

HOW THE NYVRA FIGHTS VOTE DILUTION

The NYVRA protects your rights as a New York voter

The 2022 John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York sets a new standard for protecting voters of color at the state level. To learn about all its key provisions, visit www.naacpldf.org/new-york-voting-rights-act/.

What is vote dilution?

- Vote dilution happens when an election system or other policies deny voters of color an equal opportunity to elect candidates the community supports. This means voters of color can cast ballots, but their votes don't have equal power to elect candidates the community supports.

Is this the same as vote denial?

- Vote denial is different -- that's when an eligible voter is prevented from voting altogether, or can only vote after overcoming unfair barriers (like having to pay a poll tax, comply with strict voter ID laws, or other barriers).

The NYVRA protects voters of color from both vote denial and vote dilution.

THE
NEW YORK
VOTING RIGHTS ACT

How do you spot vote dilution?

- If a town or school district is racially diverse, but its elected officials aren't -- or if candidates supported by voters of color usually lose to candidates supported by white voters -- there may be illegal vote dilution.
- Election systems and policies that dilute the votes of communities of color do not have to intend to discriminate to be illegal. Old policies must be revisited to make sure they don't deny equal opportunities.

What causes vote dilution?

- Vote dilution can be caused by "at-large" election systems or unfair redistricting maps or for local elected offices ("at-large" means that officials on a board or council are elected from the whole town or area, not from districts within it).

Either way, if vote dilution is happening in your community, the NYVRA can help.

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How is vote dilution remedied?

- Once a jurisdiction is notified that its election method is dilutive, the NYVRA requires the jurisdiction to remedy the violation promptly and fully, with public input and participation.
- Courts can also order jurisdictions to adopt remedies including a fair district map or an alternative voting method (like ranked-choice or cumulative voting), or make other structural changes to ensure that everyone has an equal voice in local democracy.

EXAMPLES OF IMPACT

New Yorkers have successfully challenged vote dilution under the federal Voting Rights Act, including in Port Chester and the Town of Islip. Both places had large Latino populations but had never elected Latino members to their at-large councils.

Port Chester: In 2008, Port Chester agreed to settle the case and switch to an alternative voting method that enabled the Latino community to elect a candidate of choice.

Town of Islip: In 2020, Islip agreed to adopt a district map including one new Latino-majority district.

Both cases led to the first Latino members being elected immediately after the change.

What should I do if I think vote dilution is happening in my jurisdiction?

Contact one of the organizations listed below! The NYVRA provides an efficient and effective framework for challenging election methods that dilute the voting power of communities of color. If you believe your community is underrepresented because of vote dilution, an attorney can work with you to notify the jurisdiction of the violation.

Notify your city council, county commission, or school board.

YOUR NEW RIGHTS UNDER THE NYVRA EXPLAINED.

FIGHT BACK AGAINST VOTE DILUTION.

LEARN ABOUT THE KEY PROVISIONS OF THE NYVRA:
naacpldf.org/new-york-voting-rights-act