

Board of Directors

The Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert,
President
Donald Odell, Secretary
John E. Keevert, Treasurer
Kenneth Bollerud
The Rev. Dr. Tom Davis
Robert Herman, Esq.
Damaris McGuire
Paula Shaw
Margaret Sherman
The Rev. Sam Trumbore
Barbara Zaron

Clergy Advisory Board

The Rev. Kaaren Anderson
The Rev. Kenneth I. Applegate
The Rev. Dr. Lynn Ashley
Rabbi Henry Bamberger
The Rev. Johanna Barrett
The Rev. Michelle Bogue-Trost
The Rev. Ben Bortin
The Rev. Stephen C. Butler
The Rev. Dr. Thomas A. Chulak
Rabbi Matthew Cutler
Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson, D.D.
Rabbi Joshua M. Davidson
The Rev. Larry A. Deyss
The Rev. Sarah Gillespie
Rabbi Debora S. Gordon
The Rev. Dr. Paula J. Gravelle
Rabbi Daniel Gropper
The Rev. Margaret Hart
Rabbi Alan J. Katz
The Rev. Robert C. Lamar
The Rev. Dr. William A. Lasher
The Rev. Christopher Luedde
Pastor Alexandra S. Lusak
The Rev. John Magisano
The Rev. Peggy Meeker
Rabbi Linda Motzkin
The Rev. Dr. Hugh Nevin
The Rev. Larry Phillips
Rabbi Daniel Polish
The Very Rev. David Robinson
Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld
Rabbi Dennis Ross
Rabbi Jonathan Rubenstein
Rabbi Scott Shpeen
The Rev. Bruce Southworth
The Rev. Kelly Spahr
The Rev. Lori Staubitz
Rabbi Peter Stein
The Rev. Moonhawk River Stone
The Rev. Dr. Charles H. Straut, Jr.
The Rev. Craig Schwalenberg
The Rev. Scott Tayler
The Rev. Joan Van Becelaera
The Rev. David Weissbard
Rabbi Michael A. White
The Rev. Robert A. White

Executive Director

Robb Smith

May 7, 2018

Memorandum of Support for

EARLY VOTING AND OTHER ELECTION REFORMS

The members of Interfaith Impact of NYS strongly support making it easier for citizens to vote.

New York has repeatedly ranked as one of the worst states for voter turnout, and barely more than half of voters regularly take part in each statewide election. This failure is largely driven by outdated laws that make it harder for New Yorkers to vote.

Right now, New Yorkers can vote only on Election Day. This creates an artificial barrier to voting for those with personal, family, or work obligations on Election Day. Allowing voting during the week preceding an election would enable more New Yorkers to vote and bring New York closer to the goal of full voter participation.

The Assembly passed an (A09608) early voting bill in April that includes funding to make it happen. A similar but not identical bill (S7400A) is in the Senate Elections Committee. We urge the Senate to pass an early voting bill during this session of the Legislature. We would like to see the bill include a window of opportunity with two weekends

We also support an amendment to the New York Constitution to legalize no-excuse-needed absentee ballots. This bill passed the Assembly. A concurrent resolution (S840) is in the Senate Judiciary Committee. This bill would amend the state Constitution to allow for any voter to request to vote by mail without declaring reason.

NOTE: The constitutionality of no-excuse ballots in New York has never been passed on judicially, but legal opinion favors changing the Constitution. (See for example, "Instituting Absentee No-Excuse Voting in New York" by the New York City Bar Committee on Election Law, May 2010.) To pass a bill allowing no-excuse voting without changing the Constitution is likely to result in a court challenge and delay.

Democracy depends on voter participation. It is to the benefit of us all to make voting easier in New York.

#