

# NYC Campaign Finance Board Post-Election Hearing

## NBC New York Testimony

*Presented 12/16/21 by Dave Manney & Hilary Weissman*

Greetings from NBC New York. I'm Dave Manney, assistant news director. I'm joined by Hilary Weissman, our political producer and debate quarterback. Thank you for this opportunity.

NBC New York hosted three debates this year in partnership with the NYC Campaign Finance Board – the Mayoral Democratic Primary on June 16, the Comptroller Democratic Primary on June 20, and the Mayoral General on October 20. Our co-sponsors for all three debates: the New York Urban League, the Citizens Budget Commission, *Politico*, and our sister station Telemundo 47.



Despite unprecedented challenges presented by the pandemic and a large field of candidates, we produced three debates that were incredibly informative and appropriately entertaining – and reached an audience of more than one-point-three million people.

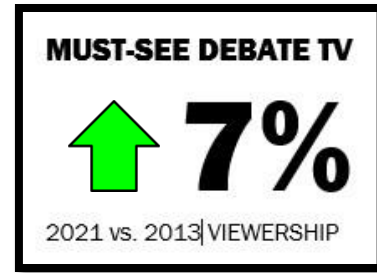
To be exact – one million, three hundred and eight thousand, three

<b>TOTAL VIEWERS</b>	<b>1,308,329</b>
<b>Mayoral General</b>	611,921
<b>Mayoral Primary</b>	479,203
<b>Comptroller</b>	217,205

hundred and twenty-nine viewers watched one of our three debates (1,308,329) on NBC New York and Telemundo 47 platforms, TV and digital. Even more tuned in on New York City's TV channel and NBC streaming channels.

The numbers break down like this: The General Election debate between Mr. Adams and Mr. Sliwa was the most watched with more than 600,000 viewers (611,921). The Democratic Primary debate was second with nearly 480,000

people tuning in (479,203). There was terrific interest too in the Comptroller Debate with well over 200,000 people watching (217,205). Total viewership is also impressive when measured by another metric: a comparison to 2013 when NBC New York hosted three similar debates. The number of people tuning in this year was 7% higher (1,308,329 vs. 1,224,859).



While the ratings were tremendous, and that is how we all measure success in this business, voter education was our number-one goal. That’s why we felt particularly good about this review from the *New York Times* of our first debate, the Democratic Primary:

*“The two-hour debate was one of the most substantive of the primary season, spanning issues from how the city can combat climate change to the best ways to manage affordable housing and homelessness.”*

As many of you know, getting to that moment – a live in-person debate – was an adventure like none other. It was exactly one year ago today that we sat in a conference room here at 30 Rock and pitched the Campaign Finance Board our proposal to host debates. The city was basically still locked down by the pandemic – and none of us knew if in-person debates could be done safely.



Our big idea was what we called *In Person-Remote* debates. The concept was that each candidate would be in their own tiny studio here at 30 Rock and hooked up live to each other and the moderators. Our engineering teams had it all figured out, but we caught a break. Covid rates eased enough for us to have candidates together, but socially distanced.

There aren’t many studios that can hold eight candidates – six feet apart – plus four moderators. But in this building, Studio 8H – the legendary home of *Saturday Night Live* – is plenty big. Thankfully, the show was on hiatus and they let us have the space to host the Primary debates for mayor and comptroller. We

moved to a smaller studio – one used by Jimmy Fallon during the pandemic – for the final debate when we only had two candidates.



As part of our proposal last December, we also pledged to host community forums with key organizations to hear concerns from different corners of the city, help shape questions for candidates, and educate people about ranked-choice voting.

We're pleased to report we hosted five virtual forums. We started with the Asian community amid a surge in bias attacks. That forum was produced with the Asian-American Federation and Apex for Youth. Other forums were done in conjunction with the Citizens Budget Commission, the New York Urban League, and Hispanic groups including the Dominico-American Society. Additionally, Telemundo 47 hosted a Spanish-language forum. Each forum included a range of voices – from business leaders to parents to students – and an explanation of ranked-choice voting.



Finally, we also delivered on our promise to educate people about ranked-choice voting beyond forums and debates. NBC New York reporter Melissa Russo's explainer story – which included visuals an RCV tutorial produced by NYC Votes – aired three times on News 4 and was seen by a quarter million people (250,118). A version for younger voters produced by Kay Angrum was seen by nearly 10,000 people on social media. We also created on-air graphics that were used in newscasts throughout the political season that sent viewers to the best place for more information – [VOTING.NYC](http://VOTING.NYC).

From all of us at NBC New York, Telemundo 47, and our partners, our thanks to the Campaign Finance Board for this opportunity – and guidance along the way. We look forward to working with you in the future.

We're happy to answer any questions you have.