

NY

QOTV:

QUEER OUT THE VOTE

Why Elections Matter for Queer Lives



THE GUIDE // FOR COMMUNITY. BY COMMUNITY.

THE NEW
PRIDE
AGENDA

sage | Advocacy &
Services for
LGBTQ+ Elders
We refuse to be invisible®

 **NEW YORK
TRANSGENDER
ADVOCACY GROUP**

 **Caribbean**
EQUALITY PROJECT

**THE
CENTER**
THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL &
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CENTER

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INTRODUCTION

QOTV: Queer Out The Vote is a NYC-based collaborative campaign between leading LGBTQIA+ organizations working to inform, empower, and mobilize community members and our allies to show up to vote. Change doesn't wait. Neither do we.

Specifically, this guide provides relevant information to help voters navigate the electoral process, to understand what to take into consideration when voting, and countering misinformation about what's at stake. There is a deep understanding of the responsibility we have to one another in the LGBTQIA+ community at large. **From Stonewall to today, our power is in our pride—and our pride is in our vote.**

Crafted with the theme of ***Justice at the Polls = Justice in Our Lives***, the purpose of this resource is to draw connections between ballot choices and lived realities. Along with framing voting as part of the larger struggle for racial, gender, and economic justice.

OVERVIEW

Based upon conversations with community partners, following the current election, and meeting our community where they are, this guide will cover the following topics:

- Voter Education 101 – Registration, roles, and rights
- Temp Check – LGBTQ+ rights since the last election
- Big Picture & Broad Strokes vs Individual & Party Lines
- #FlipTheBallot –What, How, Why of the Proposals

DISCLAIMER

This guide is up to date to the best of the author's knowledge as of the publication date. However, it is not a substitute for legal advice or representation. For specific legal concerns, please consult a legal professional.

PURPOSE: THE WHY

New York has made immense progress in protecting LGBTQ+ residents over the last few years. However, this upcoming midterm election is a critical reminder that our state-level victories are not immune against federal rollbacks and attacks.

THE ACLU IS TRACKING [528](#) ANTI-LGBTQ+ BILLS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES



"No LGB WITHOUT the T" Protest • February 14, 2025, New York City

Our community is growing, and we're not stopping anytime soon. As of 2025, 9.0% of U.S. adults identify as LGBTQ+, essentially unchanged from 9.3% in 2024 (Gallup). Moreover, 8% of LGBTQ+ adults make up NY state's electorate, and an unprecedented 20% of New Yorkers ages 18-24 identify as LGBTQ+. Our community holds the definitive power to safeguard our hard-earned progress, and elect candidates who understand our lived experiences and can champion policies that actually improve community well-being. This Voter Guide will empower you with the information needed to hit the ballot box this November, defend our legal safeguards, and prove that New York will continue to lead the nation in equality.

LOCAL ELECTIONS MATTER.



"Rise Up for Trans Youth" Rally • February 8, 2025, New York City | Credit: Donna Aceto

Races for Governor, Congresspeople, State Legislators, Attorney General, Comptroller, and ballot proposals directly affect:

- Youth homelessness programs
- Transgender healthcare initiatives
- LGBTQ+ community funding and safe spaces
- Police and public safety policies that affect LGBTQ+ people



Remember: Laws protecting LGBTQ+ people are not guaranteed, they depend on legislators and policies.

Even small local elections can **shift budgets and priorities** that impact LGBTQ+ lives immediately. **Voting is both protection and empowerment.** Every vote strengthens the community's voice, safeguards rights, and ensures that LGBTQ+ needs — from housing to healthcare to safety — are included in the political conversation.

Local elections matter because they determine who shapes New York's laws, funds protections, and enforces anti-discrimination measures.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: QUEER & TRANS ACTIVISM AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

ROOTS IN RESISTANCE

1960s-1970s

Stonewall Uprising (1969, NYC): More than a “riot”, a police raid sparks a nationwide LGBTQ+ liberation movement of the modern era.

Directly linked direct action with voter mobilization, recognizing that policy change required political power.

>> **KEY GROUPS: GAY LIBERATION FRONT, GLSEN**



PROTESTS TO POLICY

1980s-1990s

HIV/AIDS Crisis: LGBTQ+ activists, particularly trans & queer people of color, demanded government accountability for healthcare access and public funding.

Directly linked direct action with voter mobilization, recognizing that policy change required political power.

>> **KEY GROUPS: ACT UP, GMHC**

Marriage Equality Movement: Early campaigns emphasized legal recognition through courts and legislation, highlighting that civic participation could advance equality.



INSTITUTION OF RIGHTS

2000s-2010s

LGBTQ+ groups increasingly focused on **voter registration, education, and turnout** to influence elections at local, state, and national levels.

Intentional organizational focus and encouragement of elected officials to champion LGBTQ+ rights and support LGBTQ+ candidates.

>> **KEY GROUPS: HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN, LAMBDA LEGAL, VICTORY FUND**

Local wins (e.g. NYC anti-discrimination laws, transgender rights, etc) demonstrated the impact of **targeted civic participation**.





KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

How to Vote in the General Election

KEY GROUPS: LAMBDA LEGAL, NYCLU,
NY LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP

ALL VOTERS IN NEW YORK HAVE THE RIGHT TO

1. **Vote if you are registered** — You cannot be turned away for your political beliefs, appearance, or demographic characteristics.
2. **Cast a ballot privately and securely** — Every voter is entitled to a private voting booth.
3. **Vote if your registration is in question** — You can cast a provisional (affidavit) ballot if your name does not appear on the rolls.
4. **Receive assistance if needed** — This includes language assistance, accessibility assistance, and help for voters with disabilities.
5. **Vote without intimidation or harassment** — Federal law and New York State law prohibit voter intimidation, coercion, or discrimination at polling sites.
6. **Correct errors on your registration** — You may update your name, address, or party affiliation up to the registration deadline.

LGBTQ+ SPECIFIC PROTECTIONS IN NEW YORK

GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION

Poll workers cannot refuse your right to vote based on your gender identity or presentation. Name or gender marker mismatches on your ID cannot prevent you from voting — you may cast a provisional ballot if necessary.

NAME CHANGE PROTECTIONS

If you've legally changed your name, your registration should reflect it. If not, you can still vote using a provisional ballot and provide documentation.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

Your gender identity or LGBTQ+ status cannot be disclosed or used to discriminate against you.

HARASSMENT / INTIMIDATION

NYC Human Rights Law and federal laws protect against intimidation, threats, or discriminatory behavior at polling places.

ACCESSIBLE VOTING

You may request election assistance or accommodations to ensure you can vote privately and securely.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CHALLENGED AT THE POLLS

1. STAY CALM AND KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

- You have the right to vote if you are properly registered.
- You cannot be turned away based on race, gender identity, sexual orientation, or appearance.
- You have the right to vote after release from incarceration, including while on parole or probation.
- You can ask the poll workers to follow proper procedure.
- You have the right to vote at an accessible polling place and receive assistance if you have a disability, need help reading or marking your ballot, or require language support.

2. REQUEST A PROVISIONAL BALLOT

- If your eligibility is questioned, you have the right to cast a provisional (affidavit) ballot.
- This ensures your vote will be counted once eligibility is verified.
- You should fill out the provisional ballot affidavit completely and keep a copy or tracking number if provided.

3. CONTACT A VOTER PROTECTION HOTLINE IMMEDIATELY

- NY Attorney General – Election Hotline: 1-866-390-2992
- NYC BOE Voter Hotline: 1-866-VOTE-NYC (1-866-868-3692)

Hotline staff can advise on your rights, walk you through the provisional ballot process, and escalate if necessary.

4. DOCUMENT THE SITUATION

- Write down the time, location, names of poll workers, and what happened.
- Take photos or screenshots if it's safe and legal to do so (for example, of notices or signage, not people without consent).
- This documentation helps ensure your vote is counted and can support complaints later.

5. SEEK LEGAL OR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Lambda Legal: lambdalegal.org/vote
- NYLAG LGBTQ+ Rights Project: nylag.org/lgbtq-rights
- NYCLU Voter Rights: nyclu.org

These organizations can help escalate challenges, advocate for your ballot to be counted, and provide legal guidance.

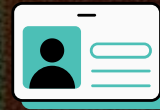
6. FOLLOW UP AFTER VOTING

- Check that your provisional ballot was counted (NY provides tracking for provisional ballots).
- Report any discrimination or intimidation to the NYC Commission on Human Rights (212-416-0197).

DISCRIMINATION & PRIVACY

- NYC Human Rights Law **protects you from discrimination at polling places.**
- You have the right to vote privately, safely, and free from intimidation or discrimination.
- If your name, gender marker, or appearance doesn't match your ID or presentation, you can still vote — **poll workers may not question your gender or identity.**

WHAT TO BRING / BE PREPARED FOR VOTING



Acceptable IDs or proof of address might include a valid photo ID, utility bill, bank statement, or gov't document showing your name & address.

Usually, registered voters do not need to show ID to vote, unless required or in the case of first-time voters without ID.



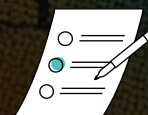
Bring a pen with you (blue or black ink preferably) in case you need to fill out any forms.

NYC BOE provides pens at most poll sites.



Have a charged phone. If you believe your rights are being violated at the polling site, call a voter protection or election hotline immediately.

- **1-866-687-8683 (English)**
- **1-888-839-8682 (Spanish)**
- **1-844-925-5287 (Arabic)**
- **1-888-274-8683 (Asian Languages)**



Make a plan. Decide when, where, how you'll vote. Check what's on the ballot **IN ADVANCE.**

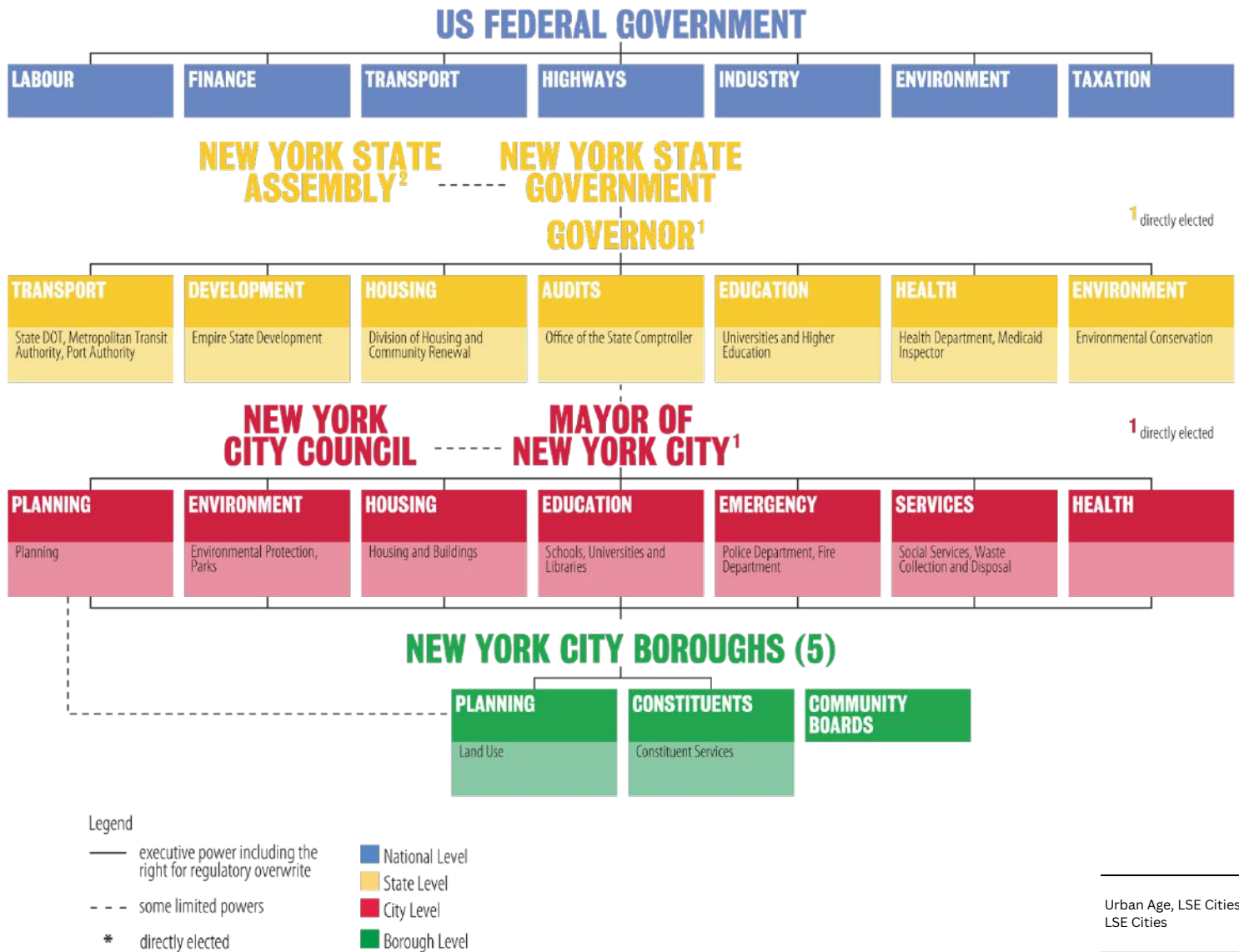
Use findmypollsite.vote.nyc



Vote with friends. Go with a buddy, group, or queer voting bloc – there's safety in numbers and it can feel affirming.

Wear your "I Voted" sticker. Queer visibility at the polls is powerful.

NEW YORK'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



OFFICES UP FOR ELECTION

GOVERNOR

Chief Executive
4-year Terms
Up to 2x
Consecutively

- Propose the state budget
- Sign or veto bills passed by the State Legislature
- Direct state agencies and departments
- Declare states of emergency & respond to crises
- Set statewide policy priorities on issues such as health care, housing, transportation, and education

LT. GOVERNOR

2nd highest
4-year Terms
Up to 2x
Consecutively

- Serve as acting Governor if the Governor is unavailable or leaves office
- Preside over the New York State Senate
- Represent the Governor at events and meetings
- Take on special initiatives and policy projects assigned by the Governor
- Help advance the Governor's legislative agenda

COMPTROLLER

Fiscal watchdog
4-year Terms
Up to 2x
Consecutively

- Audit state agencies and local governments
- Monitor how taxpayer dollars are spent
- Manage state's retirement & pension system
- Review state finances and issue public reports
- Process state payments and payroll
- Return unclaimed funds to New Yorkers and oversee state investments

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Chief Legal Officer
4-year Terms
Up to 2x
Consecutively

- Enforce state laws & protect public interest
- Investigate fraud, corruption, & consumer scams
- Defend New York State in legal matters
- Protect civil & voting rights
- Oversee charities & nonprofit compliance
- Take legal action against individuals, businesses, or organizations that violate state law

STATE SENATOR

Legislative /
Law-Making Rep
2-year Terms
Up to 2x
Consecutively

- Introduce, debate, and vote on state legislation
- Negotiate and approve the state budget
- Advocate for district needs and priorities
- Conduct oversight of state agencies and programs
- Help constituents access state services and resources

CONGRESSPERSON

Legislative /
Law-Making Rep
2-year Terms

- Introduce, debate, and vote on bills for federal laws
- Assist people with federal services and agencies
- Initiate all revenue bills, impeach federal officers

ASSEMBLYMEMBER

Legislative /
Law-Making Rep
2-year Terms
Up to 2x
Consecutively

- Introduce, debate, and vote on state legislation
- Help develop and approve the state budget
- Advocate for local community concerns
- Conduct oversight of state government programs
- Assist constituents with state services and agencies

SENATOR

Legislative /
Law-Making Rep
6-year Terms

- Introduce, debate, and vote on bills for federal laws
- Assist people with federal services and agencies
- Confirm US presidential appointments, approve/reject treaties, and convict/exonerate impeachment cases

COUNTY OFFICES

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

The District Attorney is the top prosecutor for their county. They serve for 4 years. There are no term limits.

- Decide which cases to prosecute (and which not to)
- Oversee all criminal prosecutions
- Investigate and prosecute criminal conduct

CIVIL COURT

Civil Court Judges can represent counties or districts, so you may see more than one Civil Court judge on your ballot. Judges are elected to 10-year terms and hear cases including:

- Civil matters up to \$25,000
- Landlord-tenant matters and cases involving maintenance of housing standards
- Criminal prosecution of misdemeanors

SURROGATE COURT

Surrogate Court - Surrogate Court judges decide cases involving the estates of county residents after their death. They serve terms of 14 years and hear cases including:

- Cases involving the affairs of the deceased such as wills and the administration of estates
- Adoptions
- Guardianships



The Hon. Norma Jennings became the first openly LGBTQ+ Black elected judge to be sworn in New York State on January 30, 2025. A reminder of how far we have come – and how far we have to go as a community.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING YOUR JUDGES

Judges play a critical role in interpreting laws, protecting rights, and shaping legal precedent. Unlike other elected officials, judges often make decisions that directly affect everyday life, from family law cases to criminal justice and civil rights issues. Because judicial elections can be less publicized, many voters may not have much information about candidates on the ballot. **Taking the time to research judicial candidates helps ensure that you make an informed decision based on qualifications, experience, and judicial philosophy rather than name recognition alone.**

BACKGROUND

Ballot proposals are suggested changes to the state and city's governing documents, the State Constitution, and the City Charter. Voters get to decide on the changes they want to see passed.

NYS voters can learn more about local proposals [here](#).



PROPOSALS 1-5 (CITYWIDE)

1: Speed Up Process for Granting a Revocable Consent to Use Public Space

Simplifies the process for allowing certain uses of public space, such as ramps, planters, and sidewalk cafés, by removing mandatory public hearings and City Council review of sidewalk café applications while maintaining community and Council input.

- A **YES** vote speeds up the approval process for certain uses of public space while maintaining community input.
- A **NO** vote keeps the current approval process, including mandatory public hearings and City Council review of sidewalk café applications.

2: Reduce City Contractor Paperwork

Reduces paperwork for businesses and organizations contracting with New York City by allowing the Procurement Policy Board to simplify the contractor responsibility questionnaire, requiring the Board to meet at least quarterly, and removing the mandatory public hearing requirement for a required client services report.

- A **YES** vote simplifies the contracting process by reducing paperwork, requiring regular Procurement Policy Board meetings, and allowing the Mayor to delegate certain contract approvals.
- A **NO** vote keeps the current contracting process and requirements, including the existing contractor questionnaire and approval procedures.





3: Speed Up Street Projects, Disposition of Unused City Property, and Office Leasing

Simplifies the approval process for street safety projects, allows certain unused City property to be transferred with approval from the City Planning Commission, and speeds up the leasing of office space for City agencies.

- A **YES** vote changes the New York City Charter to streamline the approval process for street safety projects, certain City property transfers, and office leasing.
- A **NO** vote leaves the New York City Charter unchanged, maintaining the current approval process, including agency consultation for street projects and City Council review of certain property transfers and office leases.

4: Simplify Building Permitting and Move Waterfront Permitting to the Department of Buildings

Creates a centralized construction permitting system to simplify the building permit process, transfers waterfront permitting from the Department of Small Business Services to the Department of Buildings, and allows additional Department of Buildings officials to approve certain construction applications.

- A **YES** vote simplifies the building permitting process by creating a centralized permitting hub and expanding the Department of Buildings' authority.
- A **NO** vote keeps the current permitting process and agency responsibilities unchanged.



5: Set Contribution Targets for the Rainy Day Fund to Promote Sufficient Budgetary Reserves

Sets a target amount of money for New York City to keep in its reserve funds, including the rainy day fund, to help prepare for future financial emergencies. Requires the Mayor to develop a method for calculating how much money should be deposited into these reserves.

- A **YES** vote establishes reserve fund targets and requires the Mayor to develop a method for determining contributions to the rainy day fund, subject to approval through the City budget.
- A **NO** vote keeps the current system, which does not require reserve fund targets or a formal method for calculating rainy day fund contributions.

NOTE TO COMMUNITY, FROM COMMUNITY

As we approach this year's crucial general elections, a dangerous misconception is taking root: the idea that because we live in a progressive "shield state", our rights are guaranteed and our votes do not matter.

However, this could not be further from the truth.

While New York State has codified some of the strongest protections for the LGBTQ+ community in the nation, such as our historic Equal Rights Amendment, the reality is that federal policies are actively eroding state-level statutes. Just recently, the federal government moved to finalize a catastrophic rule banning Medicaid and CHIP funds from covering essential gender-affirming healthcare for transgender youth.

New York's "shield laws" cannot stop the federal government from stripping away healthcare dollars. The only firewall we have left is the power of our vote.

This November, the future of our healthcare, our schools, and our safety will be decided. Every single seat in the New York State Legislature is up for election, alongside highly competitive Congressional seats that will determine the balance of power in Washington.

Our community holds the power to shape these outcomes.

When we show up, we win.

When we stay home, we concede our healthcare, our safety, and our futures to those who want to continuously erase us.

Do **not** let apathy dictate our futures. Check your registration, make a concrete plan, and bring your community with you to the ballot box.

COMMUNITY VOICES & SPOTLIGHTS

WHY YOUTH NEED TO SHOW UP

"In a time where our basic human rights are under threat, to vote is to not only take a step towards the ideal world we desire, but it also serves as evidence of our presence. Voting for LGBT+ youth is not only a right but a responsibility."

-MAJÈ LOUVERTURE, YOUTH ADVOCATE & ALI FORNEY CENTER'S YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER



"We want LGBTQ+ young people to know that their voices matter when it comes to building political power and hope as a community."

-JOHN CHO, YOUTH CLINICAL SERVICES MANAGER THE NYC LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER

TO IMMIGRANTS IN NYC AND BEYOND

"Protecting the rights and dignity of our migrant communities means ensuring that all folx, regardless of their gender identity or immigration status, know their rights and have their voices heard. Elevating our lived experiences is liberating not only for individual voters, but our communities as a whole."

-NAT MOGHE, DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY & PROGRAMS, NEW YORK TRANSGENDER ADVOCACY GROUP



"For immigrant communities, including LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers, elections transcend mere policies. Participating in this election is more than just a civic responsibility; it is an expression of solidarity with neighbors, friends, and families whose voices have long been politically disenfranchised."

-MOHAMED Q. AMIN, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CARIBBEAN EQUALITY PROJECT

YOUR VOTE = YOUR POWER

"Your vote matters so much that they dilute our electoral power by redrawing the districts to take away representation and funding from our communities."

-RAE LEINER, FIELD DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LGBTQ TASK FORCE



RESOURCES

LEGAL SUPPORT & ORGANIZATIONS

NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

They respond to voter issues on the ground (e.g. at polling places) and provide legal advocacy.

SYLVIA RIVERA LAW PROJECT

Provides free legal services and advocacy for low-income TGNCNBI+ folks, including support with identity documents, discrimination, immigration, and access to services.

COMMON CAUSE NEW YORK

Works on voter protection, monitoring, and assistance.

ADVOCACY INSTITUTE

Provides an interactive legislative mapping tool to understand New York government representation, with demographic & gender identity filters to support informed civic engagement.

LAWYER'S COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

National nonprofit network that staffs the 866-OUR-VOTE hotline and handles legal escalation for voting issues.

NYC VOTES

Nonpartisan NYC-focused voter info, "What's on the Ballot," how to cast a vote, voter rights.

RESOURCES FOR MIGRANTS

CENSUS INFO FOR LGBTQIA+ IMMIGRANTS

This infographic was created by the Caribbean Equality Project to answer FAQs for LGBTQ+ Migrants.

NYIC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COLLABORATIVE

The Civic Engagement Collaborative empowers immigrant communities by engaging in voter registration, advocacy, outreach, events, and trainings throughout New York State.

MOIA KNOW YOUR RIGHTS BOOKLET

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs has created KYR booklets in multiple languages to share information and resources.

STATEMENT ON MIGRANT RIGHTS

Immigrants, regardless of status, deserve to live with dignity, access critical services, and participate in their communities without fear of discrimination, harassment, or unnecessary barriers.

As voters consider candidates and policies, it's important to understand how decisions related to immigration enforcement, language access, public benefits, legal services, and access to affirming healthcare affects immigrant communities, including LGBTQIA+ and TGNCNB migrants. We must be dedicated to keeping ourselves and our communities informed so that all New Yorkers are able to understand their rights, access resources, and participate fully in civic engagement.

KEY DATES

CHANGE OF ADDRESS DEADLINE

Monday, 10/19

VOTER REG DEADLINE

Saturday, 10/24

ABSENTEE/VOTE BY MAIL APP DEADLINE

Saturday, 10/24

EARLY VOTING PERIOD

Saturday, 10/24 -
Sunday, 11/1

ELECTION DAY



IMPORTANT: Your Early Voting site may be different than your actual Election Day site. Be sure to confirm in advance.

WHAT ABOUT **AFTER** ELECTION DAY?

Voting is just ONE action that we shouldn't take for granted. But after the Election, it's important to stay engaged.

- Attend local meetings/public hearings
- Volunteer for a mutual aid group
- Keep up to date on what your leaders are doing, how they vote, and where they choose to appropriate funding



DISCLAIMER

As 501(c)(3) organizations, we remain nonpartisan—we do not support or oppose any political candidates or parties. Our mission is to educate, empower, and uplift the LGBTQ+ community by encouraging informed and engaged participation in the democratic process.

We urge LGBTQ+ voters and allies to research issues that impact our community, stay informed, and rely on trusted, factual sources when learning about elections or policies. While social media can be a helpful tool, always double-check information by reading from credible outlets and connecting with informed leaders, local organizations, or official election offices.

Your voice matters. Being informed and engaged helps ensure that our community's diverse perspectives and experiences are represented.

THANK YOU FOR READING

DISCLAIMER

This guide is up to date to the best of the authors' knowledge as of the publication date. However, it is not suitable for legal advice.

CREDIT

Key contributions include leading advocate G. Galloway, SAGE (Bryan Ellicott-Cook), New York Transgender Advocacy Group (Nat Moghe), Caribbean Equality Project (Mohamed Q. Amin), The NYC LGBT Community Center (Joey Uy) and NEW Pride Agenda (Kei Williams).

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