Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Expand Access to and Strengthen Democracy

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation to expand and strengthen democracy in New Jersey. The bills will provide protections and security for online voter registration while expanding access to the ballot for New Jerseyans. Today's signings add to the list of reforms expanding democracy enacted during the Murphy administration, including automatic voter registration and the restoration of the right to vote for residents on probation or parole.

"We are stronger and fairer when more New Jerseyans are represented in our democracy," **said Governor Murphy.** "Expanding access to voting is one of many ways we can work to enfranchise more voters and ensure that all eligible voters are able to participate in the democratic process."

- **S589 (Weinberg/Mosquera, Jones, Eustace, Moriarty)** - Requires Secretary of State to establish secure Internet website for online voter registration; authorizes use of digitized signatures from New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission's database.
- **S758 (Cunningham, Cruz-Perez/Sumter, Mukherji, Quijano)** - Requires incarcerated individual from State to be counted at residential address for legislative redistricting purposes.
- **A4564 (Zwicker, Freiman/Greenstein)** - Establishes "Voting Precinct Transparency Act;" requires filing of election district, county district, and municipal ward boundary data with Secretary of State for posting and download on official website with matching election results data.

"These voting bills, which will make democracy more accessible, more fair, and more transparent in our state, are reflective of grassroots efforts of advocates on the ground who are determined -- despite the troubling national moment we find ourselves in -- to build democracy from the ground up in New Jersey**," said Ryan P. Haygood, President & CEO of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice.** "We commend Governor Murphy for signing

these bills into law, and look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to continue to strengthen our democracy in the Garden State."

"These three laws offer promise to make our democracy more representative at a time when the principle of 'one person, one vote' has come under assault, and racially biased voting laws are being advanced nationwide. Everyone deserves a voice, whether through the ballot box or being counted truthfully when districts are apportioned, and these laws amplify that microphone democracy provides. Tearing down barriers and modernizing registration, shining a light into the electoral process, and allocating representation accurately are important steps toward a fairer, freer system of democracy. New Jersey has responded to attacks on our right to vote by strengthening the power of the people," **said ACLU-NJ Executive Director Amol Sinha.**

"Governor Murphy continues to lead the nation in reform for the criminal legal system**," said Bonnie Kerness, Director of the American Friends Service Committee Prison Watch Program.** "People in prison are from, and in a very real sense, remain present in the communities where their loved ones are. Given how much dialogue there is recently on election fraud, this is one clear way to restore broken communities."

"These reforms make our democracy more transparent, inclusive, and accessible. We applaud Governor Murphy and the legislature for their commitment to empowering voters and removing barriers to participation. At a time when too many Americans feel they do not have a meaningful voice in democracy, New Jersey is establishing ourselves as a leader in protecting the sacred right to vote and expanding access for those who have been marginalized and left out of our democratic process ," **said Jesse Burns, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey.**

"At a time when the right to vote is threatened all over the country, it is exciting to see New Jersey continue to enact pro-voter reforms," **said Myrna Pérez, director of the Voting Rights and Elections Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law.** "We hope other states follow New Jersey's lead."

S589

"It's time to bring our voter registration into the 21st century," **said Senator Weinberg.** "Over 30 states have already created an online system, and I'm glad that today, New Jersey will join them. It will not only make it easier for residents to register but it will be more environmentally friendly and save the state money over the cost of the paper system."

"Whether it's shopping or maintaining our bank accounts online, the Internet has become integral in our daily routines. Allowing people to register to vote online provides a similar ease for residents who wish to participate in general elections," **said Assemblywoman Mosquera.** "Online registration opens up opportunity for more residents and, particularly, new generations to register to vote more quickly and easily."

"Eligible voters should be able to register to vote from home or any place with a laptop and an Internet connection**," said Assemblywoman Egan Jones.** "It's more practical for the times we are in and it just makes sense."

"By making voter registration just a click away, we will better fit the needs of the next generation of voters," **said Assemblyman Moriarty.** "When we make it easier for residents to register to vote, we help ensure every eligible resident their right to be heard at the polls."

S758

"In most cases, incarceration is only temporary. It is unfair for inmates to be considered part of a community where they'll likely never live as a free citizen," **said Senator Cunningham**. "These individuals have personal and professional ties to the community they lived in prior to their incarceration. It is unfair to count them as part of the district which they are imprisoned when upon their release they will more than likely return to the area from which they came."

"Camden County has no prison facilities, but in 2018, there were 1652 individuals from Camden in State prisons. Those 1652 were counted as citizens of other counties, adding to the representation of those communities, despite hailing from Camden**," said Senator Cruz-Perez.** "Today New Jersey puts an end to the process of unfairly skewing districts and the resulting imbalances in our state representation."

Assemblymembers Shavonda Sumter, Raj Mukherji and Annette Quijano issued the following joint statement on the bill:

"By requiring incarcerated individuals to be counted at their last known residential address for legislative redistricting purposes, the bill would eliminate the inequity and ensure every eligible person is counted for one vote.

"To do this now is imperative to ensuring a complete an accurate count during the 2020 Census and a more balanced account of voters in all legislative districts in the state."

A4564

"Some states do a great job of providing precinct-level election results, others do a great job of providing precinct geographies," **said Assemblyman Zwicker**. "However, most states don't compile *either,* and the few that do, don't do so in a way that is standardized. Currently, New Jersey is one of the states that doesn't compile and

release them all. This new law would change that and indeed, would make New Jersey a leader in transparency about election data."

"Election data should be accessible to all in a format that is clear and understandable," **said Assemblyman Freiman.** "Our goal has always been to protect the rights of voters and ensure that all elections are fair and in compliance with federal mandates. This law is an added layer of security in order to do just that."

"The most important responsibility to preserving our fundamental freedoms is ensuring a fair election process," **said Senator Greenstein.** "We have the ability to effectively compile data and can easily share that information online for all to access. It is imperative for every precinct to partake in this process and today's signing underscores New Jersey's commitment to transparency, especially in our elections."