



## **MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT – A. 4015(Kavanagh)/S. 1057 (Addabbo)**

**March 30, 2009**

### **Title**

An act to amend the election law, in relation to affidavit ballots.

### **Summary**

This bill amends subdivision 3 of §8-302 of the Election Law to provide that affidavit ballots submitted on Election Day at a polling place shall also constitute an application to register to vote.

### **Statement of Support**

Citizens Union supports A.4015/S.1057 because it would allow voters' affidavit ballots cast on Election Day to be used to create or update their registration records. This practice would allow a voter whose voter registration may have been lost or inputted incorrectly to correct their information without resubmitting a voter registration form. The companion Senate bill, S.1057, was passed on February 26, 2009.

Citizens Union of the City of New York is an independent, nonpartisan civic organization of New Yorkers that works to ensure fair elections, publicly financed campaigns, and open, effective government that is accountable to the citizens of New York. Citizens Union provides a voice for these issues and seeks to advance meaningful election reform at the state and local level.

While the law currently does not require affidavit ballots that are cast during an election to be used to update or register a voter, many local boards of elections across the state already use this procedure. In New York City, however, this is not the practice; when a voter whose name does not appear in the poll site books casts an affidavit ballot and the ballot is found to be invalid because such person is not a registered voter, the voter must actively register or re-register himself or herself in order to be eligible to vote in future elections.

This bill takes an important step toward simplifying the voter registration process by (1) eliminating the step of requiring potential voters to register after they have already provided their personal information on their affidavit ballot; and (2) providing voters who may have had their voter registrations improperly entered or lost an opportunity to correct these mistakes in advance of future elections. This bill would ensure that voters who are under the impression that they are indeed eligible to vote and registered are not prevented from casting ballots in future elections and reduce confusion about their voter status. In addition, this bill would help address uncertainty surrounding voters who claim they did register to vote, but find themselves absent from voter poll books on Election Day.

We urge the Legislature to promptly pass this legislation. Citizens Union appreciates the opportunity to share its views and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Legislature to take steps to advance meaningful election reform to ensure that all eligible voters are able to participate in elections and have faith that their votes will be accurately counted.