

*Although I am not able to testify in person in Brooklyn on Wednesday July 28<sup>th</sup> in Brooklyn, I am submitting comments below in hopes they will be helpful in continuing to upgrade and improve our election processes.*

Background: I began as a Manhattan Election Day Poll Worker at the School of the Deaf poll site in November 2016. I attended a 4-hour in-person training class ahead of time in order to be certified to work at the polls. Since then I have been annually trained and worked at several Manhattan poll sites on both Election Days and Early Voting Days (including during the unprecedented 2020 General Election), and recently was appointed an Election Day Coordinator. Additionally, I have worked twice on the Manhattan Post-Election Canvass at the Voting Machine Facility on West 33<sup>rd</sup> Street.

### **1. Election Day Poll Working – a work in progress:**

Presidential Election Day November 2016 there was a very, very busy and sometimes chaotic time. Several scanners broke down, a nearby poll site had closed down – apparently without timely or posted notice to voters - thus there were lines around the block on East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and onto the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue sidewalk for both of these reasons - and we were still using paper voter registration books.

In the fall of 2019 the NYC Board of Elections BofE transitioned from paper voter registration log books to I-Pad E-Poll books which was a significant improvement -- logistically easier (no more leaning onto the table to sign one's name on a giant paper log) and also allowing for quicker and more efficient processing of voters. I applaud this move towards a more technologically efficient system.

*However, in my opinion, several areas need correction/improvement as we go forward into the future, including full Election Day staffing and more equitable daily pay.*

- Inadequate Election Day Staffing: More than half of the assigned poll workers did not show for Primary 2021, which often resulted in late poll site openings and made for a less fully staffed poll site. (I understand this situation was citywide.) When I called assigned poll workers the night before (per BofE procedure for Coordinators), some poll workers said they had told the BofE they wouldn't be there. Some had moved, some couldn't get time off at the last minute, but to a person those who might have long ago indicated yes they'd serve, said they had not been notified in a timely fashion in order to make alternate arrangements. *(We get a bulk-rate postage-paid postcard a few months ahead of time to fill out and return signaling our availability, but I wonder how quickly that is able to be turned around to find more poll workers?)*
- Inadequate Election Day Staffing (cont'd): Because of this too-low staffing, only a few ED tables were fully staffed. We did what we could to help each other out, but it was way less staffed than needed, especially since this goal is to have bi-partisan teams at each ED table. Coverage at lunch and dinner breaks was a feat. Somehow our long-time coordinator managed to not have a line outside or even in the hallway, except on a few rare occasions. (For this, she deserves many kudos!)

## 1. Election Day – cont’d:

*Clearly, reach-out calls to poll workers need to be made at least a couple of weeks beforehand (and then probably again via text or phone a day or two before) in order to get substitutes and a better chance of a recommended fully staffed poll site.*

- Better Election Day Poll Worker Pay: Election Days are very long (14 - sometimes 18 hrs. until the site is finished) and there is lot to closing each inspector table and scanner on Election Night (verifying the scanner tapes, verifying the number of ballots used, signing and filling out the many table site envelopes, the final closing of the scanners, etc.) – more than what poll workers need to do at the end of each Early Voting Day -- (although Early Voting Days tend to have more voters and more “poll worker/voter interface”).

*However, It is the same \$250 daily poll worker and \$350 coordinator pay for the much longer Election Day as for Early Voting Days! Therefore, it stands to reason that poll workers might not want to work Election Day - a longer day which translates into less pay. Therefore, raising the Election Day per diem to at least \$50 more than Early Voting (after EV daily poll worker and coordinator pay is raised of course as well) might also help get more experienced good people interested and working on Election Days.*

## **2. Early Voting – an important advancement, but another forward step needed:**

- Early Voting was, and continues to be, a huge and good step forward - more and varied times to vote, more voter-convenient (no more searching for one’s ED/Ad table), signing directly into the E-Poll books, and getting one’s ballot right from where one signs in is a big time saver. We are able to process more voters and keep lines shorter. (Voters like this plus of course they like the pens too!)
- Another excellent thing about Early Voting is that there is one dedicated Affidavit Table per poll site – poll workers there are dedicated solely to solving voter questions and problems not solvable at the poll station tables. This not only keeps the voting lines shorter, but also gives voters a chance to deal with just one group of people to resolve any issues.
- *However, in my opinion, the Continued Diminishing Daily Pay for Early Voting Poll Workers and Coordinators does not seem fair, especially with our having worked 3 times (June 2020, November 2020 and June 2021) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Early Voting poll worker hours have been extended a little bit each year (from 7 hours to 9 hours on some days and from 9 hours to 11 hours on other days) with no increase in pay for poll workers!. Yes, there is a daily bonus of \$25 per day, but that’s been in place since the start of Early Voting in 2019. Yes, there was an extra bonus in November 2020 when 3 days of emergency extra hours were added, but I’m referring to the “regular” poll worker hours being made a little longer each election cycle. (We understand the state controls the daily pay for non-BofE staff, but that sometimes the city can help with more \$\$ and bonuses until pay raises authorized by the state It would be nice to get that assistance, now.)*

### **3. Post Election Canvass – long hauls, but seems well organized and secure:**

- On both occasions I was glad to be selected to work to assist in this daily process – a chance to see what happens after the polls close and participate in the opening and verifying of absentee, military and affidavit ballots. Though the days are consistently very long (9-9/9-8 and 9-5 on weekends), to me, the methodology felt sound and secure.

### **4. Online vs. In-Person Training – my choice is the latter:**

- Although I participated in a ranked choice and refresher course online this spring, I believe that new training and refresher in-person training is MUCH better:
- *There is an opportunity for Q and A, you have a chance to see and feel the equipment, you can get a better sense if everyone in the room is actually there and paying attention to the subject, you can find inaccuracies and/or things that need correcting in the printed materials.*
- *Also, the digital divide continues: Not everyone can spend two hours or more at a computer screen, and/or has the resources to print out numerous pages of instructions.*
- *I understand the pandemic has changed things, and taught us lots of new ways of doing things, but the voting process is almost entirely an in-person process, so training in person just seems to make sense.*

### **5. Poll Worker/Coordinator Feedback – needed and could be so helpful!**

- One of my biggest concerns (and I have heard this often from other poll workers) is that after each election, it seems there's no time (or \$\$) for poll worker feedback so that the real time on-site learnings and experiences could help prevent the same problems from re-occurring. (I designed and led many consumer evaluations over the years and learned very quickly that this is the time and place where you learn what works and what doesn't work.) Lots of details are involved and it seems the BofE staff is busy recovering from working daily for months so there is not much chance to do this in an organized methodical manner. They always seem to be needing to get ready for the next Election cycle (and granted, they should have a break after all these hours!)
- *I believe Feedback meetings with the "front line" workers and ensuing analysis, corrections and upgrades should happen right after each election cycle with concerted time and staff and poll worker resources (\$\$) devoted to doing this so as to continue to upgrade and repair the NYC election process.*

Thank you and here's hoping things continue to improve ahead of time for November.

Faith Fraser, 7/25/21