

“Social justice should be the underlying goal of all humanity.”

-Alan V. Lowenstein, Institute Founder



Testimony of Micauri Vargas
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
In Support of A5176

New Jersey State Assembly State and Local Government Committee
Thursday, May 11, 2023

Chairman Verrelli, Vice-Chair Swain and members of the Assembly State and Local Government Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

My name is Micauri Vargas, and I am an Associate Counsel in the Democracy & Justice Program at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (the “Institute”). The Institute uses cutting-edge racial and social justice legal advocacy to empower people of color by building reparative systems that create wealth, transform justice and harness democratic power—from the ground up—in New Jersey.

The Institute submits this testimony in support of A5176, which requires periodic reporting of election results on the night of primary and general elections and until the final tally thereafter. The Institute supported this provision last year when it was considered before the legislature and we support it again here today.

In addition to providing voter information, the Institute conducts social media monitoring during and after each election to both combat voter misinformation/disinformation and answer voter questions. The Institute is also a member of the nonpartisan New Jersey Election Protection Coalition. With our partners, we work to address voter issues and ensure voters have access to the ballot and trust our democracy.

The consistent and uniform posting of ballots received, counted and remaining following an election—along with a breakdown of vote-by-mail, early voting, and Election Day votes—will lead to greater voter trust in our democracy. In recent years, we have seen how inconsistent reporting can lead to voter confusion and, unfortunately, fester conspiracy theories online. This bill will help address those issues.

We also appreciate that this bill takes voter privacy into consideration. The secrecy of our votes is paramount to our democracy and this bill recognizes that.

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do social justice.

We did notice that the reporting of provisional ballots was removed in the latest amendments. Our concern is that this change invites distrust in the voting system. When elections are very close, provisional ballots can impact the outcome, so removing this subsection could sow voter distrust.

However, we are happy to see that a fiscal note was included in the amendments.

We urge you to vote this bill out of committee.

Thank you.