

My name is Eileen O'Connor. I live in Yonkers and am one of the leaders of NYCD16-Indivisible. Thank you for holding this hearing today!

New York has come such a long way in terms of access to voting since 2018! Automatic registration, early voting, changes in Absentee voting have made such a difference, especially during this Covid pandemic. Where we used to lag behind so many other states, we now lead!

There are a few thoughts I have to make the voting process easier.

1. People don't know about early voting. More community education in several languages on TV, radio, social media needs to be done because the process varies from County to County. Getting the message out **early**, with times and locations posted, to those people who work long hours is a challenge. Bringing the message to the workplace may help.
2. Absentee ballots: complicated process of having to apply, then complete the ballot is confusing for a lot of people. In Yonkers this past cycle I heard stories about canvassers filling out the ballot for the voter; not sure whether they are true. Mail out a ballot to ? every eligible voter or at least those who have applied before. Make the ballot visually friendly, easy to complete.
3. Election Day: my polling place (PEARLS) had no signs up telling voters where to go. There was an entrance on Riverdale Ave and Culver Place, but people were only told about Culver Place, which is a long walk from the south side of the ED. Many people left without voting.
4. Stories about people showing up at their usual polling place, but assigned to another. In 2020, this was a major problem, where voters were treated badly and sent away without casting a vote. In 2021 the turnout was low and I think this was less of a problem. People filled out provisional ballots, which I hope were counted! (Is there data about this?)
5. Campaign Finance: I live in Yonkers, where this year's Primary for City Council President was tainted by negative campaigning, funded by ????. Several mailers were sent out to the entire city for a candidate who was new to the political process. The lack of transparency was maddening. Theories abound about who funded what, but nothing has been published to substantiate them. If we could have campaign financing at the Municipal level, it would allow candidates to run on their own merits.
6. Ranked Choice Voting: I love the idea of this. Candidates need to behave well and the voters truly get a choice about who their electeds are. I would like to see this implemented in Yonkers/Westchester County.

Thanks again for holding this forum!

Eileen O'Connor