

August 3, 2021

The New York State Elections Committee
Westchester Public Hearing
Westchester County Center
198 Central Avenue
White Plains, NY 10606

To the Members of the Elections Committee and our fellow citizens:

Following is my written testimony to the Elections Committee for the Westchester Public Hearing at the Westchester County Center on August 9, 2021.

My husband and I live in Whitestone, Queens. Fortunately, we have never had problems placing our votes in over 30 years residing here.

My friend, who lives in Park Slope, Brooklyn, has had problems casting her vote in the past. One year, she had to wait on a very long line, and when she got to the desk, they did not have a record of her voter registration, so she had to file a provisional ballot.

I have been concerned about voter suppression for many years and have learned over the past several years about problems throughout the country. I was shocked to learn that New York State actually has one of the least voter-friendly systems in the country. One time, I texted my nephews on election day to remind them to vote. My nephew who lives in Seattle, Washington texted me back that he had already voted because they vote by mail! I was embarrassed and jealous that Washington State had a better voting system than New York State does.

I would like to suggest the following:

New Yorkers should be able to **vote by mail**. This would save the taxpayers a fortune because poll workers would not have to transport equipment to and from polling places. Nor would they have to set up and break down polling places. There would be less opportunity for equipment to breakdown, and when a machine did break down, repair people would be on-site to repair the machines immediately, saving travel time. No one would have to wait on lines. Police would not have to be stationed at polling places. It would be better for the environment because people would not have to drive cars or be driven to polling places.

During the pandemic, we were able to request absentee ballots and to vote by mail. With the difficulties at the U.S. Postal Service that started last fall, we decided to put our ballots in a drop box at our early voting location. This was very convenient. I imagine many people did the same thing. We should always be able to vote by mail or **have a drop box** where we can put our ballots.

Ranked choice voting may be a more democratic way to select candidates and reduce or eliminate the need and expense of run-off elections, but it didn't work well this first time. I think it was because we had too many candidates to tally the votes efficiently with the system currently in place. In the greatest state in the country, we should have been able to compile the votes quickly and easily.

Virtual voting should be available. People live on their phones. Others work at computers all day. If we could vote digitally, it would make voting convenient for many more voters. Again, by using paperless ballots, New York State would save the taxpayers money and benefit the environment.

Count votes by mail as soon as they arrive. Why is New York State waiting to count absentee and mail-in ballots until after election day? It's crazy that we do not know the results of our elections until weeks after an election. Again, in the greatest state in the union, we must have people who can figure this out.

New York State has an opportunity to increase voter involvement, save money for taxpayers, and benefit the environment. I urge the Elections Committee to give these suggestions serious consideration.

Thank you to the New York State Elections Committee for coordinating this public hearing.

May you be safe. May you be well. May you be fearless.

Joan Walker
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