

**NYS Senate Voter Hearing Testimony**  
**Wednesday, July 27, 2021, 10 AM**  
**Medgar Evers College**

My testimony is delivered from the perspective of a life-long New York City voter, as well as a poll worker for the past six years.

While I am not qualified to address the recent local election debacles from a “30,000 feet” perspective, I want to share my experiences with the problematic hiring, training, elections assignments and election management on the microcosmic level. The New York City Board of Elections (BoE) preparation for, and administration of, these functions is simply abysmal. The hiring of incompetent personnel is inexcusable. While a structural overhaul to the BoE is outside my purview, actions like this hearing are necessary to create an accountable and transparent 21st century agency and restore voters’ faith in the city’s election system.

**Hiring**

After the 2008 and 2012 elections thrust the reality of untrained, uncaring, abusive, rude and insensitive poll workers who frustrated my own efforts to vote, I struggled against Board intransigence to become a poll worker. I was determined to provide my neighbors in Election District 73 a level of customer service that should be the standard across the City of New York. “Outsiders” should be encouraged to serve, not be turned away in favor of party favorites.

**Training**

Once I was able to secure a seat at a training session, I learned why there are so problematic poll workers. On a positive note, the printed materials given to poll workers are excellent – easy to read, well-illustrated and organized. Unfortunately, too many trainers gloss over basic functions and rush through training to end sessions early. Although final exams are “open book,” trainers spend far too much time “teaching to the test,” highlighting answers to the questions that they know are on the exam. As long as county leaders use BoE jobs as patronage rewards for their family members, friends, or political allies, who pass the answers to the training quizzes among each other, the system will never improve. I have no issue with the culture of nepotism and favoritism as long as the nepots and favorites are competent. Sadly, this is not the case.

**On Site Staffing**

**Poll Workers** - I worked with poll workers who have failed to provide both sheets of two-sheet ballots because they have not read instructions, then argue with voters who actually know that they should have a multi-page ballot. I served with table inspectors who cannot process an affidavit ballot. I served with poll workers who refuse to read the manual on their desks during very long days of service, even when there are no voters to serve for periods of time. They are then unable to close down their stations at the poll site at night, forcing the competent workers to do both their own jobs and those of the recalcitrant and ignorant, simply to go home after a 17- or 18-hour workday.

**Coordinators** - I have experienced the late arrival of coordinators which affected the timely opening of my poll site as police officers (rightly so) refused to provide keys to workers who were ready to do their job but were not authorized to open the machines or open the polls. I have worked under coordinators who did not know how, or when, to call for technical support, then failed to trigger emergency ballot procedures and allowed lines to develop to dangerous capacity levels at the site.

### **Unpaid Service**

The inability of some workers to close efficiently lengthens the period of service after 9 PM when poll workers are *NOT* paid for their time. If we are paid for one hour of set up from 5 AM – 6 AM to open the polls, why are we not paid for at least one hour to close the polls? Indentured servitude was outlawed in the United States centuries ago. My poll site has lost several competent workers over the years due to this concern.

Early Voting has actually offered a better model for conducting fair, accurate elections for the digital age. The use of tablets in coordination with printers allows the Board to save thousands of dollars in printing costs for ballots which on Election Day are pre-printed and not used. The waste of money and paper for printing, transportation, packaging, recycling, etc. is obscene. The ability to tailor a ballot to the voter's ED and AD eliminates human error as well. If nothing else, the use of Early Voting machines for ALL election days and sites would provide a major boost to election efficiency.

Neither New York City nor its voters are well-served when patronage and ineptitude are the pervasive norm. I recommend contacting competent "on the ground" workers to help identify more of the issues that hinder the process for voters and make a mockery of elections in New York. I hope that this session is the first of many to address the issues I have enumerated in an attempt to professionalize the Board and its workers into a structure to serve voters efficiently and effectively.