



First New York Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Platform

GenVote Second Annual Conference and First NY Youth Voting Rights Summit Report

By Brianna Cea
GENERATION VOTE AND LET NY VOTE
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About Generation Vote

Generation Vote (GenVote) is building a movement of young people to stop the youth voter suppression crisis, advance youth-friendly democracy reforms that empower all voters, and transform the way young people engage in local politics. GenVote has been at the forefront of expanding voting rights for young people across New York. For the past two and a half years, our team has been the leading youth organizers for Let NY Vote, the largest voting rights coalition responsible for pushing forward the first voter reform efforts in over one hundred years in New York. We've organized several voting rights advocacy days for young people in the state capital, held educational workshops for students across the state, and participated in press conferences and rallies to discuss the challenges facing young voters in New York.

Generation Vote is an active member of the Students Learn Students Vote national coalition and Youth Voting Rights Working Group. Generation Vote was founded in 2017 and is an all-volunteer youth-driven organization based in New York.

About Let NY Vote

[Let NY Vote](#) (LNYV) is a nonpartisan, statewide coalition of grassroots networks, civil rights and civil liberties organizations, re-entry communities, good government groups, and everyday citizens fighting to modernize New York's elections and make registering and voting more accessible and equitable for every eligible New Yorker. In Summer 2019, Let NY Vote launched its first Youth Working Group to engage young voting rights activists and elevate issues that are important to young voters in New York. Brianna Cea, CEO and Founder of Generation Vote, co-chairs the LNYV Youth Working Group with Ben Weinberg, Policy and Program Manager, Citizens Union.

Acknowledgements

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This is an independent Generation Vote publication; the views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of our supporters.

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INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that 2018 was the year that young people rocked the vote. On Election Day, we broke records with 31% of young voters showing up to the polls, and in some states, turning out in greater numbers than the general electorate. Yet in a year of unprecedented youth turnout across the country - in both red and blue states - New York came squarely in second to last place. In the 2018 midterms, only 16.4% of young voters cast a ballot in the Empire State, in large part due to statutory barriers to participation and voter education.

With 2020 around the corner, the stakes have never been higher for New York to make it simpler, not harder, for young voters to make their voices heard. That is why Generation Vote, in partnership with Let NY Vote, hosted the first statewide convening centered on youth voting rights and expanding civic engagement for young people in New York. On November 8th and 9th, 2019, we hosted the GenVote Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Summit at the University at Albany - SUNY.

The discussion that resulted was lively and wide-ranging. Participants shared their experiences as first-time voters, tackled challenges facing young people in the political process, and proposed various reforms to increase New York's low youth voter turnout.

This report aims to distill the main themes and takeaways from an eventful weekend of workshops, panels and strategy sessions. First, it provides an overview of the Summit's program. The report then summarizes the issue priorities in the first Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Platform.



THE FIRST NY YOUTH VOTING RIGHTS AND ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

1. ***Enact Automatic Voter Registration.*** The State Legislature should pass the Automatic Voter Registration Act, which will boost youth turnout and remove barriers to registration for young voters.
2. ***Codify Rights Restoration of People on Parole.*** The State Legislature should pass S1931/A4987, which will allow those leaving incarceration on parole to vote and provide opportunities to register upon release from prison.
3. ***Expand School Closures on Election Day.*** The State Legislature should expand the closure of public schools, including public institutions of higher education, on Election Day (beyond New York City). Alternatively, public and private institutions of higher education should declare Election Day as “university holidays” and develop policies allowing students and employees to be excused from class to vote.
4. ***Lower the Voting Age to 16 for Local and State Elections.*** The State Legislature should lower the voting age to 16 for local and state elections.
5. ***Mandate On-Campus Poll Sites.*** The State Legislature should mandate General Election on-campus polling locations at colleges or universities. In the wake of early voting, the State Legislature should also expand the mandate to establish early voting locations at public colleges or universities.
6. ***Expand Registration and Civic Engagement Practices at CUNY/SUNY Schools.*** The State Legislature should expand civic engagement practices at CUNY/SUNY schools with a new student voter empowerment act.
7. ***Change New York's Closed Primaries System to Open Primaries.*** The State Legislature should amend the Election Code so that voters not enrolled in a party can vote in primary elections.
8. ***Establish Youth Representation in NY State Government.*** The State Legislature should establish a youth advisory council. Alternatively, the Governor’s Office could create a youth advisory council program to advise executive agencies and educate young people about the role of executive agencies in state government.
9. ***Lower the Age Requirement for Poll Workers to 16.*** The State Legislature should amend the Election Code to lower the voting age requirement for poll workers to 16 and make it accessible for young people enrolled in school to work half-day shifts as paid poll workers.
10. ***Create Democracy Vouchers for High School Students in NYC.*** The New York City Council should create a democracy vouchers program for students attending public and private high schools in New York City.

THE SUMMIT PROGRAM

Earlier this year, New York took the first necessary steps to remove barriers that contribute to the state's dismal youth turnout by passing crucial reforms like early voting, pre-registration of 16 and 17-year-olds, and mandating all SUNY/CUNY schools to provide voter registration information to students.

In order to continue the momentum for reform in the next legislative session, the Summit offered a crucial opportunity for students, community leaders, elected officials, and grassroot organizers to discuss legislative priorities for young voters and challenges regarding youth civic engagement in educational institutions. Over 70 students, elected officials, and activists from high schools and colleges across New York - representing over 10 different organizations - joined us for this historic event.

The Program

The two-day convening included educational workshops for student members of affiliated organizations and provided a space for participants to collaborate on potential advocacy projects for the 2019-2020 school year. The first night of the Summit focused exclusively on student programming and was kicked off with an interactive dinner panel featuring guest speakers, "Transforming Youth Civic Engagement in New York." The student participants also participated in regional breakout working groups to identify areas for collaboration and develop relationships with young organizers within their region.

At the end of the night, we even celebrated an amazing year of voter reforms and the first night of the Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Summit with an ice cream social!

The second day of the Summit included a full day of programming and was open to partners of all ages. The program featured numerous guest speakers and sessions that equipped Summit participants with practical skills for mobilizing young voters and educating young people about voter reform efforts in New York. The workshop sessions addressed topics like youth voting rights, how to create student opinions research projects, understanding NY state politics and local government, and get out the vote campaigns.



THE PLATFORM

By the end of the Summit, participants voted on the first “New York Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Platform” and committed to enacting out the platform goals through campus-wide engagement and advocacy plans.

Why New York Needs to Make Young Voters a Priority

18 to 29-year-olds make up 21% of the eligible voting population nationwide.¹ In 2018, 31% of America’s eligible 18 to 29-year-olds made their voices heard on Election Day, which was a ten-point increase from the last midterm.² According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University, youth voter turnout increased in every state for which they have data. Unfortunately, while New York did show an increase, we lagged behind other states. The voter turnout rate in New York was 16.4%, the second lowest in the country behind only Arkansas. For context, our neighbors in New Jersey and Massachusetts both had around a 33% youth turnout rate.³

New York’s young voters are not less enthusiastic, or less responsible. Instead, they face barriers to making their voices heard.

As members of the Let NY Vote (LNYV) coalition, Generation Vote and the LNYV Youth Working Group are committed to advancing the priorities of the coalition. Participants of the Summit were particularly excited about automatic voter registration and expressed overwhelming support for restoring voting rights to people with past criminal convictions. In addition to these critical reforms, our Summit Platform laid the foundation for the following agenda to protect youth voting rights and expand democracy in New York.

Increase Access to Polling Places

The ability to access a polling location is critical to voter turnout. A study by CIRCLE about young voters found that 52% of the respondents needed to rearrange their work or school schedule in order to vote. In this same survey, it was found that 25% needed a ride to the polls.⁴ Voters under 35-years-old are less likely to have cars than other age groups, and many students are specifically banned from having them on campus as freshmen. When localities decide to move poll sites to areas away from campuses or public transit, or even worse, refuse to place them near campuses in the first place, they create an obstacle which suppresses the student vote.

- **Mandate On-Campus Poll Sites.** If we hope to empower the next generation of voters, the State Legislature must make voting accessible for students by expanding the number of voting sites on college campuses. In 2019, the State Senate passed A5661/S4378.⁵ Under this bill, election districts shall not be drawn in a way that partially includes or excludes universities or colleges with 300 or more registered voters (excluding inactive voters), and mandates polling

sites on campuses or at locations approved by the college or university. This bill would take into effect in 2022.⁶

To accomplish this for public colleges and universities, Assemblymember Nader Sayegh recently introduced A8783, which would mandate all SUNY and CUNY schools with on-campus dormitories to provide on-campus poll sites for registered students.⁷ This bill can also lay the groundwork for the State Legislature to mandate private institutions of higher education to cooperate with election districts to establish early voting sites on their campus.⁸ Unlike S4378, this bill would take into effect immediately.

- ***Expand/Mandate On-Campus Poll Sites for Early Voting.*** The recent implementation of early voting in New York presents a unique opportunity to enfranchise scores of young people and make it easier for young people to vote between classes, extracurriculars and jobs. New York's first attempt to implement early voting did not take advantage of this opportunity. In 2019, we only found ten early voting sites on college campuses.⁹ The placement of early voting sites away from campuses and public transit creates a barrier to young people's participation and prevents early voting from having the greatest possible impact.¹⁰

For instance, a study by the Andrew Goodman Foundation found that early voting locations on college campuses experienced higher rates of youth voter turnout than voting locations off-campus in the 2018 Florida General Election.¹¹ In Florida, on-campus early voting sites not only increased youth voter turnout, but disproportionately bolstered the participation rates of people of color and infrequent voters.

In the wake of our first year with early voting, the State Legislature should expand the mandate to establish early voting locations at public colleges or universities. A8783, would also require SUNY and CUNY campuses to have on-campus poll sites during the early voting period.¹²

Modernize Registration Practices

The first step to casting a ballot is registering to vote. Unfortunately, New York's voter registration system is opaque and creates barriers to participation. The Center for American Progress found that the most common reason young people cited for not voting was a barrier to registration.¹³ We need to modernize our registration system and removes barriers to entry for young voters.

- ***Enact Automatic Voter Registration.*** Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) is a powerful tool for increasing youth turnout. Rhode Island implemented AVR in 2018, and the state youth turnout increased by 8 points to 23% between 2018 and 2014.¹⁴ Oregon implemented AVR in 2016, and their youth turnout increased nearly 12 points to 39% since 2014.¹⁵ There are 8 states which have implemented AVR, and all of these states have greater youth turnout than New York.¹⁶

AVR is considered one of the best ways to encourage youth civic engagement when paired with pre-registration of 16 and 17-year-olds. In California, the dual AVR and pre-registration model demonstrates the promise of combining these two programs. In 2018, nearly 65% of young people who pre-registered through California's AVR program cast a ballot in the midterms.¹⁷ Seven other states have taken steps to make it easier for young voters to get registered by combining AVR and pre-registration - all of which had significantly higher youth turnout than New York in 2018.¹⁸

In January 2020, the Senate Majority kept its promise and passed an updated Automatic Voter Registration Act. The Assembly and Governor Cuomo must pass this updated AVR act.

- ***Expand Registration and Civic Engagement Practices at CUNY/SUNY Schools.*** Given New York's low youth voter turnout, it is not surprising that voter registration rates in New York's public colleges lags behind the rest of the country.¹⁹ In 2017, Governor Cuomo ordered SUNY and CUNY to investigate their voter registration practices and policies.²⁰ In 2019, the Legislature passed a bill mandating all SUNY/CUNY schools to provide voter registration information to students at the beginning of the school year and in January of each presidential election year. This bill (A2599/S1128) was recently signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo and will take into effect in January 2020.²¹

Although we applaud the recent passage of A2599/S1128 the State Legislature can further expand civic engagement practices at CUNY/SUNY schools by modernizing notification systems, providing students with election dates information (including on academic calendars), and creating university vote committees. Other states have introduced and implemented new student voter empowerment acts to expand civic engagement practices on college campuses.

For example, in California, the Secretary of State's office manages a Student Vote Project in partnership with public higher education institutions through a Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Program. This program requires California Community Colleges, the California State University and the University of California campuses to send emails with relevant election information, designate Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinators, hold at least three election outreach events, and submit civic engagement action plans for the Secretary of State's report to the State Legislature.²²

Ensure All New Yorker's Voices Are Heard

The decisions made by New York's politicians affect every New Yorker. However, not every New Yorker has a say in those decisions. High school-aged New Yorkers are already feeling the effects of issues such as gun control and climate change and will continue to do so in the future. At the same time, whole communities - primarily low-income communities and young people of color - are having their voices silenced by Jim-Crow era laws that keep justice-involved individuals out of the political

system. New Yorkers deserve to have a say in the decisions which affect them, and it is critical for the health of our democracy when every voter has a voice.

- ***Lower the Voting Age to 16 for State and Local Elections.*** Under the current election paradigm, sixteen and seventeen-year-olds do not have a voice in our political process since they cannot vote in any primary or general elections. New York has the potential to create transformative change by expanding youth voting rights and lowering the voting age. As of 2018, 18 states and the District of Columbia allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections, as long as they turn 18 before the general election.²³ New York can take a step further by not only allowing 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections, but also allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote in all state and local elections.

In 2017, the Youth Progressive Policy Group worked with Assemblymember Bobby Carroll to write the Young Voter Act, which would lower the voting age to 17 in New York, add additional civic education requirements to the NY State high school curriculum, and provide for high school registration.²⁴ In 2019, the Young Voter Act was amended to lower the voting age to 16 for state and local elections. The State Legislature should pass the Young Voter Act and set an example for expanding youth voting rights.

- ***Codify Voting Rights for People on Parole.*** Disenfranchisement hurts families and young people, particularly in urban communities and communities of color. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, there is “evidence that suggests that disenfranchisement of the head of a household discourages his or her entire family from civic participation.”²⁵ Full rights restoration will strengthen communities and foster civic engagement in households with currently disenfranchised individuals.

The State Legislature should pass S1931/A4987 and immediately codify the right to vote for New Yorkers on parole.

- ***Change New York's Closed Primaries System to Open Primaries.*** Closed primaries lock young voters out of crucial political decisions. Approximately 40% of young voters do not identify with either major party, and only a third of young people believe that party membership makes their voices more powerful.²⁶ With the recent passage of pre-registration of 16 and 17-year-olds, an increasing number of New York's youngest eligible voters may be ineligible to vote in primary elections.²⁷ Considering that many contested races in New York City are decided in primary elections, keeping unaffiliated young voters out of the primary process prevents them from having a say in local government.

The State Legislature should amend the Election Code to remove the requirement that voters in primary elections be enrolled in a political party. It should replace the requirement with a

provision in which voters can choose a primary to vote in at their early voting location or poll site, regardless of their party affiliation.

Expand Youth Civic Engagement to Grow Voters

New York has a lot more work to do to foster authentic civic engagement among the youngest eligible voters and prepare them to be active citizens. CIRCLE measured the voter turnout rates of the nation's youngest eligible voters, 18-19-year-olds, to determine whether or not the state is succeeding at "Growing Voters." Not surprisingly, New York had one of the lowest 18-19 turnout rates(16.2%).²⁸

To elevate young people's voices in New York's government, young people need to be in positions to not just participate in the political process, but to lead it. Young voters need opportunities to participate in the political process, enter a voting system which is accessible to them, and establish themselves as active citizens before and after reaching voting age.

- ***Establish Youth Representation in NY State Government.*** A report from CIRCLE and Opportunity Youth United found that in many communities, political participation is not established as an expectation for young people and avenues for engagement are unclear.²⁹ Creating youth advisory councils in state government is an innovative and proven method to promote avenues for youth participation in local politics.³⁰ A survey by the National Council for State Legislatures found at least 12 statewide legislative youth advisory councils.³¹ Six of the state councils were created by statutes, while the remaining six were created by executive order.

The State Legislature should establish a youth advisory council to provide high school-age youth and college students the opportunity to develop recommendations regarding public policies and programs that affect young people in New York. Alternatively, the Governor's Office could create a youth advisory council program to advise executive agencies and educate young people about their role in state government.

- ***Lower the Age Requirement for Poll Workers to 16.*** More often than not, young voters enter poll sites that do not reflect the diverse needs of their communities. According to a study by CIRCLE, 74% of respondents said that poll workers "don't look like them" and 59% said that they did not think that election officials make an effort to ensure they can vote.³² Student poll workers tend to be tech savvy and linguistically diverse, which can be invaluable for managing electronic poll books and assisting voters from language-minority communities.³³

The State Legislature should amend the Election Code to lower the voting age requirement for poll workers to 16, and make it accessible for young people enrolled in school to work half-day shifts as paid poll workers.³⁴ Even more, the State Legislature should work with the State Board of Elections to invest in robust recruitment and training programs for young poll workers across the state.³⁵

- **Create Democracy Vouchers for High School Students in NYC.** There is evidence to suggest that young people are highly undermobilized as potential political donors.³⁶ A study by Pew Research found that the proportion of young people (ages 18-29) who donated to political campaigns was similar to the rate of older individuals in the 2016 election. Although young people are usually contacted at lower rates by political campaigns and candidates, there is a growing desire among young people to support candidates or issues beyond the ballot box.

The New York City Council can tap into the enormous potential of young people as political donors and cultivate habits of political giving at an early age by creating a democracy vouchers program for high school students in New York City. Associate Professor Heath Brown of public policy at City University of New York, John Jay College and CUNY Graduate Center has proposed an innovative “democracy dollars” program, modeled after existing democracy voucher programs across the country.³⁷ Under this proposal, high school students would receive two \$5 vouchers to donate to eligible candidates running for office.

Additional Youth-Friendly Improvements to Existing Voter Reforms

The First NY Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Summit Platform is a comprehensive agenda for expanding youth voting rights, but it is not exhaustive of all possible youth voting rights reforms. These proposals can build upon the success of the 2019 legislative session and strengthen existing reforms that facilitate youth engagement, such as³⁸:

- **Creating a Robust Pre-registration Program for 16 and 17-Year-Olds.** As of January 1, 2020, 16 and 17-year-olds can fill out voter registration forms before they are eligible to vote in New York. Passing a pre-registration law is just the first step to engaging potential young voters, but does not guarantee a robust statewide pre-registration program. In 2019, the Civics Center found there is “currently a dearth of implementation efforts across counties” for pre-registering 16 and 17-year-olds in New York.³⁹

In order to maximize the number of 16 and 17-year-old registrants, this new law should include explicit directives for how local boards of education can promote student voter registration (such as creating high school voter registration days and designating high school voter coordinators), require county boards of elections to report the number of students registered through their pre-registration program to the State Board of Elections, and advertise online pre-registration.⁴⁰

- **Piloting an Online Registration System in New York City for the 2020 election.** In 2021, new voters in New York can register to vote online, outside of the DMV. But New York City residents may have an opportunity to register online earlier- thanks to S6463, introduced by Senator Zellnor Myrie (on the behalf of the Office of the Mayor). If passed, the New York

City online voter registration system will take into effect immediately, and can provide valuable insight for the future statewide online registration system.⁴¹

If the State Legislature fails to authorize the New York City online voter registration system it will be a missed opportunity for the city's youngest eligible voters, especially in the lead-up to one of the most consequential elections for our generation.

- ***Pushing Same-Day Registration Over the Finish Line.*** Same-Day Voter Registration allows voters to register on Election Day when they cast a ballot. Young voters who did not have access to voter registration opportunities, moved recently, or missed one of the confusing series of registration deadlines will have the opportunity to participate under this system.

In order to achieve Same-Day Voter Registration, New York needs to amend its state constitution. Last year, the legislature took the first step toward making this change by passing a same-day registration amendment. In order to get same-day registration over the finish line, the amendment must be passed again by the State Legislature and approved by voters as a ballot referendum.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the first NY Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Summit will last far longer than the upcoming legislative session. With low youth turnout throughout the state, it is imperative that elected officials, youth-based organizations, and educational institutions explore new opportunities for building a robust civic culture for all young people in New York. Ultimately, this Summit laid the groundwork for new working groups to monitor the implementation of newly passed voting reforms that will expand access to the political process for young people in New York, while building support for a future youth voting rights act and authentic youth engagement on campuses across the state.

APPENDIX A: SUMMIT AGENDA

NY Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Summit

And Second Annual GenVote Summit

University at Albany SUNY, Campus Center, Multipurpose Room

Goals:

- Participants will gain practical skills for mobilizing young voters and educating young people about voter reform efforts in New York.
- Participants will deliberate and vote on the first “NY Youth Voting Rights and Engagement Platform,” which will guide the LNYV Youth Working Group priorities in the upcoming legislative session.
- Participants will connect with voting rights activists across the state and develop advocacy plans for our communities.

November 8, 2019: Student Programming

4:30 PM-6:00 Check-in at Days Inn by Wyndham Albany SUNY

PM *1230 Western Ave, Albany, NY 12203*

5:30 PM **Doors open at University at Albany, Campus Center, Multipurpose Room**

6:00 PM **Program Begins: Introductions and Expectations**

6:30 PM Dinner: Transforming Youth Civic Engagement In New York

- *Ramon Contreras*, Founder of Youth Over Guns, Fmr. National Strategist for March for Our Lives, Advisor for Organizing Corp
- *Benjamin Reynolds*, Johnson City Trustee, youngest elected official in NY, GenVote @ Oneonta
- *Dairanys Grullon-Virgil*, Alumni Manager, Generation Citizen

Moderator: Brianna Cea, CEO/Co-founder of GenVote, Co-Chair of LNYV Youth Working Group

7:30 PM Regional Breakouts

Divide into regional groups and identify areas for collaboration around youth voting rights and engagement initiatives.

8:30 PM Wrap-up

Followed by a Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream Social at the hotel

November 9, 2019: All-Day Voting Rights and Engagement Summit

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|-----------------|--|
| 8:30 AM | Check-in and Breakfast |
| 9:00 AM | Introductions and Why We Are Here |
| 9:30 AM | State of Voter Reform in NY and Youth Voting Rights <i>What is the state of voter reform in NY today? How did LNYV help us get to where we are today, and what are we fighting for in 2020?</i> Presenters: Susan Lerner, Director of Common Cause NY and Brianna Cea, CEO Generation Vote |
| 10:30 AM | <i>How We Win: Educate, Mobilize, Connect</i> Educate: Student Opinions Research and Messaging Workshop <i>How can we spread awareness about youth voting rights and measure barriers to youth political engagement in our communities? In this workshop, participants will learn the basics of student opinions research and how to craft messages around youth voting rights.</i> |
| 11:30 AM | Understanding NY State Politics and Local Government <i>How does a bill become a law in New York state government? Who are the key players in NY politics and how can we leverage our power to pass key reforms in 2020?</i> Presenters: Nicole Hunt and Julie Kerr, Brooklyn Voters Alliance |
| 12:15 PM | Lunch |
| 1:00 PM | Mobilize: Turning Out Our Generation <i>In 2018, NY had the second to lowest youth turnout rate in the country. In 2019, we took one step closer to making the ballot more accessible for young people with early voting. What did we learn in 2019 and how can we leverage the power of our generation to turn out our communities?</i> Presenters: Julie Kerr and Nicole Hunt, Brooklyn Voters Alliance |
| 2:00 PM | Connect: Coalition Breakouts and Strategy Workshop Breakouts based on LNYV Youth Working Group Subcommittees: Policy, Base-building/Outreach, Communications, Lobbying, Speakers Bureau/events. |
| 3:00 PM | The Future of the New York Democracy Movement Facilitate discussion around the strengths and challenges of potential youth voter reforms and vote on the FIRST New York Voting Rights and Engagement Platform. |
| 4:00 PM | Closing Remarks |

APPENDIX B: LNYV YOUTH WORKING GROUP

PURPOSE

The Let NY Vote Youth Working Group serves an essential role in elevating the voices of young activists in the Let NY Vote coalition. Member organizations of the Youth Working Group will have the opportunity to develop youth-specific initiatives, shape the strategy of the LNYV Coalition and ensure that we are building a coalition that is inclusive and accessible for all young New Yorkers.

BACKGROUND

[Let NY Vote](#) is a nonpartisan, statewide coalition of grassroots networks, civil rights and civil liberties organizations, re-entry communities, good government groups, and everyday citizens fighting to modernize New York's elections and make registering and voting more accessible and equitable for every eligible New Yorker. In Summer 2019, Let NY Vote, Generation Vote, and Citizens Union launched the first Youth Working Group to engage young voting rights activists and elevate democratic access issues that are important to young people in New York.

The Youth Working Group will monitor the implementation of election laws relevant to young voters, advocate for innovative voting reforms that expand access in the political process for young people, develop educational campaigns, and strategize on how to authentically engage young activists across the state.

CO-CHAIRS:

The Youth Working Group will have two co-chairs charged with coordinating the group's schedule, activities and overall strategy. The 2019-2020 Co-chairs are:

Brianna Cea, Generation Vote: Brianna Cea is the CEO and Co-founder of Generation Vote. For the past two years, Generation Vote has been at the forefront of expanding voting rights for young people across New York as the leading youth organizers for Let NY Vote.

Ben Weinberg, Citizens Union: Ben is the Policy and Program Manager at Citizens Union. CU has been an active member of the Let NY Vote coalition since its founding and sits on its steering committee as well as several ancillary committees.

LEADERSHIP OF YOUNG VOTING RIGHTS AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVISTS

The Let NY Vote Youth Working Group, and more broadly, Let NY Vote, is committed to honoring the leadership of young people in the coalition. Member organizations will agree to elevate the voices of young people in LNYV, and actively solicit feedback from young members of their organization.

The Youth Working Group encourages member organizations to consider nominating at least one young person to represent their organization on the Working Group calls.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

If you are a student activist and would like to sign up for the youth working group calls, please email Brianna Cea bcea@genvote.org or bweinberg@citizensunionfoundation.org.

If you are a staff member of a potential partner and would like to schedule an onboarding call, please fill out the LNYV Youth Working Group Partner Form.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Youth Voting,” Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://civicyouth.org/quick-facts/youth-voting/>.

² John Della Volpe, “Historic Turnout and Performance by Young Voters,” Harvard Kennedy School of Government Institute of Politics, November 7th, 2018, <https://iop.harvard.edu/about/newsletter-press-release/memo-historic-turnout-and-performance-young-voters>.

³ “Final Analysis of State by State Youth Voter Turnout Shows Increases Across the Country,” Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University, May 20, 2019, <https://civicyouth.org/final-analysis-of-state-by-state-youth-voter-turnout-shows-increases-across-the-country/>.

⁴ Reynol Junco, Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, Lashon Amado, Victoria Fahlberg, Laurel Bliss, *Expanding the Electorate: How Simple Changes in Election Administration Can Improve Voter Participation Among Low Income Youth*. Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University, and Opportunity Youth United, October 2018, https://civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/guide_election_participation_low_income_youth.pdf.

⁵ S4378 was first passed by the State Senate in the 2019 legislative session but died in the Assembly. On January 10, 2020, the State Senate reintroduced and passed S04378 in the 2020 legislative session.

⁶ S. 4378, 2019-2020 Reg. Sess. (N.Y. 2019).

⁷ Assemb. 8783, 2019-2020 Reg. Sess. (N.Y. 2019).

⁸ *Democracy's Future: Proposals to Expand Access to Registration and Voting for a New Generation*, Fair Elections Center, 2019, https://642cf75b-6e65-4c0d-82e2-1135e0523f7.filesusr.com/ugd/85cfb4_bcb814a781c84c10a1cdb0dc0a7f55b1.pdf.

⁹ Robert Lopes-Irizarry, *Testimony of Generation Vote Submitted to the New York State Senate and Assembly Standing Committees on Elections at the Hearing Regarding the Regarding the Implementation of Early Voting*, Generation Vote, Nov. 20, 2019. Available at <https://www.genvote.org/pdf/Early%20Voting%20Testimony.pdf>

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¹¹ Daniel A. Smith, *On-Campus Early In-Person Voting in Florida in the 2018 General Election*, The Andrew Goodman Foundation, August 9th, 2019, <https://andrewgoodman.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/On-Campus-Early-In-Person-Voting-in-Florida-in-the-2018-General-Election-FINAL-8-9.pdf>.

¹² *Id.* at 7.

¹³ Anisha Singh, Brittney Souza, and Danielle Root. *Pro Voter Reforms Were Key to Young Americans Voting in the 2018 Elections*. Center for American Progress. February 21st, 2019.
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2019/02/21/466450/pro-voter-reforms-key-young-americans-voting-2018-elections/>

¹⁴ *Id.* at 3.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.* at 13.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 3.

¹⁹ Robert Harding, “NY Lawmakers OK SUNY/CUNY Schools As Voter Registration Sites,” *Auburn Pub*, June 20, 2019, https://auburnpub.com/blogs/eye_on_ny/ny-lawmakers-ok-suny-cuny-schools-as-voter-registration-sites/article_d340ba5c-4d9f-5ca1-9595-ddbc732bbfd2.html

²⁰ Letter from Andrew Cuomo and Chairman Carl McCall and Chairman William Thompson, July 24, 2017, https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Letter_to_SUNY_and_CUNY.pdf

²¹ S1128 was signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo on December 6, 2019, based on an agreement that the Legislature will remedy deficiencies and provide SUNY and CUNY additional time to implement the new registration requirements. *See* Approval Mem. No. 30 Chapter 587. Amd §5-211, El L.

²² Cal. EDUC § 66852 (2020). In Maryland, the Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020 was recently introduced by Assembly member Luedtke. H.B. 245, 441st Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess. (Md. 2020).

²³ “Voting Age for Primary Elections,” National Conference of State Legislatures, May 9, 2018, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/primaries-voting-age.aspx>; Seventeen-year-olds are allowed to vote in primary elections in New York. Senator Diane Savino has proposed an amendment to the state constitution to allow seventeen-year-olds to vote in the primary presidential election, as long as they will turn eighteen-years-old by the presidential general election. S.3822, 2019-2020 Reg. Sess. (N.Y. 2019).

²⁴Ben Brachfeld, “As New York Votes, a Push to Allow 17-Year-Olds the Ballot Next,” *Gotham Gazette*, November 8, 2017, <https://www.gothamgazette.com/state/7303-as-new-york-votes-a-push-to-allow-17-year-olds-the-ballot-next>.

²⁵ Erika Wood, *Restoring the Right to Vote*, Brennan Center for Justice, 2009, https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_Restoring-the-Right-to-Vote.pdf.

²⁶ “CIRCLE Poll: Young People’s Ambivalent Relationship with Political Parties,” Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University, Oct. 24, 2018, <https://civicyouth.org/circle-poll-young-peoples-ambivalent-relationship-with-political-parties/>.

²⁷ For example, when California implemented pre-registration of 16 and 17-year olds, nearly half of the students who pre-registered rejected political parties altogether. See Andrew Sheeler, “High School Students Can Pre-Register to Vote. This Woman is Making Sure They Do”, *The Sacramento Bee*, Sept. 25, 2018, <https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article218994780.html>.

²⁸ “Voter Turnout of Youth Aged 18-19 Shows States Having Varied Success at Growing Voters,” Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University, Sept. 19, 2019, <https://civicyouth.org/voter-turnout-of-youth-aged-18-19-shows-states-having-varied-success-at-growing-voters/f>.

²⁹ *Id.* at 4.

³⁰ See Shanetta Martin, Karen Pittman, Thaddeus Ferber, Ada McMahon, *Building Effective Youth Councils, a Practical Guide to Engaging Youth in Policy Making*, Forum for Youth Investment, July 2007, <http://med-fom-learningcircle.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2010/09/Building-Effective-Youth-Councils.pdf>.

³¹ As of 2009, the following states had functioning statewide youth advisory councils: Maine, Nevada, New Mexico, Washington, New Hampshire, Louisiana, Iowa, Maryland, North Carolina, Nebraska, Arizona and Missouri. NCSL. See National Conference on State Legislatures, *Statewide Legislative Youth Advisory Councils* [PDF File], accessed January 18, 2020, retrieved from http://www.ncsl.org/print/cyf/councils_grid.pdf.

³² “Growing Voters: Engaging Youth Before They Reach Voting Age to Strengthen Democracy,” Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University, August 14, 2019, <https://civicyouth.org/growing-voters-engaging-youth-before-they-reach-voting-age-to-strengthen-democracy/>.

³³ *Id.* at 8.

³⁴ The NY Election Code was recently amended to lower the age requirement to 17 years old for poll workers. The election code does not include an explicit allowance for part-time or half-day shifts. N.Y. Elec. Law § 3-401(5); N.Y. Elec. Law § 5-102.

³⁵ *Id.* at 8.

³⁶ “Voting With Their Wallets: The Largely Untapped Potential of Youth as Political Donor,” Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. Sept. 13, 2019, <https://civicyouth.org/voting-with-their-wallets-the-largely-untapped-potential-of-youth-as-political-donors/>

³⁷ Heath Brown, “New York Should Give ‘Democracy Dollars’ to Kids”, *Gotham Gazette*, May 24, 2019, <https://www.gothamgazette.com/opinion/8523-new-york-city-should-give-democracy-dollars-to-kids>

³⁸ CIRCLE listed pre-registration, online voter registration, same day registration and automatic voter registration as “facilitative election laws” for increasing youth voter turnout. See “YESI Spotlight: Facilitative Election Laws,” Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University, May 31, 2018 , <https://civicyouth.org/yesi-spotlight-facilitative-election-laws/>.

³⁹ Dori Newman, “New York’s Preregistration Law Goes Into Effect January 1. Counties Are Not Paying Attention, but Students Will,” *Civic Center*, November 21, 2019 <https://thecivicscenter.org/blog/2019/11/21/new-yorks-preregistration-law-goes-into-effect-january-1-counties-are-not-paying-attention-but-students-will>

⁴⁰ For instance, see Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 28A.230.150 (West 2018). In 2018, Washington State created a "future voter" program to implement pre-registration for 16 and 17-year-olds, mandated voter registration events for high school seniors, and requires the superintendent of public instruction to report county youth voter registration rates and plans to increase youth registration.

⁴¹ S. 6463, 2019-2020 Reg. Sess. (N.Y. 2019).