

CONDUCT & OBLIGATIONS OF ABSENTEE AGENTS

BALLOT HARVESTING \ BALLOT COLLECTION DISCUSSION

BALLOT COLLECTION / BALLOT HARVESTING POLITICALLY POLARIZING – SO LET’S GO THERE!

Proponents:

- Convenient
- Potential to reduce turnout disparities
- Easier for Voters – reduces barriers to participation
- Distrust of postal system
- Safer for delivery of ballots to infirmed/ill voters
- No evidence of widespread fraud



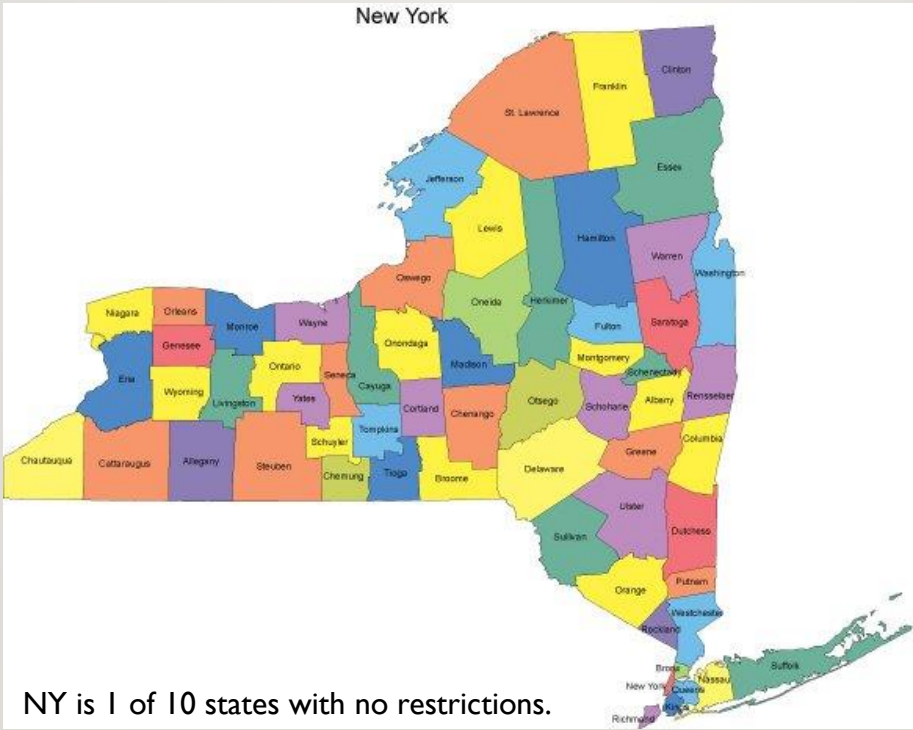
Opponents:

- Incentive to alter or destroy voted ballots
- Could influence the voters behavior
- Vulnerable individuals most targeted
- No oversight over the process
- Not Neutral; Interested parties hoping to sway
- Opportunity for fraud

ULSTER COUNTY 3RD PARTY ABSENTEE COLLECTION

- Average 200/year, majority collected by handful of local candidates or political operatives
- Average 30/year never collected, higher in non-local years
- We do outreach (mail, call, email) to ensure ballots are collected by agents; no recourse if they do not collect and deliver.
- Annually we mail letter to permanent absentee recipients to verify collection method
- Close elections puts the practice in the spotlight

WHAT DOES NY ELECTION LAW SAY?



COMPARISON OF STANDARDS

- Absentee Ballot 3rd Party Collection

- No requirements; law is silent

8-400 "...application forms shall be supplied upon the request of the person authorized to vote pursuant to this section, any such person's spouse, parent or child, a person residing with the applicant as a member of his household, or the applicant's *duly authorized agent*"

8-406 "...mail to him at an address designated by him, or deliver to him or any such person designated for such person in writing by him, at the office of the board, such an absentee voter's ballot or set of ballots and an envelope therefor."

- Voter Assistance at Poll site

- Oath & Signature/address of Assister
- Bi-partisan team if inspectors
- Disqualifications (employer, union agent)

- Election Inspectors

- Oath
- Annual training

- Witness to Absentee Voter

- Signature and Address required on application and oath envelope

- Absentee Voting at Nursing Homes

- 8-407 Process to collect and distribute

POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGE??

- Communicate with voters to let them know ballot has been picked up
- Keep a log of agents and number of ballots collected
- Oath of Agents with contact information required (similar to voter assistance at poll site – goal to remove potential influence)*
- Term limited – similar to 2 yr. Fed absentee application*
- Limits of amount – example 5 per agent or with Commissioner exception*
- Conduct of agents standards written in to the law*

What are other CBOs doing?

Comments, Questions?

