



City Board of Elections Wrong to Refuse to Allow Online Voter Registration Required By City Law

Board Making It Harder to Register to Vote

The City Board of Elections decided on Tuesday, June 11th, to not comply with [Local Law 238 of 2017](#). The law, sponsored by Councilmember Ben Kallos, allows New Yorkers to register to vote online through the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB), with completed voter registration forms physically delivered by the CFB to the City Board for processing and final approval.

Instead of implementing the law passed by the City Council and signed by Mayor de Blasio, the City Board of Elections will require New Yorkers who complete a voter registration form through the CFB's portal to mail in an additional paper form with a wet signature. The City Board believes a voter's handwritten signature is required on the voter registration form yet state law requires an "original signature" without ever specifying it needs to be handwritten. Their "solution" creates more hurdles to register, meaning it is not a solution at all.

Democratic State Board of Elections Commissioners Douglas Kellner and Andrew Spano, Democratic State Board of Elections Co-Executive Director Robert Brehm, the New York City Law Department, the Council, and the Attorney General's Office have all indicated the law should be implemented. Only Todd Valentine, the Republican Co-Executive Director of the State Board of Elections, disagrees. The City Board by refusing to execute the law is disregarding most of legal experts who weighed in.

New York State separately passed online voter registration in the budget, requiring the State Board of Elections immediately begin building its own portal for online voter registration. Reinvent Albany agrees with the state legislature which, in passing the bill, said, "*The predominantly paper based voter registration application process in New York is antiquated and must be supplemented with online voter registration . . .*"

[Reinvent Albany](#) advocated for passage of both the [City](#) and [State laws](#), and also believes companies like Vote.org or TurboVote should be able to also create their own voter registration portals. Good government groups have long conducted voter registration drives using paper forms. We should empower third parties to similarly facilitate digital registration.

The City Board's decision is on the wrong side of historic technological developments that are transforming the world and will soon change the voter registration process.