

I am 80 years old—and have voted in New York State in just about every general and party primary election since I was eligible to vote at the age of 21. I began voting in Kings County, then in New York County, then in Nassau County and now, since 2013, in Westchester County.

I have never had any problem voting, either in person or by mail, in any county in this state until 2020 in Westchester.

In the last three elections—the primary election of 2020, the general election of 2020 and the primary election of 2021—the **Westchester County Board of Elections has so completely mangled the election process that I have been led to suspect that the Westchester County Board of Elections is trying to suppress my vote.**

Here's the evidence, much of it on the record, in the form of complaint emails that I sent both to the Board and to the County Executive.

I am delighted that the state legislature is finally trying to find out what is going on—but I have to confess, knowing what I know about the political process in this state—that I have almost no hope that this totally corrupt system is ever going to be reformed.

(1) This text was an **email that I sent on July 10, 2020 to the Westchester County Board of Elections** in response to its request for public comments. I never received either a confirmation that my comments had been received or a reply to my email.

“The Board of Elections completely failed to do its job properly with regard to the primary election:

- 1. Its website was completely confusing; it was exceedingly difficult even to find its address on the website, let alone figure out how to get an application for an absentee ballot.*
- 2. I had no confirmation that my application was received.*
- 3. I received a ballot for the CANCELLED Presidential Primary on April 28th, TWICE, once on May 10th and then again on May 25th, which was infuriating, confusing AND a complete waste of money. Nothing was said, either time, about when a ballot for the local races might appear--if ever.*
- 4. By early June I had lost hope of the ballot ever arriving and had resigned myself to having to vote in person, which was exceptionally risky for me, as I am 79 and have asthma*
- 5. When the REAL ballot finally appeared, its instructions were badly worded. No explanation was offered for why there was a place for a witness to sign. It took me three re-readings of the ballot to realize that I did not have to have a witness since I was capable of signing my own name. My profession requires me to be a very careful reader; I hate to think of how many people, less accustomed than I am to reading carefully, failed to vote because they were unable or unwilling to go through the completely unnecessary exercise of having their signatures witnessed.*

This whole fiasco was an act of voter suppression. It doesn't matter to me whether it was deliberate suppression or just incompetence, the end result was the same.

(2) In **early September, 2020** I received an undated letter from the WCBOE (see photo below) telling me that my application for an absentee ballot in the general election (which I had sent in a few weeks earlier) had **been denied**. I immediately sent this angry email to County Executive George Latimer:

"I am beyond angry. I received the attached (undated) letter from the Board of Elections today. When I called to ask why they had been unable to process my application for a general election ballot, I was told that this letter only concerned applications for the PRIMARY election in June and SHOULD HAVE BEEN SENT OUT IN JULY, NOT SEPTEMBER.

When are the people in charge going to be fired for mismanagement????

This letter is going to prevent some untold number of voters from getting an absentee ballot in time to vote in November.

I CALL THAT VOTER SUPPRESSION. And I am going to look into ways to create a class action suit against the County for voter suppression. Continuing mismanagement is no excuse.

(3) I could not have been the only person who complained to George Latimer because the **very next day I received** an email reply from his office telling me that "The board of elections is an independent agency which does not report to the county executive. This being said, please be assured that the county executive is working to assist voters as evidenced by his request to Governor Cuomo for secure drop boxes to be made available. This office has followed up on concerns which constituents have shared via phone calls and emails. Your frustration has been conveyed to the county's two election commissioners."

I have no idea who the "county's two election commissioners are" because they certainly never replied to tell me that they had received my complaint. A web search for their names turns up NOTHING. Do you know who they are?

(4) **As a consequence of this second fiasco I decided not to vote by mail in the general election of November, 2020 but to vote early instead.** This decision was at considerable risk to my health (I had to stand, masked, on a long line outside the Dobbs Ferry Town Hall, using a cane for support) but **I decided that the risk to my health was less important than casting my vote against the apparent effort by Westchester County to suppress it.**

(5) Then...and I have to say that I can barely believe that this happened again...**my election district was changed (without notice) for the Democratic primary election in 2021.**

My polling place used to be in the Irvington Public Library, which is just down the street from where I live. When I was notified, by postcard, that my polling place had been changed to Irvington Town Hall I was incredulous. So I went on the WCBOE website to locate the correct polling place. **The website polling place location system DID NOT WORK.** I tried this at

least five times. **Each time it told me that my address, 1 South Astor Street, Irvington DID NOT EXIST.**

This polling place location system had very precise instructions for how an address had to be entered. I am used to these kinds of instructions and followed them perfectly each time.

Once again suspecting an effort at voter suppression I went to my polling place on election day and was told by the workers there **that, indeed, my election district had been changed and I did indeed have to go several blocks away and up a very steep hill in order to vote.**

I have asked the president of my local Democratic Club why our election district was changed (David Imamura, now chair of the state redistricting commission, happens to live in the same building that I do.) He told me that he was as startled by it as I was.

I am not, by nature and habit, a cynical person—and I have been proud to call myself a New Yorker, by birth and by choice for my entire life—but this sequence of events has left me, as I said at the beginning of this testimony, with almost no hope that NY's totally corrupt election system is ever going to be reformed.

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Important Voter Information

Reginald A. LaFayette
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Dear Westchester County Voter!

Your absentee ballot application has been reviewed and we are unable to process it due to Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 202.28 which states that your absentee application was only applicable to the June 23, 2020 Elections. You will need to re-apply if you choose to vote via absentee ballot for the General Election to be held on November 3, 2020. You can select "Temporary Illness" as the reason due to COVID-19 on this application.

That's why we have enclosed an application for an Absentee Ballot for use if needed.

You may also download an absentee application at our website www.westchestergov.com/boe.

You may vote in person during Early Voting or on Election Day.

If you have any questions or concerns, please check our website www.westchestergov.com/boe or call 914-995-5285/5291 or email BOE-Westabsentee@westchestergov.com.

Estimado Votante del Condado de Westchester!

Su solicitud de boleta de voto ausente ha sido revisada y no podemos procesarla debido a la Orden Ejecutiva 202.28 del Gobernador Cuomo, que establece que su solicitud de voto ausente fue solamente aplicable a las elecciones del 23 de junio de 2020. Usted deberá volver a presentar una solicitud si elige votar a través de una boleta de voto ausente para las elecciones generales que se llevarán a cabo el 3 de noviembre de 2020. Puede seleccionar "Enfermedad temporal" como el motivo debido al Covid-19 en esta solicitud.

Es por eso que adjuntamos una solicitud para una Papeleta en Ausencia para su uso si es necesario. Usted puede descargar una solicitud de ausencia en nuestro sitio web www.westchestergov.com/boe.

Puede votar en persona durante la votación anticipada o el día de las elecciones.

Si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud, visite nuestro sitio web www.westchestergov.com/boe o llame al (914) 995-5285/5291 o envíe un correo electrónico a: BOE-Westabsentee@westchestergov.com.

Reginald A. LaFayette, Commissioner

Douglas A. Colety, Commissioner