



NY A1115C/S309B

MEMO OF SUPPORT

The “Protect Our Ballots” Act

The [Black Institute's](#) mission is to shape intellectual discourse and impact public policy uniquely from a Black and people of color perspective in the United States and throughout the Diaspora. We are centered in New York and have a particular passion for policy here. So are pleased to add our voices to the chorus of support for this urgently needed piece of legislation to protect New York voters from the predatory financial interests of voting machine vendors.

As we have for over a decade we are looking at this issue through the lens of how it will affect people of color. We start by asking the question, what do voters of color need from their voting system?

1. **Access.** For too long our voters have been denied the ability to vote for a myriad of illegitimate reasons.
2. **Reliability.** We have often received the worst of the worst of voting equipment.
3. **Trustworthy systems.** There is already well-deserved suspicion of the democratic process in our communities. We do not need to further erode confidence.
4. **Efficiency.** Long lines are legendary in communities of color. We want and deserve an efficient and well-run election.
5. **Accessibility.** Like any community, we have a diversity of needs and deserve for all eligible voters to be able to vote with full language and physical accessibility.

Reviewing these priorities it is not hard to understand why the Protect Our Ballots Act is urgently needed in New York.

Voting machines with a horrific record of public performance, including

- machines arriving [30% out of calibration](#)
- [lines as long as ten hours to vote](#)
- twenty-seven [pages of complaints](#) from voters with disabilities and
- a [100% vote of no confidence](#)

are currently applying for approval for use in New York.

And who will get the worst of these systems, if they are approved? History tells us it will be communities of color that will be most impacted by this poorly conceived and badly executed technology.

A1115C/S309B is a well-written bill that updates New York's voting machine requirements for the first time in fourteen years. It follows expert guidelines and best practices, and will create some of the best standards for voting equipment in the country.

This will improve the voting experience for voters of color who will benefit from:

- Being able to verify who they voted for (not having to trust a barcode).
- A system that is designed to reduce wait times to vote.
- Better security that can contribute to increased confidence.
- More affordable systems that will allow scarce resources to be used wisely and allow jurisdictions to purchase more machines to serve more voters at once.
- The choice between a hand-marked paper ballot or a ballot-marker, continuing our current tradition.
- More reliable counts and recounts because ballots must be made of durable paper.

We are focused on delivering justice to people of color. We cannot stand by and allow our communities to be disenfranchised yet again through the very voting mechanisms that are supposed to bring us equity.

We call upon the NY legislature and the Governor to pass this legislation immediately so that we can protect the sacred right to vote that we have already paid a heavy price to enjoy.