

Set Dates for School Proposition Votes

S.1604 (Bonacic)(no same as)

June 9, 2015

ON ACTIVE LIST

THE COUNCIL OPPOSES this legislation that would set uniform statewide voting dates for school proposition votes.

This legislation proposes to establish a maximum of three statewide allowable school proposition voting dates: the third Tuesday in May, in conjunction with school budget votes and school board elections, and two additional dates to be set by the commissioner. This legislation would increase taxpayer costs and be problematic for school construction planning.

Placing all school district capital project votes on the same three dates would place a hyper-competitive premium on architects, contractors, and construction materials. All school districts in the state would be competing for these resources on the same schedule, driving costs considerably higher.

School districts currently hold bond votes on alternative schedules for efficiency and flexibility of operation, to ensure that construction is timely, and to allow the proposals to stand on their own merits apart from the school budget and board votes. There appears to be little compelling reason to alter this process. Continuing to allow school districts latitude to develop and approve projects on their own, unique local schedules will ensure the best financial and logistical outcome for the local community.

Finally, creating a few select dates for project approval also creates a time crunch for project reviews by the State Education Department's Office of Facilities Planning, which must approve school building projects to ensure the safety of the facilities. This Office is already underfunded and maintains a lengthy backlog of projects for approval (the wait is currently six months from date of submission). Creating few statewide deadline dates will virtually ensure that all projects are submitted to SED Facilities Planning at the same time and with the same due dates. This office simply cannot meet such a demand.

The New York State Council of School Superintendents **OPPOSES** this legislation and urges lawmakers to reject it.