



NEWS RELEASE

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**ON EVE OF NY'S APPROVAL OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 26TH AMENDMENT,
NY STUDENT GROUPS CALL FOR EXPANDED VOTING ACCESS AT COLLEGE CAMPUSES**
*Letter delivered from over 120 student groups to Governor Cuomo and Legislative leaders calls
for polling sites on college campus grounds*

(Albany, N.Y.) A coalition of 121 student, faculty and community groups representing public and independent institutions from across the state today delivered a letter to Governor Cuomo and the state's legislative leaders calling on them to expand youth voting rights by requiring college campuses be locations for polling sites, including during the early voting period (see S.4658/A.454-A).

It has been 50 years since the nation approved the voting rights of college students and other 18-20 year olds in 1971, with New York State approving the 26th Amendment on June 2, 1971. But approval of the amendment granting young adults the right to vote did not mean that casting a ballot would be easy for young voters. Despite the fact that college students are considered residents of college communities for the federal census, efforts to limit the student vote have persisted. The S4658/A454-A legislation would promote student access to the polls by having a polling site on campuses located in communities with election districts where there are at least 300 active voters on campus.

This policy works to increase voter turnout among students. Florida hosted early voting sites on college campuses for their 2018 general election and witnessed massive turnout from their young voters. Of the 60,000 voters who participated in early voting on college campuses, 22,000 were between the ages of 18 and 22, the age range of most college students.

"Voting is a habit that must be supported in the early years of eligibility, which typically coincides with college years. Students study, socialize, engage in civic life, and often live on their college campus already -- it's a no-brainer that New York should allow students to vote on their campus," said Olga Filakouris, Program Coordinator with NYPIRG.

As shown in Florida, young people are more likely to turnout if voting is easily accessible. College students are constantly on or around their campuses. Distant and unfamiliar polling locations discourage young people from exercising their voting rights. Now that the state offers early voting, legislation should include designating campuses as early polling sites and allowing students to cast their ballot on-campus – even if they are not living in the dorms.

"I think it's crucial to have poll sites located at colleges so students can be surrounded by and further educated towards the importance of voting and allowing their voice to be heard. In order to create a better future for ourselves, becoming an advocate for change is an important step," said Sabrina Benet, Editor in Chief, The Banner at College of Staten Island.

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“College students are new to their areas and new to voting, so we should make voting as easy as possible by allowing students to vote on campus,” said Adam Winne, President of Men’s Rugby at SUNY New Paltz.

“Between classes and working, most students here in NY are really busy; To make students travel away from where they need to be in order to vote suppresses our vote as young people. NY must allow students to vote right on campus,” said Rob Zentgraf, NYPIRG Board Chair and Co-President of Queer Pratt at Pratt Institute.

The 26th Amendment was passed by Congress March 23, 1971. Approved by the states – with NY approval on June 2nd, and ratified July 1, 1971. The amendment reads “The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.”

The amendment was the culmination of decades of advocacy by young adults. The debate began during World War II when then-President Roosevelt lowered the draft age to 18. The slogan “Old enough to fight, old enough to vote,” began then and intensified during the Vietnam War, when young men denied the right to vote were being conscripted to fight for their country.

Attachment: 1, Copy of the letter and list of signatories

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May 31, 2021

Andrew Cuomo
Governor
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12234

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader
State Senate
Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Carl Heastie
Speaker
State Assembly
Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Robert Ort
Minority Leader
State Senate
Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

William Barclay
Minority Leader
State Assembly
Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Re: Support legislation to expand youth voting by requiring college campuses be locations for polling sites.

Dear Gov. Cuomo, and Legislative Leaders Stewart-Cousins, Heastie, Ort, and Barclay,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support for legislation to greatly expand youth voting by requiring that college campuses be locations for polling sites, including during the early voting period (see Senate bill 4658/Assembly bill 454-A).

It has been 50 years since the historic first votes cast by college students and other 18-20 year olds in 1971. Young voters were among the last to gain the vote—following Black people, women, non-property owners and others whose rights to vote were either not recognized or frustrated by local, state and federal governments.

As has been the case when fundamental rights are affirmed for new groups—which threatens the status quo—securing the legal right to vote did not mean that casting a ballot would be easy for young voters. A key battleground has been the right of students to vote in their college communities. Despite the fact that college students are considered residents of college communities for the federal census, efforts to limit the student vote have persisted. After years of court battles, boards of elections in New York are now required to allow students to register to vote from their campus addresses if they so choose.

Now, New York should support voting by students on campus. The above legislation would promote student access to the polls by having a polling site on campuses located in communities with election districts where students are a majority of the voters.

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As shown in Florida, young people are more likely to turnout if voting is easily accessible. College students are constantly on or around their campuses. Distant and unfamiliar polling locations discourage young people from exercising their voting rights. Now that the state offers early voting, legislation should include designating campuses as early polling sites and allowing students to cast their ballot on-campus – even if they are not living in the dorms.

Our organizations urge you to act on legislation consistent with what we are supporting and that such legislation be in place in time for the upcoming General Election this November.

Sincerely,

NYPIRG

Student Activities Board, SUNY Cortland
Student Association, Queens College
Student Association, SUNY New Paltz
Student Association, Syracuse College
Student Government Association, Bronx Community College
Student Government Association, Bronx Community College
Student Government Association, Nassau Community College
Student Government Association, Pratt Institute
Student Government Association, Queensborough Community College
Student Government, College of Staten Island
Student Senate, SUNY New Paltz
Undergraduate Student Government, Hunter College
United Students Government, Buffalo State College
93.1 WBNY, Buffalo State College
American Medical Students Association, Brooklyn College
BC Sustainability Club, Brooklyn College
Be the Match, Hunter College
Bertha Harris Women's Center, College of Staten Island
Best Buddies, SUNY Cortland
Best Buddies at SU, Syracuse University
Biomedical Informatics, NYC College of Technology
Black Student Union, Pratt Institute
Black Student Union, SUNY ESF
BLM@NAZ, Nazareth College
BMCC Health and Wellness Club, BMCC
Buffalo State Cheerleading, Buffalo State College
Building A Brighter Afrikan Diaspora, BMCC
Caribbean Student Organization, Nassau Community College
Caribbean Student Union, Brooklyn College
Cheese Club, SUNY Purchase

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Chemistry Forensics Club, SUNY Buffalo State
Chi Alpha Epsilon, Bronx Community College
Circle K International, Hunter College
Clean Cats College Recovery Community, Pratt Institute
CMMB x Hunter, Hunter College
Cortland Writer's Association, SUNY Cortland
Council of Organizations, SUNY New Paltz
CSI Intramurals & Rec., College of Staten Island
Economics Student Association, Syracuse University
Economics, Equality and Environment Club, BMCC
Entrepreneurship Club, SUNY Cortland
Environmental Alliance, SUNY New Paltz
Environmental Sustainability Club, Queensborough Community College
EOP, Buffalo State College
EOP, Nassau Community College
ESA SEEDS, Hunter College
Fashion and Sustainability Club, Pratt Institute
Female Force, SUNY Cortland
Film In Color, Pratt Institute
Fine Arts, Pratt Institute
FIT Club, SUNY Cortland
Gender Resources at CCNY, The City College of New York
GenVote@NYU, New York University
GLASA, Queens College
Green Campus Initiative, SUNY ESF
Guitar Club, State University of Buffalo State
Hillel, SUNY Cortland
Honors Advisory Board, Syracuse University
Humanitarian Student Union, Fordham University
Hunter K-Pop Club, Hunter College
InterAct!, Nassau Community College
Jerk Magazine, Syracuse University
Jump Nation, Syracuse University
Know Your Roots, SUNY Cortland
La LUCHA, Syracuse University
Las Naranjas, Syracuse University
Latinx Student Alliance, Pratt Institute
Men's Rugby, SUNY New Paltz
Men's Club Basketball, Syracuse University
Muslim Students Association, BMCC
NAACP Unit 2905 Syracuse University, Syracuse University
National Society of Collegiate Scholars: CSI, College of Staten Island

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National Student Speech-Language Hearing Association, SUNY Cortland
Nautilus Society, SUNY ESF
New Paltz Chapter of United Nations Association, SUNY New Paltz
New Paltz College Democrats, SUNY New Paltz
New Paltz Dance Association, SUNY New Paltz
Newman Club, SUNY Cortland
NP Nachle/SACA, Suny New Paltz
NTSO, SUNY Cortland
NYC Men Teach, CUNY Queens College
Palestine Solidarity Alliance, Hunter College
Peer Health Exchange, Hunter College
Personal Finance Club, SUNY Cortland
Photography Club, Nassau Community College
Pratt Health Promotion, Pratt Institute
Pre-Health Diaries Blog, Hunter College
Pre-PA Society of Hunter College, Hunter College
Psi Chi, Hunter College
Psychology club, SUNY Cortland
Queens College Muslim Students Association, CUNY Queens College
Queer Pratt, Pratt Institute
Renew Democracy Initiative Hunter, Hunter College
Rotaract Club, Buffalo State College
Science Club, BMCC
Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi, CUNY Queens College
Sigma Epsilon Chapter of Kappa Sigma, Hunter College
Social Justice/Social Practice Minor, Pratt Institute
Society for Conservation Biology, ESF Chapter
Society of Physics Students & Cosmic Club, SUNY New Paltz
Spanish Club, SUNY Cortland
Speech, Drama, and Debate Club, Bronx Community College
Sports Management Club, SUNY Cortland
Student Political Society, Buffalo State College
Student Run Pre-Health Organization, CUNY Hunter College
Sustainabiliteam Committee (Undergraduate Student Association), SUNY ESF
Syracue Hillel, Syracuse University
Taiwanese Student Association, Hunter College
The Accounting Society of Hunter College, CUNY Hunter College
The Banner, The College of Staten Island
The BMCC Writers Guild, Borough of Manhattan Community College
The Buddhist Meditation Association, Hendricks Chapel. Syracuse University

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The Dominican Students Association, The City College of New York
The Prattler, Pratt Institute
The Yoga Collective, SUNY New Paltz
United Nations Association, SUNY New Paltz
Unlabeled Part 2, Hunter College
Wall Street Club, Nassau Community College
Women in Computer Science at CCNY, The City College of New York
Women's Students' Association, Nassau Community College
Young Democrats, SUNY Cortland