



Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Minority Conference Leader John Flanagan
Room 315, State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12247

Speaker Carl E. Heastie
LOB Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

William Barclay
Assembly Minority Leader
LOB 933
Albany, NY 12248

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
188 State Street Room 907
Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

March 27, 2020

Dear Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Minority Leader Barclay, and Senate Minority Leader Flanagan,

New York State is facing an unprecedented health crisis that has impacted all aspects of life for residents statewide. As the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 continues to rise, we urge you to postpone the April presidential primary and special elections and consolidate them with the June state and federal primaries to further limit the spread of the virus.

Earlier this month, reports predicted that the virus will reach its peak in 45 days, around late April. The presidential primary and special elections are currently scheduled for April 28th with nine days of early voting occurring from April 18th through April 26th. If these reports are correct, voters and election workers will be expected to vote during the most contagious period of the outbreak.

Postponing the April primary will allow election administrators time to prepare for new challenges created by the outbreak such as responding to an increase in absentee ballot requests, hiring new poll workers who are not at high risk of contracting the virus, and informing the public of any poll site changes due to restrictions on the use of public spaces. The New York State Election Commissioner Association has raised these concerns and asked that the primary be postponed and that additional resources be made available to overcome these challenges.

We fully support the Election Commissioner Association's request and believe that consolidating the primary is the only way to ensure voters have complete access to the ballot. Moving exclusively to absentee voting is too restrictive and inaccessible to many voters. It is also too short of a time period to effectively move to an entirely absentee ballot model of voting. Although we agree that absentee voting

should be expanded to allow any voter to request a ballot, we believe that in-person voting is essential to guaranteeing the greatest level of ballot access without overwhelming county boards of elections.

With less than a month left until the April primary, we urge you to act swiftly and consolidate the presidential primary and special elections to June so counties can begin to plan effectively. If you fail to act, you will risk the health and well-being of countless voters and election administrators.

Sincerely,

Betsy Gotbaum
Executive Director
Citizens Union

Susan Lerner
Executive Director
Common Cause

Laura Ladd Bierman
Executive Director
League of Women Voters New York State

Blair Horner
Executive Director
New York Public Interest Research Group

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany