

January 12, 2018

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We, the undersigned national organizations, urge you to follow through on your stated goal of including Early Voting funding and legislation in the 2018-19 state budget, as the first step towards giving all eligible New Yorkers the freedom to vote.

Alarming, in our country it is still the case that our elections have too many missing voices due to racial and class barriers. While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were two hard fought successes of the civil rights movement, rules that undermine fair voting practices and put eligible voters at risk have only taken new forms over time. New York's failure to modernize its elections harms voters instead of helping them.

As we approach this year's observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 15, we are mindful that one of Dr. King's biggest commitments was to remove barriers to every step of the voting process. But in New York, outdated voting rules discourage voter participation and help reduce voter turnout. We are encouraged by the possibility that passing Early Voting funding and legislation in the 2018-19 New York State budget can help change that.

Modernizing New York's elections will not only benefit New Yorkers but will make the work of protecting the right to vote throughout the country easier. When voting rights aren't defended in New York, it makes it that much harder to protect eligible voters in North Carolina, Alabama, and Ohio. We know it is your goal that New York should be a guardian of core democratic values and a model for the rest of the country. But because New York hasn't adopted simple voting reform measures, it's easy for other states to cite New York as a reason for cutting back or repealing voting rights legislation. And, in fact, states like North Carolina and Ohio do point to New York as an excuse for their own voter suppression measures.

We urge you to do everything in your power to remove unnecessary barriers to voting for New Yorkers and include Early Voting funding and legislation in the 2018-19 state budget.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights

Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

ACLU Voting Rights Project & NYCLU Voting Rights Project

NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.

National Action Network

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

AFT-American Federation of Teachers

CWA District One

Democracy Initiative

Rock the Vote

Hip Hop Caucus

The Student Public Interest Research Groups

National Education Association

Fair Elections Legal Network

Campus Vote Project

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote

Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural

National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund

Unitarian Universalist Association

National Council of Jewish Women

AJC

Anti-Defamation League

Friends of the Earth US

National Resources Defense Council

Greenpeace USA

Common Cause

Public Citizen

League of Women Voters of the United States

The Brennan Center for Justice

People For the American Way

Every Voice

Patriotic Millionaires

Daily Kos

MayDay America

People's Action

CREDO

Progressive Turnout Project