

EDITORIALS

NY primary rules need to change

For New Yorkers closely watching today's presidential primary voting in five states, your turn to go to the polls is only a month away. But some registered voters in New York won't get that chance. They're already five months too late to qualify.

Across the nation, voters energized, or dismayed, by the emergence of Donald Trump and the twists and turns of the 2016 presidential race are overwhelming polling booths and caucus sites. Some of these states allowed same-day registration or allowed members of one party to cross over to vote in another's primary.

New York, one of the most inflexible states about party affiliation, does neither. Here's what state law says about party membership and primaries: If you have never registered to vote in New York, March 25 is the deadline to get on the rolls and choose a party.

So, for first-time voters looking to boost Trump or another candidate, the Republican primary is open to you; just sign up for that party. Those followers of Bernie Sanders who join the Democratic Party before March 25 also will get a voice in the primary, which is why his campaign workers are out in force around downstate colleges.

However, if you are a member of any of the state's six minor political parties — or a "blank," the indelicate way the state labels those who specifically choose not to register with a party — you cannot vote on April 19. That's about one-third of New York State's registered voters. The deadline to switch parties was Oct. 9 (state law requires that any switch of registration must occur a month before the last general election). These sclerotic rules don't reflect the decline in party control as voters have more access to information about a candidate.

So Working Families Party members who want to support Sanders are out of luck. Conservatives, Independence Party members and blanks can't get a GOP primary ballot to give Trump or anyone else more delegates.

This is how New York's political parties maintain control over their nominating processes — to keep out insurgents or block the gamesmanship of crossover voters. Yet there is a difference between a closed primary and a locked one like New York's. Voters in this state should have more flexibility about how and when they can join a political party.

— *The editorial board*

Today's village elections give residents a voice

The presidential race isn't the only political contest being waged right now. On Long Island, another election date arrives today and it demands your participation if you live in one of the villages electing mayors and board of trustee members. At least eight villages have contested elections.

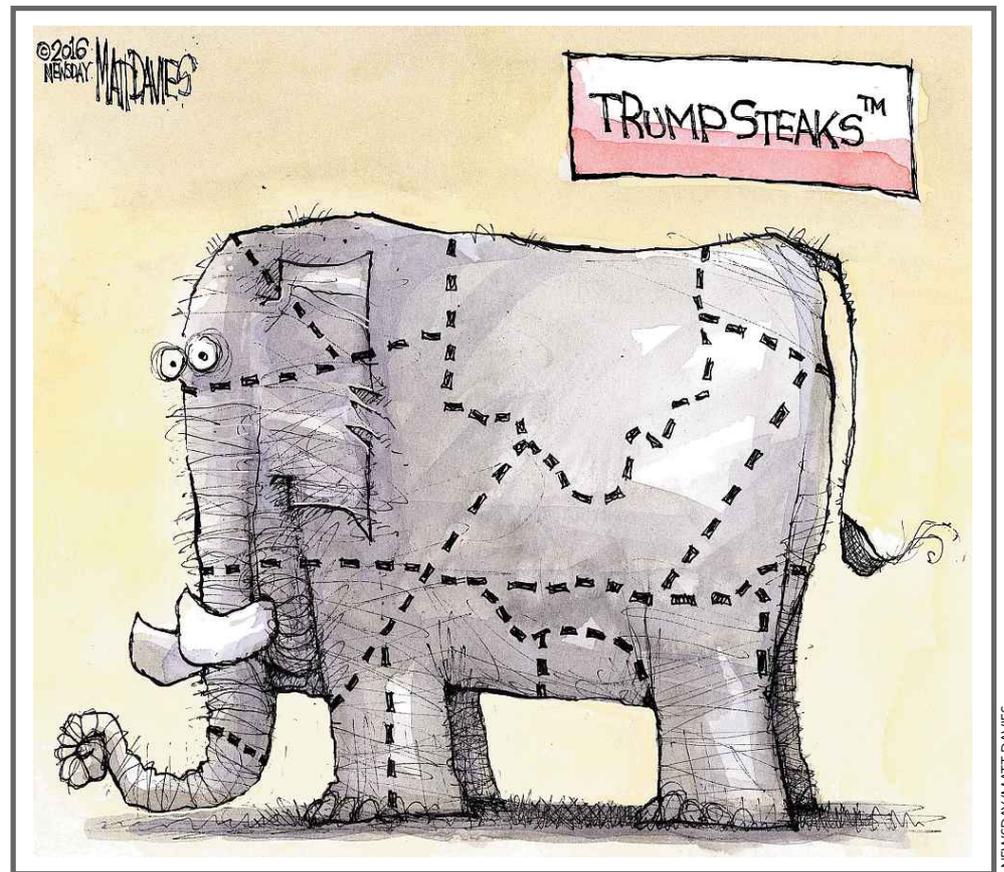
These races are important — because villages epitomize the idea of local control cherished by Long Islanders, because these officials control zoning and development in their communities, and because some of the most exciting development on Long Island is taking place in villages, especially those with train stations.

Multiple seats are open in Patchogue, Mineola and Lindenhurst, all of which are wrestling with downtown development. In Northport, harbor water quality is a key issue. Candidates in East Williston have been debating whether to continue getting water from a neighboring village or to dig their own well. Transparency is an issue in Head of the Harbor. In East Hills and everywhere else, responsible budgeting is important. And Roslyn Estates has only one candidate for two board seats, creating an opening for a write-in winner.

Be part of the excitement. Vote.

— *The editorial board*

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

Don't dismantle local water districts

Newsday's editorial "Gaining ground on water fight" [Feb. 19] refers to inefficiencies of water management on Long Island. The Nassau Suffolk Water Commissioners' Association is composed of 21 water districts, each with locally elected commissioners. The association provides information crucial to district management and operational effectiveness.

Each district enforces and complies with all county, state and federal regulations, and works with other dedicated, environmentally concerned organizations, including the bi-county Long Island Commission for Aquifer Protection. Through this and governmental supervision, our water is already managed regionally.

Independent local governance is critical to policy

and water supply decision-making in each community. Advocating the dismantling of water districts ignores community differences across Long Island and summarily takes away voting opportunities from the people of each community.

We agree with the governor's assessment that the "aquifer on Long Island is a priceless asset," and we commend his decision to release state funds for a study. We concur that a wholly scientific, unpoliticized study will provide extremely useful information for all organizations, including our member districts, which have successfully managed Long Island's greatest natural resource for generations.

Raymond J. Averna
Bethpage

Editor's note: The writer is president of the Nassau Suffolk Water Commissioners' Association.

Newsday uses plastic bags, too

Hooray for Newsday for applauding towns and villages that have banned plastic grocery bags ["All of LI should ban plastic grocery bags," Editorial, March 8].

My wife and I always take reusable bags to the grocery store and often refuse plastic bags when shopping at other stores.

However, Newsday is ignoring its own pollution. The newspaper uses plastic bags by the thousands every day when carriers throw them on lawns of Newsday customers. Don't get me wrong, I love a dry newspaper. It would be great if Newsday could find a substitute for plastic bags.

Patrick O'Hara
West Babylon

I applaud Legis. William Spencer's action to stop plastic bag pollution in Suffolk