

New York State Assemblywoman Sandy Galef-May 2015

I received 787 responses to the Constituent Questionnaire in my January Newsletter and I thank those of you who submitted these responses. I value your input, as it allows me to better address the pressing issues of today during the legislative process. Here are the percentage results for the responses:

Question	In Favor		Opposed	
1. Would you support requiring that a defensive driving course be taken every ten years (either on-line or in a classroom) to help ensure our roadways are as safe as possible for passengers and drivers alike?	469 62%		284 38%	
2. Do you believe that New York should join other states to protect our environment by imposing a ban on (a) polystyrene and/or (b) plastic bags, to be replaced by paper, recyclable material, or biodegradable products?	2(a) 611 83%	2(b) 496 76%	2(a) 129 17%	2(b) 154 24%
3. Do you believe we should institute an independent utility consumer advocate at the state level to represent customers and weigh in on rate and policy changes for utility companies?	550 78%		155 22%	
4. The proposed Education Tax Credit would give a boost to private and parochial schools by allowing tax exempt donations to these schools as well as to public schools. Do you think we should allow this, even if it would reduce the taxable income which supports public schools?	292 41%		425 59%	
5. In an effort to ensure a well-educated society that can keep up with the demands of the 21 st century, do you believe that we should provide financial aid for those trying to get a college education (a) while in prison and/or (b) whose parents may have brought their children into our country illegally?	5(a) 336 45%	5(b) 269 40%	5(a) 405 55%	5(b) 408 60%
6. To begin to address voter engagement, should we allow 16 and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote with their county boards of elections so that when they turn 18, they will automatically be added to the voter rolls?	455 61%		296 39%	
7. Should we allow partial public financing of campaigns to help offset the influence of large PACS on campaigns and elections?	422 60%		287 40%	
8. Should we require that all town and village elections take place in November?	567 77%		167 23%	
9. Should we increase the minimum wage to \$10.50 an hour statewide, and \$11.50 in New York City, as proposed by Governor Cuomo?	570 76%		184 24%	
10. Do you believe students' standardized test scores should make up a significant part of a teacher's performance evaluation?	218 31%		494 69%	

11. Do you believe we should raise the number of charter schools allowed to operate in New York State?	328 46%	388 54%
---	------------	------------

The following are some of the comments that I received from constituents in relation to the various questions above.

#1 Regarding a 10 year defensive driving requirement for all drivers:

Mary from Carmel wrote, *“Should be at least 5 years. I take one every 3 years.”* 10 people wrote in agreement.

#3 In response to having an independent utility consumer advocate at the state level to represent customers and weigh in on rate and policy changes for utility companies:

Deanna from Ossining responded: *“Especially to arbitrate and monitor solar metering.”*

#4 Regarding the Education Tax Credit, that would allow tax exempt donations to private and public schools:

“Our public schools need more, not less financial support.” – Elena from Ossining.

#6 Addressing pre-registration for 16 and 17 year olds with their county boards of elections so that upon turning 18 they will be automatically added to voter rolls:

Peter from Peekskill writes, *“If young people don’t register at 18, why believe they’ll do so at 17?”*

Joan from Maryknoll responded, *“This group is not politically informed and early registration will not change anybody.”*

“17 only – too much time in advance for 16 year olds.” – Michael from Ossining.

#7 In response to allowing partial public financing of campaigns to help offset the influence of large PACS on campaigns and elections:

Mariana from Peekskill writes, *“Politicians are more in debt to large PACs than they are to what constituents want.”* Eliminating/reducing PAC influence was shared by about 10 respondents.

#8 In reference to other steps that could be taken to increase voter engagement:

Gary from Buchanan writes, *“Voters have lost faith in the political process.”*

Robert from Kent Lakes responded, *“Teach civics in schools; instill the importance of local elections.”* 20 people wrote echoing support.

Victor from Mohegan Lake writes that he believes, *“more ‘meet the candidates’ public hearings” will help.”*

Mayfred from Verplanck expressed a desire for *“better and earlier information of candidates.”*

“More early voting.” – David from Ossining. About 10 constituents said the same.

“Make Election Day a holiday” – G. from Cold Spring.

“Allow online voting.” – Helen from Cortlandt Manor. 10+ respondents wrote about this concept.

“Weekend voting.” – Rita from Croton. Several agreed.

#9 In response to the prospect of the minimum wage being raised to \$10.50 statewide and \$11.50 in New York City, as proposed by Governor Cuomo:

Lars from Garrison writes, “*Even more.*” At least 10 people echoed this sentiment.

#10 Regarding if standardized test scores should be used as a significant part of teacher evaluation:

“*Maybe a small part. But until we address inequality we are only blaming teachers for all the ills in society.*” –Gary and Jeanne from Croton. Many other respondents echoed this.

“*[My] grandchildren are only being ‘taught for the test’. This is not education. There are a multitude of ways to measure the effectiveness of a teacher, but any measure is irrelevant if he/she is burdened...The unions in the education system have lost sight of the primary objective of ensuring that children receive a decent education...That is a disgrace.*” –Elena from Ossining

Virginia from Cold Spring commented, “*Standardized tests are developed to measure students, not teachers. If you want to test teachers—develop standardized tests for that purpose.*”

“*No, then they only teach ‘to the test’.*” –CJ from Ossining

Jerry from Garrison writes, “*Teachers can’t pick their students!*”

“*The tests are not well-made,*” writes David from Ossining.

“*...Teachers in wealthy districts where students have more advantages would appear to be doing best education practices. However, in lower income district[s] where there are not supports built in for students and staff would not have a fair reflection for both the student and the teacher.*” –Janice from Cortlandt

#11 Regarding an increase of charter schools in New York:

“*There is already a problem funding existing schools, we need to provide for those first.*” – John from Ossining. A few wrote in agreement.

“*I fear money will be reduced from public schools*” – Grace from Croton-on-Hudson. Several expressed apprehension that attention would be shifted away from public schools.