

Elections Committee

Written Testimony for:

Michael Agostino

My name is Michael Agostino. I currently work for the Erie County Board of Elections, and have been employed there since 2007. As the committee ponders reforms for the Boards of Elections across New York State, I would like to share my experience as it pertains to my tenure at the Erie County Board of Elections.

In my 14+ years of working at the Erie County Board of Elections, I have worked with many people from both parties, and almost all them were qualified and able to do the job function for which they were tasked. As with any business, public or private, you will have a few employees who don't work out how you envisioned. It has been my experience, that a two-party Board of Elections works as a perfect check and balance, and leaves most people in Erie County to trust that our elections are run honestly and fairly. It has also been my experience that despite being from different political parties and many times sharing different beliefs, we still all work together to ensure all elections are run properly. There have been zero times in my 14+ years on the job where the political affiliation of someone at the board has influenced how we prepare elections.

I have held a few positions over my career, but I am currently responsible for our technology department. My department has Democrats and Republicans who work together in maintaining our IT, setting up all elections, and printing all ballots. We work together seamlessly to provide the voters of Erie County the best possible election experience we can.

While I certainly can not speak for the other counties throughout New York State, from my conversations with people from some other counties, I feel that Erie County is more the norm than not. In this day and age, any issues that arise at any Board are greatly magnified. When they do, people jump to the worst conclusions and call for elected officials to make massive changes. I agree that there are always ways to improve just about any situation. The changes need to be well thought out and not just rushed out to appease constituents.

If the last presidential election has taught us anything, it's that when both parties agree on the certified election results, it is better for everybody. Putting that responsibility to a person or legislative body where one party is the majority will only allow for that person or body to possibly to what is best for its party and not for all the voters of that County.

I don't know if there is a perfect way to organize County Board of Elections, but I believe it is setup pretty well currently to ensure for fair elections with proper oversight. A complete overhaul will not stop errors from occurring. Humans will still work there and be prone to human error. There are ways to make improvements that will help to minimize errors and issues. Let's look into those first.

I wish you well and thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. I look forward to hearing your recommendations. Until then, I will continue to work with all of my co-workers from both parties to ensure that all voters, in Erie County and the great State of New York, that their vote counts.