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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of New York State

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF:
A.9108 Cusick/ S.6452A Stewart-Cousins

TO: Assembly Elections Committee
DATE: January 29, 2016

Subject: An act to amend the election law, in relation to primary elections and amending certain deadlines to facilitate the timely transmission of ballots to military voters stationed overseas; to amend the public officers law, in relation to filling vacancies in elective offices; and to amend the election law, in relation to date of primary elections.

The League of Women Voters of New York State strongly supports A.9108/S.6452A, which would create a single combined congressional and state June primary date and would bring New York State into compliance with the Military Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. The MOVE Act was designed to provide greater protection of the voting rights of military personnel, their families, and other overseas citizens. The League believes that a single primary is the only and best way to ensure that our military men and women are not disenfranchised and that voter participation does not suffer.

For several years, New York has had one of the lowest voter participation rates of the 50 states and Washington, D.C., ranking 49th in turnout in the 2014 election, with primary elections having even lower rates. Multiple primary dates serve only to confuse voters and contribute to New York's low voter participation rate. In addition, the unnecessary multiple primaries create a significant fiscal burden for local municipalities. Combining congressional and state primaries would save New York localities tens of millions of dollars and is the fiscally responsible alternative to a confusing and unnecessary multiplicity of primaries.

Now is the time for the Legislature to act and do what is best to maximize voter participation, protect the voting rights of overseas personnel, and eliminate the unnecessary costs of separate congressional and state primaries.

The League of Women Voters of New York State urges your support of this legislation.