

Subject: Absentee Voting: Mailing Process & Delay Inquiry

Good afternoon Council member Dromm, et. al.

Hello, my name is Josh Tjaden and I am a resident of Astoria, Queens in the following districts: Election: 21 | County Leg: 0 | Senate: 12 | Assembly: 36 | Congressional: 12 | City Council: 22

As the Chair, members and senior staff of the NYC Council Committee on Finance I thought it best to reach out to you with regards to the election process and considerable difficulty I have had in receiving my absentee ballot in the mail as it relates to contracting with private entities.

This is very concerning to me as someone who takes my civic duty and right to vote seriously.

Background Info:

- I mailed my application initially the third week of March, and received a call that I would need to mail another application due to the election date being changed.
- After receiving this call, I mailed a second absentee ballot application the second week of April.
- When I hadn't yet received my ballot on June 2nd, I called the Queens Board of Elections office. I was told at that time that my ballot had been mailed out with a batch on May 26th and I should receive it in the next few days.
- Today I called again since I have yet to receive my ballot in the mail.

I was spurred to call again today specifically after reading [this article](#) that documents many New Yorkers' difficulty with the absentee ballot process, and also not receiving their ballots in due course and with enough time to count in the election. I spoke with Donna in the Queens BOE office who was very helpful and shared relevant, albeit incomplete, information regarding this year's absentee ballot application and subsequent mailing process.

I would like to inquire about the new process that the City Council took part in by hiring a private vendor to send out the ballots. Is this the case? And will this same vendor be processing absentee requests for the general election on November 3rd? It's my understanding that this had previously been done by the BOE itself and not outsourced. I was not able to get this company's name or other process details by calling the staff at the BOE today, but am working diligently to get this information.

If the process of receiving absentee ballots has been hindered by this new method, I'm concerned and that it's happening during this particular year's election cycle, what with widespread voter suppression and rightful confusion due to the realities of COVID-19.

Is the New York City Council, perhaps members of your Committee, able to look into if this was a widespread issue due to contracting with a private vendor? I understand that there is a backlog getting the ballots out (greater demand means more people are interested in voting, which is fantastic) but the USPS should not take nearly three weeks to get a ballot from Queens to West Hollywood - even with the holiday weekend.

Further, what steps is the BOE is taking, or able to take, into oversight of the private vendor's process of distributing the ballots to the USPS, and then to voters. After speaking with the staff at the BOE it was not clear if any oversight has been done, or if my inquiry would result in any sort of further investigation into the process by the BOE itself.

If my inquiry should be directed toward another Committee or representative(s) within New York City government I am happy to reach out to those individuals directly. Thank you for your time.

Best, -JT

Josh Tjaden