

LWVW STATEMENT REGARDING VOTING EXPERIENCES AND ISSUES

IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY

The League of Women Voters of Westchester appreciates this opportunity to provide testimony regarding voting experiences and issues in Westchester County, ensuring that voters' rights are protected and any voter fraud is eradicated.

The League of Women Voters of Westchester is here to build upon the strength of our relationships with all Westchester County Legislators and the Board of Elections. We offer a non-partisan, collaborative partnership, and an experienced and extensive team of Voter Services volunteers who are willing to provide service in our community.

In summer 2020, the LWVW provided their voting experiences, observations, and solutions to the County Board of Legislators and Board of Elections. We appreciate that our recommendations were considered, and can report now of the improvements we witnessed highlighting a few:

- **Early voting** was introduced in the County and is a ten-day duration. Hours are staggered to accommodate voters.
- **17 Early voting locations** were established in 2020, and was increased to 23 for the June 2021 Primary.
- Well-marked and controlled **Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes** were implemented at all poll locations.
- **Training** is much improved as it is now required on an annual basis. Process training is ~ 1 hour self-led online; voting machines training is in person for 3 hours - both the e-poll pad and the Plan A and Plan B machines. Well documented checklists and manuals are provided with all poll location materials for Election Inspectors.
- The **daily election day compensation for Election Inspectors was increased**; and compensation was provided for both online and in-person trainings.
- The purchase of additional Dominion ICE voting machines and electronic poll pads **reduced machine breakdowns at poll locations during election days** to increase efficiency for voters.
- **Adequate preventive care** (sanitizers, face masks, social distancing, larger venues, etc.) was established at poll locations to protect voters against Covid-19.

However, there is always room for improvement and the LWVW suggests the following for consideration:

- **Communications improvement needed** -- website is not updated frequently enough to keep voters informed; Board of Elections staff has referred callers to the LWVW inquiring about voting processes, poll locations, voter registration, etc. Many times, BOE phones are not answered in a timely manner. Signage is still only fair at many polling locations (especially the larger venues.)
- **Recruiting of Election Inspectors improvement needed** -- there was a shortage of Election Inspectors for the primary election in June. Improvement is needed in recruiting and then selecting Election Inspectors, finalizing commitments, and developing a list of Election Inspector Alternates to be called upon in the event of last-minute no-shows of Election Inspectors.

- **Expedite the vote-counting process.** In Westchester County, the absentee ballot counting process does not begin until seven to fourteen days after an election. All absentee ballots must be postmarked by election day but can be delivered to the Board of Elections seven to fourteen days after. Currently, no absentee ballots are touched until then. We recommend the processing of absentee ballots after poll locations close at 9:00 p.m. on election day to help speed up the process.
- **LWVW does not support S.264/A.5783.** Mailed applications for absentee ballots must be received by the relevant board of elections no later than the 15th day before the day of an election. LWVW recommends a seven or a ten-day deadline.
- In New York State, **voters must register at least 25 days prior to an election to be eligible to vote** in that election. LWVW recommends shortening that deadline with possible voter registration at poll locations for an immediate voting opportunity.
- LWVW recommends **providing additional early voting poll locations and studying the address location** itself to ensure voters can seamlessly reach the poll locations via mass transit.
- LWVW recommends that **all poll locations can accommodate all disabled persons** with regards to building access (i.e., ramps or elevators) and vehicle parking for an increased number of disabled voters.
- LWVW would like the Board of Elections to **consider split shifts for Election Inspectors.** Currently, Election Inspectors must report to poll locations at 5:00 a.m. and remain after 9:00 p.m. when all voters in lines have had the opportunity to vote. Closing processes cannot begin until all voters in line have voted, which has led to very late nights, i.e., midnight, 1:00 a.m., etc. during high voter turnouts.

The League of Women Voters of Westchester requests Legislators and the Board of Elections to consider our recommendations, and as always, offers our non-partisan assistance. Please feel free to contact us for further discussions.

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 League of Women Voters of Westchester
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