

I am Judith Hertzberg, a registered voter in the 20th Senatorial district. I am also an active member of several community and grassroots groups including True Blue New York, Brooklyn Voters Alliance, Persist New York and Empire State Indivisible. My testimony specifically addresses my experience voting in New York City.

I would like to speak on three areas of concern:

1. Patronage at the Board
2. Need for Professionalism at the Board
3. Improving the Voter Experience

Remove patronage. Patronage and cronyism have no place in the election process. Commissioner and election worker positions are give-away jobs that currently carry no qualifications other than party loyalty. It does not support continuous improvement good government requires. It only perpetuates machine politics, county bosses and incumbents. The voter experience would be improved if election administration staff met skills qualifications that actually supported their ability to execute their job responsibilities and serve voters.

Professionalize the New York City Board of Elections to prevent so many of the mistakes we've seen in the past few years. Many current incumbents lack the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure that the various voting processes are established and executed appropriately to prevent problems evidenced in recent election cycles. The board commissioners and all employees should have job descriptions that include stated qualifications - skills and experience requirements commensurate with described responsibilities. Furthermore, practices, procedures and controls should be documented to uphold criteria for employment, improved training practices and working conditions. Board commissioners and Senior Administrators should have clear, codified accountability to some governing body other than the NYSBOE. A detailed stakeholder/ecosystem map would be helpful to explain all of these players, what current accountability might look like and where the gaps/opportunities are.

Some examples of processes needing review and better procedures include, but are not limited to

- Voter registration
- Poll worker training
- Absentee ballot processes, from ballot request through vote tabulation
- Ballot tabulation testing processes and machine reset, to prevent such problems as encountered in in tabulating primary results this past June,

Improving the Voter Experience - making voting easier and more accessible for voters

This includes, but is not limited to providing

- Postage paid envelopes for mailing absentee ballots is crucial. With variable length ballots and double envelopes, the voter has absolutely no idea how much postage is required. Short of going to the post office to weigh the packet, the voter is left to guess how much postage to affix to the outer mailing envelope.
- More early voting sites, especially to ensure that they are within reasonable walking distance for voters assigned to them. Voters should not have to pay for transportation to exercise their right to vote.
- Citywide voting centers during early voting, so registered voters can vote anywhere in the city that is best for them.

- Better signage at poll sites, especially for the in-person deposit of absentee ballots and for people who have questions or may have special circumstances.
- Better training for poll workers so they know how to direct voters, especially voters who may need an affidavit ballot, or have special needs.