



Voter Experience Public Hearing 7/1

My name is Melissa Saenz Gordon. I live in Ridgewood, Queens, I'm a member of Soft Power Vote, a collective that works to make voting more accessible and transparent in NYC. Launched in May, our initiative reached over 12,000 people and in the time leading up to Election Day, we received a flood of questions regarding the voting process.

We'd like to thank NYCvotes, who answered our questions via Instagram in-real-time.

For this hearing, we conducted a survey to document the various experiences of the recent NY Primary.

170 people participated in this survey.

In requesting an absentee ballot 24.8% of those surveyed said they had to request an absentee ballot multiple times, 32.5% said they never received their request for an absentee ballot promised by Governor Cuomo's executive order.

Of those that requested their absentee ballot 57.8% received their ballot before June 23, 2020, whereas, 7.5% received on June 23rd, 10.2% after June 23rd, and 24.5% said their absentee ballot never came.

For those who voted in-person, 66% had no issues—but 66% is not a passing grade and is unacceptable.

Many of the issues voters experienced echo much of what has been recorded—receiving incomplete ballots at their poll site, not allowed to submit absentee ballots at their poll site—voters also mentioned: not receiving their absentee ballot whereas their partner did; noting both ballots were requested at the same time for the same address. Voters were given two identical ballots at the poll site, forcing them to request the correct document. Absentee ballots not accepted at poll sites names not on voter rolls, and affidavits not provided. One voter thought police presence at their poll site was intimidating and may discourage people from voting.

Absentee voting issues and concerns include the deadline to submit incorrectly marked on absentee ballots and the Official Use Only box not clearly marked, causing confusion.

In conclusion, 67% of those surveyed said it was their first time voting-by-mail or absentee. When these systems don't work, it fosters distrust in the voting system and is a form of voter suppression.

Voting needs to be easy and transparent. We recommend the following:

1. Adopt Vote By Mail in New York State for November and indefinitely
2. NYC needs a robust guide with important dates, deadlines, printed and online.

3. Pre-addressed voter registrations forms to be proactively sent to New Yorkers with ample time for them to register, change party affiliation, and/or update their address. Additionally, mandate city agencies to inform constituents of voter deadlines ahead of each and every election, special or otherwise.
4. CCFB needs to provide bio, platform and website of each candidate, not rely on candidates to provide that info. This includes info on every ballot proposal and State Committee and District Leaders candidates, Presidential and judicial delegates.
5. Poll workers to receive robust training on the entire voting process

With regards,

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