

SECTION III

RESTORING FAITH IN GOVERNMENT



OVERVIEW

Governor Hochul is committed to restoring New Yorkers' faith in their State government. The Executive Budget includes many key pieces of legislation to help follow through on this promise.

Term Limits. To ensure New Yorkers are the focus of the State's elected officials, the Executive Budget includes Governor Hochul's proposal for a Constitutional amendment to limit all four statewide elected officials to two consecutive four-year terms in office.

Independent Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government.

Governor Hochul will replace the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) with a new independent ethics enforcement organization to be overseen by a five-member rotating board selected by New York State-accredited law school deans or their designees. The Executive Budget will provide additional funding to JCOPE's \$5.6 million in annual funding for this new ethics entity. This new ethics entity will abide by and be subject to:

- Majority voting and will no longer use "Special Vote" practices;
- Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) and Open Meeting Laws, consistent with other State agencies; and
- Ban on communicating with outside parties regarding potential or ongoing investigations.

Advancing Election Reform. Governor Hochul will continue New York State's progress in expanding voting rights as more work remains to be done.

10-Day Voter Registration Deadline. Governor Hochul will amend State Law to lower the voter registration deadline from 25 days to 10 days before the election.

College Campus Polling Locations. In instances where a college/university campus has 300 or more students, then the polling place designated within that election district will be located at the college/university or at an alternative location approved by the college/university.

Public Campaign Finance. The Public Campaign Finance (PCF) program will go into effect November 9, 2022. The PCF program establishes public financing to encourage candidates for public office to focus campaign efforts toward soliciting small donations from individual constituents rather than corporate interest groups. As such, the State will provide matching funds on the first \$250 of any qualifying donation. The Executive Budget commits to funding the State's matching portion, with estimated spending occurring for the first time in FY 2024. Additionally, the Executive Budget provides \$3.2 million in additional funding for the State Board of Elections to support additional PCF staff and IT-related costs.

Strengthen Ethics Requirements for Local Officials: To make ethics requirements more consistent and easier to understand across all levels of government in New York State, the Executive Budget proposes legislation to harmonize the laws for State and local officials with respect to gifts, standards of conduct for all public officers, nepotism, and lobbying. For decades, the State has amended the ethics provisions within the Public Officers Law and the Legislative Law without also amending the similar ethical provisions in General Municipal Law that governs the hundreds of municipal officials (outside of New York City). The result is that municipal officials are sometimes held to different and lower standards of conduct. This action will further help assure New Yorkers that those entrusted with government service are fulfilling their ethical duty to the public.

TRANSPARENCY

Governor Hochul has also pledged to improve transparency to increase accountability in State government. In September, Governor Hochul directed heads of New York State agencies, authorities and boards to assess and evaluate their existing policies and practices and create a plan detailing their new efforts to increase transparency and accessibility. These plans can be found online at governor.ny.gov/hochul-administration-transparency-plans.

As part of this initiative, the Division of the Budget is implementing transparency measures, including:

- **Boards and Commissions Landing Page.** The Division will soon launch a landing page for the boards and committees on which the Director serves that will provide links directly to where each

board will be posting their materials 24 hours before the meeting, consistent with Chapter 481 of the Laws of 2021 that the Governor approved last year. This will provide New Yorkers with a single location to find this information.

- **Completed FOIL Requests.** DOB will soon post on its website a listing of recently completed FOIL requests.
- **Frequent FOIL Inquiries.** DOB will soon post a listing of frequent FOIL requests and the information responsive to those requests.

DATA STRATEGY

The Division of the Budget supports the Governor's strong transparency objectives and endeavors to provide policy makers and the public with extensive budget and fiscal information at every step of the process. To further accomplish these objectives, DOB is leading the development of a data strategy initiative to establish a uniform approach for data governance and management across state agencies. New York State believes a transparent government is one where data is responsibly shared, kept secure, and utilized to inform decision making. New York State considers program data, including metrics related to program outputs, outcomes, populations, and financing to inform budget recommendations.

The State's efforts to improve data quality and analytics will strengthen strategic planning and program inventory capabilities to prioritize allocations for effective programs. This approach reinforces New York's goal to focus critical resources on the highest risk communities, populations, and individuals. In the coming months, the Division of the Budget will release its data strategy for comment. When the comment period has concluded, DOB will consider this feedback and begin to implement the strategy.

FEMA CLAIMING PROCESS

New York State, through coordination by the Division of the Budget and the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, manages Federal COVID-19 recovery efforts centrally to most appropriately assign Federal funding to each effort and ensure compliance with all associated Federal requirements. The Division of the Budget tracks COVID-related expenditures, compiles data to complete Federal reports, and facilitates the reimbursement

process. Expenditures must pass through several levels of compliance based on the results of agency risk assessments. The State developed internal controls and processes to mitigate the risk of inappropriately claimed expenses and audit disallowances. This includes the statewide implementation of a subrecipient monitoring and management policy for all agencies (including State and Federal programs). During the past year the State increased automation for more efficient processing of the State's financial reporting and eliminate certain findings.

