



COUNTY OF ONONDAGA

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PRESS RELEASE

TO: ALL MEDIA
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 24, 2020

DM *MS*
Contact: Dustin M Czarny/ Michele L Sardo
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The Onondaga County Board of Elections endorses the recommendations from the New York State Elections Commissioners' Association today to postpone the Democratic Presidential Primary from April 28th to June 23rd, allow increase use of Absentee balloting during the COVID-19 health crisis and give local boards more flexibility in securing poll sites and workers for the June Primary Election.

In addition to their recommendation, we also endorse moving the March 18th Village Elections to June 16th and either moving the scheduled special election for NYS Senate District 50 to June 23rd or cancelling that election all together.

"Voters should not have to choose between risking their health and exercising their right to participate in our Democracy. Delaying the election will protect the voters rights, the safety of election workers, and buy us precious time to prepare to administer this election amongst the current health crisis"
Dustin M. Czarny Onondaga County Elections Commissioner (D)

"During the health crisis that we are faced with today, I feel the health risks well supersede the necessity to hold these elections at this time. The right to vote is what keeps our democracy strong, but we need to consider the health of our voters and our employees."

Michele Sardo (R) Commissioner of Elections Onondaga County

SEE ATTACHED

-END-



ELECTION COMMISSIONERS' ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

2019-2020

*****For Immediate Release*****

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The New York State Elections Commissioners' Association is calling for immediate action by the Governor and New York State Legislature to protect our electoral process during the COVID-19 pandemic. Election Boards throughout the state are risking personnel safety and health to prepare for impending elections on April 28, 2020. We are facing critical shortages of inspectors and polling places due to the ongoing public health crisis. Over the next week, BOEs will find it almost impossible to meet mission critical deadlines for testing machines and preparing ballots because of staff shortages due to the ongoing stay-at-home order. We ask Governor Andrew Cuomo, NYS Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, and NYS Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins to consider the following items by either Executive Order or Legislative action:

1.) Postponing the Democratic Presidential Primary scheduled for April 28th to June 23rd. Fielding inspectors in the midst of this health crisis is dangerous and may be impossible. Traditional polling places may be unusable as they are currently restricted or closed to the public. Postponing until June will not only give us time to plan, but will ease the burdens on host counties budgets that are devastated by the COVID-19 crisis.

2.) Amend 8-400 of NYS Election Law to allow for Absentee Balloting during all times of declared state of emergency due to infectious disease or pandemic. This will allow all voters who are at-risk but perhaps not yet sick to apply for and receive an absentee ballot. At risk or vulnerable citizens should not have to make decisions on whether to exercise their right to vote or risk their health.

3.) For all Primary & Special Elections: Give wide latitude to the local Board of Elections to consolidate polling places and election districts to best operate the election. While we hope the COVID 19 crisis will be better by June, it is quite likely we will have limited numbers of polling places and inspectors even then. We need this flexibility to adjust to circumstances on the ground in our jurisdictions that may be changing right up until the June 23rd Election.

Acting on these items will buy us precious time and save our host counties significant amount of resources while also preserving the rights of voters and safety and health of Election Workers. Every day that we do not act makes us less prepared and wastes valuable time and money.

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