How can the state constitution be amended?

Many New Yorkers know that our state’s constitution can be amended or revised by holding a constitutional convention. But the most common process to amend the state constitution requires action by New York’s legislature, and voters across the state get the final word.

How does the constitutional amendment process work?

*First Passage → Second Passage → Voters Approve or Reject*

1) First Passage: the Senate and Assembly must agree upon and pass a bill that contains the text of a proposed constitutional amendment.

Unlike regular legislation that amends state law, bills amending the state constitution do not go to the Governor for approval. Instead....

2) Second Passage: after a general election is held and a new 2-year legislative term begins in Albany, the exact same proposed amendment must be passed a second time.

In order to move forward, any amendment that is passed by the legislature this year or in 2020 must be passed again by the next sitting legislature during the 2021-2022 legislative term.

3) Voter Approval or Rejection: once second passage is completed, the Secretary of State will place a yes-or-no question on the ballot for the next general election. If more people vote “yes” on it than vote “no”, it is approved, and it will take effect on January 1 of the following year.

For example: if lawmakers pass a re-enfranchisement amendment this year or next, second passage could take place in either 2021 or 2022; voters could get the chance to weigh in as soon as November 2021; and the change could take effect as soon as January 2022!

...But we need lawmakers to pass an amendment in 2019 or 2020, so that reform doesn’t wait another whole 2-year cycle, and so restoration will be more likely to reach the ballot along with other voting rights amendments!