

UNH Position on 2021 Election Reform Ballot Proposals

Vote Yes on Proposals 3 and 4

New York State General Election

In the November 2, 2021, general election, New Yorkers will have the opportunity to reform elections by voting yes on two constitutional amendments that will appear on the ballot: proposal three, which would establish same-day voter registration, and proposal four, which would allow for no-excuse/ universal absentee voting.

These proposals will appear alongside five ballot proposals for voters to answer. In the order they will be presented to voters, the proposals include (1) an amendment to the redistricting process, (2) a constitutional right to clean air and water, (3) same-day voter registration, (4) no-excuse absentee voting, and (5) NYC Civil Court Jurisdiction. For information on the full slate of ballot proposals, please see [UNH's Ballot Proposals Summary](#) document.

UNH Supports Proposals Three and Four

Modernized election laws are critical to ensuring every New Yorker has fair and easy access to the polls. As an active member of Let NY Vote, the statewide coalition for electoral reform, UNH joined the advocacy effort that led to legislative approval of these two ballot questions that will ultimately be voted on by the statewide electorate in November 2021. **UNH encourages a “yes” vote on ballot questions three and four**, as both proposals are important steps toward building a modernized election system that ensures every New Yorker has fair and easy access to voting.

Proposal 3: Same-Day Voter Registration

UNH supports same-day voter registration as a simple solution that makes it easier for voters to participate in elections. A yes vote on proposal three would enable individuals to register and vote at the same time and location, either during the Early Voting period or on Election Day. Current law requires a voter to register at least 10 days before an election day.

In addition to the positive effect same-day registration would have on voter turnout, this change would also prevent bureaucratic errors from interfering with poll site operations. Previous elections in New York have been disrupted by outdated voter rolls and other administrative mistakes, resulting in the disenfranchisement of thousands of eligible voters. Same-day registration would allow voters to correct inaccuracies or make changes in their voter registration when they go to the polls to vote.

Proposal 4: No-excuse Absentee Voting

UNH supports the expansion of absentee voting so that no New Yorker has to decide between voting and their job, health, or family responsibilities. A yes vote on proposal four would remove barriers to absentee voting and allow any eligible voter to cast an absentee/mail-in ballot.

Ballot proposal four would amend New York State Election Law by simply removing any requirement that a voter provides an excuse before being issued an absentee ballot. Enactment of no-excuse absentee voting in New York would allow registered voters who find themselves unable to appear at their local poll site on Election Day, regardless of the reason for their absence, to vote in advance of the election using an absentee ballot.

Frequently Asked Questions:

As a 501(c)(3) organization, can my settlement house take a position on these proposals?

Yes! While 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations are prohibited from endorsing political candidates, they *are* permitted to endorse ballot proposals. For example, UNH is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and has chosen to endorse Proposals 3 and 4.

Would passing Proposal 3 for same-day registration mean that people could “party crash” (i.e. vote in primaries for a party they typically do not support)?

Same-day registration would be available for all eligible New Yorkers without an active voter registration to register at their poll site.

This does not mean that potential voters can *switch* their party affiliation on the day of a primary election. It means that if someone has never been registered, their registration lapsed, or they moved, they can register the same day as the election. Voters with an active registration who want to switch their party affiliation must follow a separate process and timeline. So, a voter has an incentive to register with and vote in the primary of the political party that most reflects their interests.

I voted absentee in 2020 without an excuse, why do we need to pass Proposal 4?

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Cuomo signed an executive order which allowed any New Yorker with a valid registration to vote absentee. All registered voters in the State were pro-actively mailed a form where they could request an absentee ballot. Proposal 4 would codify no-excuse absentee voting in all future elections.

It took so long to learn who won the New York City Democratic - would passing Proposal 4 mean that election results always take that long?

Potentially, but it is crucial that every voter has the opportunity to engage in the electoral process, and that every vote is counted, even if it takes a longer timeframe to do so.

Key Dates & Information:

October 8: Voter Registration Deadline

October 18: Last day to request an absentee ballot

October 23: First day of early voting at designated locations

October 31: Last day of early voting at designated locations

November 2: General Election Day

To find your polling site, click here: <https://findmypollsite.vote.nyc/>

For questions, please contact Lena Cohen at lcohen@unhny.org.