



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

PRESS RELEASE

PR16-05-047

May 18, 2016

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER: NYC BOARD OF ELECTIONS MUST TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO AVOID ANOTHER ELECTION FIASCO

More than 600 New Yorkers registered complaints with the Comptroller's office; over half reported they weren't on voter rolls, nearly a quarter encountered issues at their poll site

(New York, NY) – In the wake of reported voting irregularities across the five boroughs during the April 19th Presidential Primary Election, New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer solicited comment from New Yorkers and received more than 600 complaints about voting issues, including over 300 who reported they weren't listed on voting rolls. In response to these complaints, Comptroller Stringer sent a [letter](#) to the New York City Board of Elections (BOE) demanding that it take immediate steps to avoid a recurrence of problems experienced by many New York City residents during the April 19th presidential primary. The need to change policies and procedures is urgent, Stringer noted, as the deadline to register for the state's June 28th Congressional primary election is June 3rd – just 23 days away.

"Thousands of people experienced problems at the poll that prevented or interfered with their right to vote," Comptroller Stringer said. "Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy, and with three more elections in 2016 alone, the Board of Elections must act now to ensure that everyone is able to have their voice heard at the ballot box."

On primary day, Comptroller Stringer announced an [audit](#) of the operations and management of the Board of Elections, an inquiry that is expected to take at least nine months to one year to complete. To help identify potential issues that may improve voter access before that audit is completed, Comptroller Stringer's office solicited feedback from the general public about their voting experience. Over 600 complaints were logged, including:

- 306 voters, or roughly half, reported that they were not on the rolls, either due to the BOE's "purging" of their name, a change in poll location, or another issue.
- 78 voters reported encountering significant issues with poll workers, including but not limited to:
 - Directing voters to the incorrect poll site;
 - Demanding identification from voters;
 - Failing to show up by 6 a.m. to open poll sites;
 - Giving voters the incorrect primary ballot (wrong party); and

- Confusion about the procedure for affidavit ballots.
- 55 voters reported that they were not listed with the correct party affiliation.
- 19 voters encountered issues with the ballot or ballot machine, including:
 - Lack of functioning ballot scanners (poll workers deposited ballots in a box);
 - Scanners that were not programmed to accept the Republican primary ballot; and
 - Ballots that did not allow voters to write in another candidate.

To help improve conditions for the upcoming elections in 2016 and beyond, Stringer demanded that the BOE:

1. Address the needs of “purged” voters by:
 - Identifying those who were improperly removed from the rolls and restoring them to active status before the June primary; and
 - Prominently displaying a link on the BOE website for people who may have been affected by the voter purge with information on how to confirm voter status.
2. Reach out to the 120,000 affidavit ballot voters to inform them of their current registration status, and what steps, if any, they can take to ensure that they are on the active voter rolls for the June primary.
3. Increase voter registration and turnout by:
 - Extending the 9-to-5 hours of operation for BOE telephone hotlines;
 - Conducting an enhanced public awareness campaign directing all voters to register in advance of the June primary and/or to check their voter status on the BOE website; and
 - Providing weekly updates to the public on steps taken to restore voters who were improperly purged, plus additional steps being taken by the BOE to ensure that all eligible voters will be able to participate in the Democratic process.

“The status quo for the Board of Elections is not going to cut it. These proposals are concrete steps the BOE can take to proactively break down barriers to voting and help bring an end to this cycle of dysfunction,” Stringer said.

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