

Hello,

I am forwarding a note that my wife Caroline Stern wrote, regarding the serious problems in the NYS primaries in June, in advance of tomorrow's hearing on Elections taking place in the NYS Legislature.

I am writing to second her thoughts on the matter, and of the crucial importance for the November elections as we vote in the continuing time of the pandemic.

I am adding one additional link—a story I heard on NPR today about using special dropboxes for ballots as an alternative either voting in person or voting by mail.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/10/901064498/ballot-drop-boxes-gain-popularity-as-an-alternative-to-in-person-and-mail-in-vot>

I do not know whether this is an alternative being considered, but feel that all viable alternatives need to be considered in order to insure a full and fair vote this November and going forward.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter.

With all good wishes,
Gerald Cohen
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Good afternoon,

I begin by saying that I understand that the Pandemic has caused a considerable strain on every part of the State's infrastructure, but there are issues that still need vigilant attention. This November is one of the most important elections, if not the most, of my lifetime. I want to make sure that everyone's vote is counted, that not one person should be denied the opportunity. What I saw transpire during the June primary horrified me and causes me great concern for the accuracy of November's results.

I understand that there is a NYS Legislature hearing tomorrow, "Elections in a Pandemic: A Review of the 2020 Primaries" on Tuesday, 8/11 @ 10am. It's important you know the breadth and depth of the problems in Westchester (I include a link to a Time article as a point of reference - I was not alone - NYC and Westchester had the bulk of the problems! <https://time.com/5874571/new-york-state-general-election/>).

I saw that there were last minute decisions about how to apply for voting in absentia that some municipalities were not able to implement without some hiccups, but what happened in Westchester and New York City went well beyond hiccups.

So many have spoken so articulately about the train wreck of an election cycle that this year's Westchester Board of Elections oversaw so poorly. Suffice it to say that as election date neared, I felt increasingly that my vote would not count if I in fact followed the method of using an absentee ballot. My husband and I chose to vote during the early voting period. Instead, Even then, I was surprised at how the polling area was set up, there were inconsistent COVID preparations, and I was not allowed to vote until one of the senior election officials called my name into the board of elections. I learned later that this was an unlawful step and one that made it hard to vote in person in an expeditious manner. Even as a district leader I felt frequently challenged that I barely understood shifts in policy for absentee ballots, leaving it difficult for me to be able to explain to my constituents what the best way to vote would be. My own Senator, Andrea Stewart Cousins mentioned recently about hold ups for when she went to cast her own vote.

I am still shocked by stories about the amount of poor information, poor options for voting, poorly trained poll workers, and confusion about how to apply for an absentee ballot in the first place. This election cycle was the result of negligence, hubris and incompetence.

I am deeply concerned that the Westchester Board of Elections has no visible oversight from the people they directly serve. The electeds of our County don't have the option to hold the Board accountable for mismanagement and poor planning. I believe that poor planning is in part the reason that the County is being railroaded into the purchase of the risky ICE voting machines.

I have copied my husband Gerald and a few other neighbors on this email in case they have anything to add.

I am unclear if there will be a state-wide push to mail absentee ballot applications to all voters for the November election. If that is under consideration on the state level I encourage you to do that sooner than later.

Thank you again for listening. I really appreciate the time you are taking concerning this critical issue as I know that it is a tough year on many fronts. Change will only happen if a very bright light is shone immediately on the mismanagement of this incredibly important process. Only then can alternatives be put in place to make sure that each person will be able to vote in a way that is safe and where each vote counts.

Regards,

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