

RESOLUTION ON DEMOCRATIZING BALLOT ACCESS IN NEW YORK ELECTIONS

Whereas, voter turnout in New York elections on state and local levels is among the lowest of all states, particularly among young voters, minority voters, voters with lower educational achievement and naturalized citizens¹, and the state ranked dead last among states in the 2010 mid-term election²; and

Whereas, low voter turnout by voting district is highly correlated with the incidence of low-income, impoverished and minority households, and this is especially the case in off-year and mid-term elections, resulting in elections tilted in favor of candidates supported by older, non-minority and higher-income voters; and

Whereas, the consequence of the asymmetry in voter participation and turnout among groups with these characteristics has resulted in the election of fewer pro-labor, progressive candidates who will pursue legislation beneficial to working class and minority constituencies; and

Whereas, improving low voter turnout among these groups in New York is hindered by the absence of election rules and procedures which would improve access, including early voting, voting by mail, and same-day registration; and

Whereas, since the recent decision of the Supreme Court overturning sections of the Voting Rights Act, legislatures of various states have succeeded in repealing or limiting measures that facilitate voting, such as early voting and voting by mail, and imposing measures that hinder voting, such as requiring voters produce a valid photo ID; and

Whereas, the absence of these measures in states such as New York has been used in court cases in states such as North Carolina as a rationale for eliminating same-day registration and limiting early voting; therefore

Be it resolved, that the Delegate Assembly pass a resolution calling upon the Professional Staff Congress, on its own and in accord with NYSUT, the NYC Central Labor Council, and other labor and civic organizations, to join in a campaign for voting rights reform in New York City and State which would have the effect of maximizing voter turnout by allowing for early voting, voting by mail, and same-day registration, and by removing other deterrents to voting; and

Be it further resolved, that the PSC join or support organizations committed to improving voter participation in New York, including the New York State Coalition for Voter Participation and Fair Elections (which includes The Brennan Center for Justice, Citizen Action, NYPIRG, Common Cause, Citizens Union, the League of Women Voters, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, NAACPLDF, and other voting rights organizations).

Submitted to the Delegate Assembly by Craig Bernardini on February 11, 2014 and passed unanimously by the Hostos Chapter of the PSC on November 18, 2013.

¹ http://www.nycclfb.info/PDF/issue_reports/WhoVotes.pdf

² http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/16/new-york-state-ranks-last-for-voter-turnout/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0