Reforms in the Budget

Funding Essential for Success of Early Voting

Reinvent Albany calls on the state leaders to adequate fund voting reforms like early voting as part of the budget, and allow for counties to purchase electronic poll books to implement the reform. The government watchdog, a partner with the [Let NY Vote coalition](#), also supports sufficient funding for the State Board of Elections (SBOE) to continue modernizing its campaign finance reporting and disclosure systems.

In January, state leaders passed and signed into law numerous voting reforms aimed at making voting easier in New York State. Early voting is one of the major changes which, in addition to electronic poll books being considered as part of the budget, is expected to impose considerable costs on the county boards of elections. There is not yet a consensus on how much the state should allocate to funding these reforms, with vast differences remaining between the budgets submitted by Governor Cuomo, the Assembly and the Senate.

The Assembly submitted the only budget that explicitly provides funding for the implementation of early voting and electronic poll books, though the Senate states in its budget resolution that additional funding is provided “for early voting and other voting reforms.” Both the Assembly and Senate dedicated some funding to early voting, though the Governor’s proposal did not.

Below are differences between the three budgets and our recommendations for reconciliation. [More detailed descriptions of the bills, how they differ, and our proposed solutions can be found in this chart.](#)

Full Funding for Voting Reforms and Board of Elections Operations

The Governor’s budget provides \$11.56 million in funds for elections-related proposals, with no funds specifically for early voting or electronic poll books, and the release of

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\$6.1 million contingent on the passage of a public matching system. Both the Assembly and the Senate’s version provide more total funds, \$48.65 million and \$24.56 million respectively, each dedicating about \$3 million in additional funds to the Board of Elections. The Senate provides \$10 million for “early voting and other voting reforms,” but the Assembly’s version goes much further, providing \$27 million in funds for electronic poll books and \$7 million for “early voting and other voting reforms.”

Reinvent Albany supports a total budget allocation of \$58.1 million, with \$31 million for electronic poll books and \$12.5 million for early voting reforms as recommended by the Election Commissioners Association and Citizens Union respectively. Underfunding e-poll books and early voting could slow their implementation or even imperil the reforms. In addition to funding early voting and electronic poll books, Reinvent Albany supports funding to continue to modernize SBOE’s CAPAS (Candidate Petition Administration System) and FIDAS (Financial Disclosure Administration System) to make campaign finance reporting easy, and more transparent and publicly accessible. The Board is facing a \$3 million cut in the Executive Budget. Without those funds, the SBOE says it will not be able to continue with modernizing its technology.

Implementation of Electronic Poll Books

All three budgets provide for the use of electronic poll books in lieu of paper-based poll books when checking in voters on Election Day, require the SBOE to establish certain security standards for technology used, and produce a list of approved devices. Electronic poll books would be integrated into numerous Election Day procedures, such as preparing registration records and verifying signatures. The Senate’s and Assembly’s bills, while broadly similar to the Governor’s, go further by requiring the SBOE to promulgate procedures to ensure backup registration records are available. Reinvent Albany supports e-poll books and the additional measures provided in the Senate and Assembly versions, and believes the SBOE should be required, when approving devices, to consider how well devices can reflect handwritten signatures provided on voter registration forms, as too great a disparity may prevent a voter from being allowed to cast their ballot if their eligibility is challenged.