



# NY ballots could be in for change



**W**ith a new-look State Legislature arriving in Albany, an old and oft-criticized New York political practice could be on the way out.

New York could cease to be one of the few states in the union that allow political candidates to appear on multiple ballot lines through the use of “fusion voting,” or cross-endorsements.

A “voting reform” package will be one of the early agenda items in Albany when the legislature — now controlled by Democrats in both houses — returns in January. It is likely to include items considered “low-hanging fruit,” such as combining federal and state primaries on one day, permitting “early” voting and easing registration.

It might also include a proposal to end cross-endorsements, a move favored by some legislators, sources said.

New York is one of just three states in the nation that permit a candidate’s name to appear on multiple ballot lines, according to Ballot Access News, a website that monitors election laws. (Several others allow multiple endorsements while still printing a candidate’s name just once on the actual ballot.)

For example, in November, **Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo** was on the ballot on the Democratic, Working Families, Women’s Equality and Independence party lines; challenger **Marc Molinaro** was on the Republican, Conservative and Reform party lines.



Candidates appear on multiple ballot lines through “fusion voting.”

The smaller parties have used their endorsements at times to get major-party politicians to advance their policy goals.

But critics say the minor parties use Republicans and Democrats for financial support and patronage positions sprinkled across state and local governments.

“Fusion voting came out of the industrial Midwest by those who were trying to break single-party dominance,” said **Jim Twombly**, a professor of American politics at Elmira College. “Here in New York, the way it’s been applied” has been more about “how a minor party can feed off” major parties in exchange for a ballot line.

Further, minor parties push candidates more to the extreme left or right as a price for scoring an endorsement. It can result in the fringe parties becoming the “tail wagging the dog.” — that is, calling the shots on policy positions and candidate selections.

The issue of minor party en-

endorsements is a “sometimes insurmountable millstone in the way of statewide election contests,” **Norman Green**, a Chautauque County elections commissioner and a Democrat, said earlier this year in a call to end fusion voting.

Minor party officials say multiple ballot lines offer voters a choice to express themselves and their values. But really, the practice doesn’t actually expand the number of candidates, Twombly said.

With the exception of the Green Party, the other minors hardly ever nominate their own candidates, but rather support a Democrat or Republican. Even when the Working Families Party nominated **Cynthia Nixon** for governor last spring, it eventually dumped her and backed Cuomo after he won the Democratic primary.

Cuomo supported ending cross-endorsements in 2013, but the idea went nowhere. But the legislature is vastly different now.

## SPINCYCLE

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### Chairman role for Halpin?

Former Suffolk County Executive **Patrick Halpin** will be proposed as the new \$32,000-a-year chairman of the Suffolk County Water Authority when newly elected Democratic State Sen. James Gaughran leaves the agency to take his seat in Albany in January.

**Rich Schaffer**, Suffolk Democratic chairman, said he will recommend Halpin to the 11-member majority Democratic caucus of the Suffolk Legislature. The legislature must confirm the appointment.

Halpin, a Democrat who has been on the five-member authority board since 2006, would be named to fill the remainder of Gaughran’s term as chairman, which ex-

pires in March 2023.

Halpin’s board seat also must be filled, Schaffer said. Among those who have expressed interest in the \$18,000-a-year part-time job are **Tracey Edwards**, a former Huntington Town Board member; attorney **Michael White**, former executive director of the Long Island Regional Planning Council; and attorney **David Bishop**, a former Suffolk lawmaker.

Halpin is a former Suffolk legislator and state assemblyman and served as county executive from 1988 to 1991. He is a managing director at the political consulting firm Mercury Public Affairs and is chairman of the Babylon Town Planning Board.

— Rick Brand

### King gets back to hobby

Rep. **Peter King** (R-Seaford), off the campaign trail after winning his closest race in years, is back to appraising his favorite films, books and television series.

Two weeks ago, King delivered a rave review plus episode summary of the latest airing of “Blue Bloods,” a CBS show starring **Tom Selleck** as commissioner of the New York City Police Department.

“With the campaign over and successful, I was able to watch and absorb ‘Blue Bloods,’ which is clearly the most outstanding show on television. The episode was first rate,” King, 74, wrote in the review that was emailed to

campaign supporters and published on Facebook, where he often posts his reviews.

Last week, King blasted out a review of the political book, “Frank and Al: FDR, Al Smith, and the Unlikely Alliance That Created the Modern Democratic Party,” by **Terry Golway**. “A must read,” wrote King, a self-described “blue-collar conservative.”

“Having grown up in a family of **Al Smith** supporters in an Irish-American, working class neighborhood, I have a definite Al Smith bias,” King wrote of the former Democratic governor of New York and 1928 candidate for president.

— Scott Eidler

### Trotta eyes executive run

Suffolk Legis. **Robert Trotta** (R-Fort Salonga) has decided “to test the waters” for a possible run for county executive against Democratic incumbent **Steve Bellone**.

Trotta said he has scheduled a \$100-a-head fundraiser Dec. 5 at Del Vito’s Vineyard in Northport.

Republican county Comptroller **John M. Kennedy** says

he is weighing a run for the executive’s job. Other possible GOP contenders include Legis. **Tom Cilimi** of Bay Shore, the minority caucus leader, and Huntington Town Supervisor **Chad Lupinacci**.

Were Trotta to run for county executive, he could not run for re-election as a county lawmaker next year.

— Rick Brand

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