

August 4, 2021

Dear New York State Senate Committee on Elections:

My name is Terry MacKinnon and I am a 9 year employee of the Erie County Board of Elections. In my capacity as a Board of Elections employee, I have served in many different roles, starting as a clerk and working my way up to my current position as a Democratic Supervisor in the Records and Supplies Department. I am submitting this written testimony in hopes that you will consider the many successes the Erie County Board of Elections, and many Election Boards throughout the state, have had operating under the current, bipartisan structure.

In my experience in Erie County, Democrats and Republicans have a cordial, professional relationship, and bipartisan departments ensure the integrity of the electoral system. Generally speaking, my department is in charge of all documents filed, including petitions and related paperwork, as well as the tallying of election results. My Republican counterpart and I accept and review all documents together, ensuring all paperwork is timely and in accordance with the law. At no time do any of the upwards of 4,000 documents we receive in a year get processed without a Democrat and Republican present. Our department is also in charge of tallying votes, which again, does not happen without a Democrat and Republican present. The bipartisan structure of the Boards of Elections is integral to ensuring election integrity.

Some testimony you have received calls for “professionalizing” Boards of Elections. Election employees in Erie County, and all around New York, are professional. We work hard and take pride in our work. In any industry with thousands of employees, there will be exceptions, but in Erie County those exceptions aren’t employed very long. Professionalism and dedication by rank and file employees, is why we were so successful in Erie County last year amidst a global pandemic, a charged political atmosphere, myriad election law changes, and record voter turnout.

In my opinion, changes are certainly needed. Boards need additional staff, more funding for training and development, and significant funding increases to attract quality inspectors. But the bipartisan structure of Election Boards and the professionalism and dedication of its employees are what is right with the system, not what is wrong with it. Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Very Truly Yours,

Terrence MacKinnon
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