

# Voter Suppression in New York City

Making Voting More Accessible in Our City

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# Timeline/History

**1846** - New Yorkers votes against an amendment to the state constitution that would grant black men the right to vote

**1855** - Political machines in Tammany Hall try to manipulate elections

**1869** - New York ratifies the 15th Amendment in April 1869, only to rescind it in January 1870, and did not ratify it again until 1970

**1908** - City officials seek to suppress the Jewish immigrant vote by holding voter registration on Saturdays and on the holiday of Yom Kippur, days Jews observe

**1921** - New York State passes a law requiring an English literacy test to vote

**1989** - Advocates successfully argues that 300,000 voters had been wrongfully purged from the voter rolls and needed to be reinstated

**2013** - City Council redistricting map arises controversy; groups pose their own redistricting map that will boost voter turnout rather than dilute it

**2015** - City Council drafts legislation that would allow all legal residents, regardless of US citizenship, the right to vote in city elections

**2016** - NYC Board of Elections illegally wipes off 200,000 voters off the rolls

# Important Figures/Local Positions



# State Senator Myrie

- State Senate Chairman of committee on elections
- Recently elected in the 2018 elections after unseating a member of the IDC
- Introduced and passed Early Voting in NYS
- Also introduced comprehensive voting reform included in the NS John Lewis Voting Rights Act



**State Senator Zellnor Myrie**



# Executive Director Michael Ryan

- Executive Director of Board of Elections Michael Ryan
- BOE is responsible for maintaining who is registered; however thousands of voters have been purged even in recent years
- They have asked for additional funds to ensure the integrity of future upcoming elections as well



**Executive Director Michael Ryan**

# Interview #1- Assembly Member Diana C. Richardson



*Q1- After recently winning your primary, what are your views on the many problems that occurred with absentee ballots in the past elections?*

“ I believe that the DOB did the best that they can. It was clear that communication between them and the USPS wasn't uniform. The fact that prepaid envelopes didn't receive a postmark date was a key component to the primaries. As a result, we saw a lot of voter disenfranchisement, and people were still forced to go to the polls... **In the interest of protecting democracy, it is imperative for us to rectify the situation.**”

*Q2- In what ways do you think NYS can be better at making voting a more inclusive process?*

“NYS has a lot of proposals, such as same-day voter registration, Automatic Voter registration... For the first time, we can take a look at initiatives such as rank choice voting. We are finally getting to see some of these things implemented instead of them just being ideas. **We need to look at the legislation that we have and identify how we can make sure it upholds our democracy.**”



# Interview #1- Assembly Member Diana C. Richardson (Cont.)

*Q3- What will you be doing as an Assembly Member to ensure that your community is safe while voting?*

I will ensure my constituents are safe by promoting early voting, absentee ballots, and keeping them informed. Enacting a robust digital campaign while coordinating on the ground engagement. Handing PPE to poll workers and voters on the day of the elections. **Safety is of paramount importance.** The MTA uses the phrase “knowing before you go”, and voters need to know their ED, polling sites, and other important information in advance to makes the voting process seamless. **We want voting to be quick but efficient this year, and I hope we learn from our mistakes in the primary.**

# Interview #2 \* - Councilmanic Aide for Council Member Carlos Menchaca

*\* These are merely the interviewee's  
views, not that of Council Member  
Carlos Menchaca (pictured right)*



*Q1- Since Menchaca is Immigration Chair, how do you  
think immigration relates to elections?*

Menchaca is trying to push for immigrants to get their voices heard regardless of whether they can vote; **if immigrants are vocal and civically engaged, that can put issues relating to immigration in the spotlight** and highlight the urgency to vote for issues/candidates that support immigration

Participatory budget is an example of voting power-- anyone can vote on the budget regardless of citizenship status; **as long as you live in the district + community, you can vote on the budget.**

The budget is allocated to community resources in the CM's district

In terms of endorsements of candidates running for office, **he can potentially influence the eligible-voter population in his district** (which are largely immigrant communities) to vote for a candidate that largely supports immigrant communities



*\*These are merely the interviewee's views, not that of Council Member Carlos Menchaca (pictured above)*

# Interview #2 \* - Councilmanic Aide for Council Member Carlos Menchaca (Cont.)

*Q2- Does the CM's office do anything to encourage voter participation?*

There are voter registration forms in the office, which are offered in multiple languages. These include Spanish, Chinese, Arabic [main languages in the district RE: language access]. **This increases accessibility, and therefore, voter participation.**

*Q3- Is there anything you believe City Council can do to encourage better voter participation/turnout/improvement of access?*

**Menchaca's social media needs to be loud about the importance of voting.** At the same time, people don't always use social media, so he would have to remember other avenues of conducting outreach. It's important to remember that in Menchaca's district, a low-income district, not everyone has internet access

# Looking Forward

## Advocacy Groups/Agencies

**ACLU (NYCLU):** fights to make voting easy and accessible for all New Yorkers by advocating for reform to the policies, processes, and practices of how New Yorkers vote

**LWVNYC:** Hopes to empower voters and protect democracy

**NYCBOE:** Conducts elections, voter outreach & education

**Let NY Vote:** fights to improve our elections by making registering and voting more accessible and equitable for every eligible New Yorker

# How to get involved

- Donate to organizations (like the advocacy groups mentioned!)
- Increase personal awareness and civic engagement
- Encourage peers to become civically engaged
- Start at home, make sure your family is also aware of how they can be politically and civically active
- Search for your own sources
  - Don't always stick to the same outlets/news sources!