

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

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May 3, 2018
Start: 1:24 p.m.
Recess: 1:42 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.
14th Fl.

B E F O R E: FERNANDO CABRERA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Ben Kallos
Alan N. Maisel
Bill Perkins
Keith Powers
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Kalman Yeger

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Jorge Ortiz, 32BJ

2 [sound check]

3 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Alrighty. [gavel]

4 Good afternoon and welcome to this hearing of the
5 Committee on Government Operations. I'm Council
6 Member Fernand Cabrera, and we've been joined by
7 Council Member Kallos, Council Member Yeger, Council
8 Powers, and Council Member Perkins. Today we are
9 holding a hearing and vote on six resolutions all
10 related to election and campaign finance reform in
11 New York State. First, we have Resolution 307
12 sponsored by myself calling upon the New York State
13 Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign
14 legislation that would authorize same day voter
15 registration in New York, which will allow eligible
16 residents to register to vote and cast a ballot at a
17 pole site on Election Day. Too often, people may be
18 unaware that they are not currently registered to
19 vote, yet feel strongly enough about an election to
20 want to come into a poll site to participate in
21 democracy. We should be encouraging people to vote
22 not discouraging them from doing so simply because
23 paperwork was not submitted in time. Same day
24 registration will fix this situation. Second, we
25 have a Preconsidered Resolution sponsored by myself

2 calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass
3 and the Govern to sign legislation in relation to the
4 political expenditure of limited liability companies,
5 the LLC loophole as is often referred to is an
6 accident of history that these limited liability
7 companies differently from other companies and
8 corporations. This has been used to introduce more
9 corporate money into state elections than would
10 otherwise be permitted. This resolution is asking
11 the state to close that loophole. Third, we have
12 another Preconsidered Resolution sponsored by myself
13 calling upon the State, New York State to pass, and
14 the Governor to sign legislation in relation to
15 requiring a new party to file a certificate following
16 the election of which the party obtains party status.
17 Currently, there is no deadline for a new party to
18 submit its name and logo. So, they will be included
19 on the voter registration form, and this will permit
20 the more timely printing of complete border
21 registration form. Fourth, we have a Preconsidered
22 Resolution sponsored by Speaker Corey Johnson calling
23 upon the State the New York State Legislature to pass
24 and the Governor to sign the Voter Enfranchisement
25 Modernization Act of 2018, an act which establishes

2 an electronic personal voter registration process and
3 provides for online voter registration. This
4 committee under the sponsorship of its prior Chair
5 Council Member Ben Kallos has already taken on the
6 decision of universal online voter registration by
7 passing legislation last year to create Social Portal
8 for the city. However, this resolution is asking the
9 State to introduce true universal online voter
10 registration for the entire state. Fifth, we have
11 Preconsidered Resolution sponsored by Ben Kallos
12 calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass
13 and the Governor to sign legislation authorizing
14 ballot by mail, a no excuse absent ballot voting and
15 early voting. Council Member Kallos will soon
16 discuss this issue in more detail. Finally, we have
17 a Preconsidered Resolution sponsored by Council
18 Member Keith Powers calling upon the New York State
19 Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign
20 legislation improving the format of ballot proposal
21 to minimize confusion. Council Member Powers will
22 also discuss his resolution in greater detail
23 momentarily. These resolutions cover a wide range of
24 issues from fixing small confusions to addressing
25 large structural problems with our state-state

2 system. Together, I believe that they will bring a
3 big step forward for our city, and our state and I
4 would encourage members of our committee to support
5 them. I would—I would like to thank your Speaker
6 Corey Johnson for placing such an importance on the
7 issues of election, and campaign finance reform. I
8 will also ask—I would also like to thank Council
9 Member Ben Kallos and Keith Powers not only for
10 sponsoring two of today's resolutions but also for
11 being tirelessly—tireless advocates for improving our
12 elections. I would also like to thank the entire
13 committee for its work in support of our efforts, and
14 finally, I would like to thank our committee staff,
15 our wonderful staff Committee Counsel Brad Reed,
16 Policy Analyst Elizabeth Cronk, Finance Analyst Zack
17 Harris and my own Legislative Director Claire
18 McLeveighn for making these hearings possible. I'll
19 now ask Council Member Kallos and Council Member
20 Powers to make to make opening statements.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: In the interest
22 of time, I'd like to waive, and just say that this is
23 important, and we look forward to supporting our
24 Albany and do an incentive. (sic)

2 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: You're a champion.
3 Thank you so much.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: In the interest
5 of time, I echo Council Member Kallos' comments, but
6 I do thank the committee staff and the committee for
7 prioritizing and ensuring that our elections are—are—
8 are more fair and—and we can have an increased
9 turnout and, of course, in my resolution that people
10 know actually where to find the things that they're
11 voting for. So, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much.
13 You're another true champion. This is truly the
14 dream team. At this moment, I would like to ask the
15 Jorge Ortiz from 32BJ to testify. [pause]

16 JORGE ORTIZ: Good afternoon gentlemen
17 and ladies. My name is Jorge Ortiz. I've been a
18 member of 32BJ for 45 years. On behalf of 32BJ SEIU,
19 I want to thank the New York City Council Committee
20 of Governmental Operations for holding this hearing
21 on key voting reforms. As a union, we are 163,000
22 members strong. In New York City we represent 85,000
23 Bedford-Stuyvesants working who keep our city
24 residential buildings, schools, offices, stations,
25 and neighborhoods clean and safe. We proudly fight

2 for the rights of all of the members. We are a
3 working class of people of color to live safe and
4 healthy life with dignity and respect. 32BJ members
5 their active and they know about the process. We
6 support many of the core principles who really are
7 under consideration in the Albany are being proposed
8 today as a resolution. These principles include:
9 Same Day Voter Registration; Automatic Voter
10 Registration, and most of the problem is seated not
11 on the Department of Motor Vehicles. A 12-day voting
12 period was at least two weekends of voting and even
13 in as ours as well as funding to support counties.
14 (sic) Many-many registration are 16 and 17 years
15 old. We thank the Speaker, Chair Cabrera, Council
16 Member Carlos and the Council Members for pushing
17 this key resolution. We order Albany to take action
18 now to ensure that New York has truly promises it's
19 voting policy. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you, so much.
21 Any questions. No. Yes, you have a question.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I-I want to say
23 thank you for the testimony and-and I know that I was
24 actually at a hearing yesterday where a member from
25 32BJ also testified around bail, and bail reform.

2 So, I want to just say thank you for being part of a
3 conversation that's happening now.

4 JORGE ORTIZ: I want to thank you for
5 listening to me.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Yeah, thank you.

7 JORGE ORTIZ: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: [interposing]

9 Well, I want to—

10 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] Wait—
11 wait, wait.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: One moment to ask
13 him. (sic)

14 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Go here, go here.
15 One more.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS [Speaking
17 Spanish]

18 JORGE ORTIZ: [Speaking Spanish]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So, have we, um,
20 a—some legislators in Albany that are supporting
21 this—this bill that you know of?

22 JORGE ORTIZ: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, do you—okay,
24 very good.

25 JORGE ORTIZ: Thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: I'm glad to hear
3 that.

4 JORGE ORTIZ: Another question?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: That—that makes
6 it difference sometimes.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Any other questions
8 and Council Member Perkins I know you served the
9 Senate very well. Thank you for all your service
10 that you did there, and I'm sure you have a lot of
11 influence still there. [laughs]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Well, it's good
13 to be at the Council.

14 JORGE ORTIZ: Yes, a blessing for me.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Helping folks in
16 Albany and wherever.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: There you go.

18 JORGE ORTIZ: Well, I thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Muchas Gracias.

20 JORGE ORTIZ: Very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much,
22 and with that, we're getting ready to vote. I'm
23 going to ask the Clerk to-to call the roll.

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1 COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS 11

2 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk.

3 Roll call vote Committee on Government Operations.

4 All items are coupled. Chair Cabrera.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: I vote aye, and I
6 want to congratulate Council Member Ben Kallos and
7 Council Member Powers on their Reso, and I encourage
8 all of the members to vote yes, and also neglected to
9 recognize we've also been joined by Council Member
10 Maisel.

11 CLERK: Kallos.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: With
13 congratulations to our Chair and Council Member
14 Powers, aye on all.

15 CLERK: Maisel.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Yes.

17 CLERK: Perkins.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: I vote aye on
19 all and congratulations to all the sponsors, and glad
20 to be a part of this.

21 CLERK: Powers.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I vote aye on
23 all. Thank you.

24 CLERK: Yeger.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: May I be excused
3 to explain my vote, Mr. Chairman?

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Absolutely.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you. Mr.
6 Chairman, I join you and my colleagues in
7 congratulating Council Member Kallos, Council Member
8 Powers and, of course, yourself, Mr. Chairman for
9 your commitment to democracy. While I support many
10 of these bills, many of these resolutions, and the
11 bills to—of which they are subject in Albany, with
12 respect to one particular resolution, I am not able
13 to vote in favor, and I wish to explain why. It
14 would be Resolution with the Temporary Assignment
15 Number of T2018-1885 by good friend and very wise
16 colleague Council Member Kallos, and I—while I
17 support part of the resolution, I do not support in
18 its entirety. I support Council Member Levine's Bill
19 A960-AB, which would provide registered voters with
20 seven days of early voting. I think early voting is
21 important in our democracy. I think it gives us an
22 opportunity to get people out who can't otherwise
23 show up on Election Day during the 15 hours that
24 polls are open. However, I cannot support Bill A7623
25 and the Senate Bill 840, which would provide for no

2 excuse absentee ballot voting. I believe that our
3 democracy is important enough that it should not
4 become the functional equivalent of owning stock in
5 Kellogg's where we get a mail-in ballot. We send it
6 in. We call it day. We walk away, and I'm also
7 concerned about the incidents and the potential
8 instances of fraud in my great Borough of Brooklyn
9 where everything is always perfect except for this
10 little part that I'm going to describe. We a have
11 seen elections where unscrupulous people engage in in
12 absentee ballot fraud, which in my view and the view
13 of many people involved in litigation about this,
14 cost elections to the Democrats, and I think that
15 that's something that we should be very vigilant
16 about. Now, I'm not one of those people who believe
17 that people should be forced to show ID at a pole
18 because of this, you know, alleged fraud. I don't
19 believe in that. I don't think it's true. I don't
20 think it's demonstrable, and it's never really
21 something that's affected elections, but I think when
22 open up the paper ballot and the mail—the mail-in
23 ballot to allow where anybody can kind of walk around
24 with a clip board and sign people up to receive
25 ballots by mail, send them in and there's no real

1 COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS 14

2 tracking and there's no real accountability, that's
3 something that I can't support. So, I vote aye on
4 all with the exception, as I indicated T2018-1885
5 and, of course, with my apologies to Mr. Kallos
6 because almost all of his ideas are almost always
7 perfect. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry. It is
8 imperfect. [laughs]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Can you tell my
10 wife?

11 CLERK: By a vote of 6 in the affirmative,
12 zero in the negative and no abstentions, all items
13 are adopted with the exception of Preconsidered
14 Resolution T#1885 which is adopted by a vote of 5 in
15 the affirmative, 1 in the negative and no
16 abstentions.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Thank you so much,
18 and we'll keep the roll open for another 15 minutes.
19 Life is good. Have a great day. [pause]

20 CLERK: Continuation of roll call, the
21 Committee on Governmental Operations. Council Member
22 Rodriguez.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

24 CLERK: The final vote in today's
25 committee all items are adopted by a vote of 7 in the

1 COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS 15

2 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions
3 with Preconsidered Resolution T#1885 being adopted by
4 a vote [pause] 6 in the affirmative, 1 in the
5 negative and no abstentions. [background comments
6 pause]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date May 31, 2018