



September 17, 2020

Governor Cuomo
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, N.Y. 12234

Via Email

Re: New York's COVID-Era Elections Should Be Paid For By State, Not Facebook Funding

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Something is seriously wrong with New York State's democracy when less than two months before this November's historic vote, local boards of election are so broke they are pleading for funding from a charity funded by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. Last week our groups asked you to find \$50 million in state COVID-19 emergency funds to ensure New Yorkers can vote early, by mail and at new polling sites. Your Division of Budget responded by saying the boards have enough funding. This week, Onondaga County's election commissioner confirmed his county was seeking a grant paid for with Facebook funds and explained to a reporter that "a drowning man looks for every branch it can find." (Note links below.)

None of New York's voters should have to depend on a Facebook-funded charity to determine whether they have full access to new voting opportunities. Free and fair elections are fundamental to our democracy and should be robustly funded by our tax dollars, not private interests.

We again ask you to find \$50 million in COVID emergency funds to ensure local boards across the state can provide voters with the chance to vote safely and conveniently in this year's state and presidential elections.

Thank you,

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany

Betsy Gotbaum
Executive Director
Citizens Union

Susan Lerner
Executive Director
Common Cause New York

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

Blair Horner
Executive Director
NYPIRG

Cc:
Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie
Senator Zellnor Myrie
Senator Liz Krueger
Assemblymember Charles Lavine
Assemblymember Helene Weinstein
Senate Minority Leader Robert Ort
Assembly Minority Leader William Barclay

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<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/capital-region/news/2020/09/14/county-election-boards-election-charity>