



May 27, 2016

Senator Rich Funke
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 905
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblyman Al Stirpe
New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 656
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Senator Funke and Assemblyman Stirpe:

We are the two former chairs of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA), which delivered its report to the President in 2014 with unanimous recommendations and an array of best practices in election administration that will significantly improve the American voter's experience and promote confidence in the administration of U.S. elections.

Over the course of six months of hearings and research, we spoke to election administrators, legislators, policymakers, advocates, and regular voters about all areas of election administration that impact a voter's positive experience at the polls. As noted in the report, "[w]ith almost no exception, the testimony received from state and local election administrators identified schools as the preferred venue for polling places." The reasons are clear: (1) schools are located relatively evenly across jurisdictions, (2) schools maintain sufficiently large spaces for operating efficient polling places, and (3) election officials are generally not required to pay to use these public facilities. Many states would have an almost impossible task to find available and accessible locations for polling places should schools not be usable in the future.

To address a new movement to limit the availability of schools as polling places due to safety concerns for students, PCEA called explicitly for the continued availability and use of schools as polling places. To accommodate any related and real security concerns, we recommend that states make Election Day an in-service day for teachers so that students will not be at the schools. Especially in a state like New York, which sites many of its polling places in schools, election administrators have no real alternative options for Election Day voting locations.

We endorse Assembly Bill 6040A and Senate Bill 4787 that would codify the PCEA recommendation for schools as polling places in New York law. Providing either a school holiday or in-service day for teachers on each general Election Day will ensure that the

community retains the option to cast ballots at the best available public sites in their local neighborhoods. The voting experience would only be diminished by the elimination of schools as polling places. New York's action on these bills would make the state a leader in the use of schools as polling places

Sincerely,

Ben Ginsberg
Co-Chair, PCEA

Bob Bauer
Co-Chair, PCEA