



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Blair Horner,
bhorner@nypirg.org, 518-727-4506

**ON 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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