

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**NEW YORK CITY TO LAUNCH \$15 MILLION RANKED CHOICE VOTING
EDUCATION CAMPAIGN**

Mayor de Blasio appoints Laura Wood as New York City's Chief Democracy Officer

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and DemocracyNYC today announced an unprecedented \$15 million voter education campaign to inform New Yorkers on the new Ranked Choice Voting system ahead of June's Primary Elections. This effort will include an advertising campaign, investments in language access and accessibility resources, and direct outreach partnerships with community groups, faith-based organizations, Minority and Women-Owned Businesses (MWBs), and other stakeholders.

The mayor also announced the appointment of Laura Wood as New York City's Chief Democracy Officer. A native New Yorker, Laura has served as Senior Advisor and General Counsel to DemocracyNYC since 2019. Prior to this position, she spent five years as Senior Advisor and Special Counsel to the New York State Attorney General. Before that, Laura was Chief Counsel to the Democratic Conference of the New York State Senate and Policy Director to State Senator Daniel Squadron.

"New York City is set to conduct the biggest Ranked Choice Voting election in America, and we'll put on a full court press to ensure every New Yorker has the information they need to make their voice heard," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "Laura Wood is an extraordinary public servant who knows how to reach deeply into communities. She's the perfect choice to lead this unprecedented effort to get voters ready to participate in democracy in 2021 and beyond."

"There's nothing more fundamental than the right to vote – and this year, we have to work harder than ever to make sure New Yorkers use their franchise knowledgeably and wisely," said **J. Phillip Thompson, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives**. "This campaign will give voters the resources they need to adjust to the new system and tell friends and neighbors about the importance of Ranked Choice Voting."

"With New Yorkers facing so many challenges, learning about the upcoming elections and Ranked Choice Voting should not be one of them," said **Chief Democracy Officer Laura Wood**. "In this final stretch before the primary, DemocracyNYC is thrilled to work together with our partners – both in and out of government – to ensure that all New York City voters have their voices heard at the ballot box in June. This new commitment will allow us to educate voters where they live and in the languages that they speak."

The campaign will include:

Citywide Media Campaign

- Robust TV, radio and print advertising, including significant investment in community and ethnic media.
- A broad “out of home” campaign which includes subway, billboards, and Staten Island Ferry, including 542 bus shelter and newsstand ads.
- Digital media on popular app platforms and streaming services.
- Continued collaboration with BRIC Media on a “BHeard Civic Engagement and NYC Politics” series.
- Promotion of a multilingual, interactive online app, developed with RankedVote, which mimics the New York City ballot and helps New Yorkers practice and understand how Ranked Choice Voting works.

Language Access and Accessibility Resources

- Investing over \$2 million in translation of key voter education resources into more than 18 languages including printed pamphlets and public service announcements.
- Culturally competent video content to be produced, in partnership with CUNY and the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, for We Speak NYC, the City’s free English language learning program which provides civic-focused instruction through community conversation workshops and videos.

Direct Outreach

- Investments in MWBEs, Community-Based Organizations, faith-based organizations, and other community leaders and groups to do in-person outreach, education, and material distribution.
- Hosting and facilitating dozens of multilingual voter education workshops.
- Conducting Phone Banking Days of Action to Get Out the Vote for the June Primary.
- Text Banking New Yorkers with a goal of three million text messages, including a Voter Registration Day of Action on May 11th.
- Working with the CUNY student corps to conduct voter outreach, voter education and volunteer recruitment.

“With a little over 50 days to go until the primary, most New Yorkers will find themselves participating in a ranked choice voting based race election for the first time. It is imperative we conduct as much outreach as possible and invest in education efforts so voters are fully informed at the polls. Queens proudly joins the city in this comprehensive effort to reach millions of voters and teach them all about ranked choice voting in time for June,” said **Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, Jr.**

"This year's elections are perhaps the most consequential in this city's recent history. When voters overwhelmingly approved Ranked Choice Voting in 2019, we had no way of knowing the

conditions under which we would be using it in this first citywide election. That's why a robust public outreach and engagement strategy is so critical. I applaud the Mayor and DemocracyNYC for launching this campaign and Councilmember Ampry-Samuel for her advocacy to educate voters about RCV. I look forward to engaging as many New Yorkers as possible in this year's elections," **said Chair of the Senate Committee on Elections Senator Zellnor Myrie.**

"I am elated to hear that Mayor de Blasio is prioritizing voter education on Ranked Choice Voting for the city of New York." said **Assembly Member Alicia Hyndman.** "Organizations such as the Campaign Finance Board and Rank the Vote NYC have been working diligently on ensuring all New Yorkers understand RCV's impact and how to vote consciously. I implore all community based organizations to work with Democracy NYC and these other organizations in ensuring we get out the vote in a true and impactful way in our historic ranked elections this June."

"I applaud the Mayor's favorable response to the Council's Governmental Operations committee's request to fund an education campaign designed to increase public understanding of rank choice voting. As chair of the Council's Governmental Operations committee, I want to thank the Mayor for his allocation of 15 million dollars towards this important effort," **said Council Member Fernando Cabrera.**

"Ranked Choice Voting education is a critical investment for our city, and I commend the Mayor and DemocracyNYC for their commitment to our democratic process. As a longtime advocate for voter access, I am thrilled that this campaign will use a variety of methods to reach voters, particularly those who are too often left behind. It is vital that everyone have the tools they need to make their voices heard during this pandemic recovery, and with such an important primary quickly approaching, we hope these efforts will help empower New Yorkers," **said Council Member Eric Dinowitz.**

"With Primary Day less than two months away, we must ramp up our efforts to educate voters in every language and zip code to combat misinformation and disenfranchisement. Our government must reflect our cultural diversity and that goal can only be achieved when we work together to make sure every voice is heard and every vote is counted," **said Council Member Farah N. Louis.**

"Ranked Choice Voting has incredible potential to deepen our democracy in New York City, but we still have a lot of work to do to make sure voters understand the RCV system" **said Council Member Antonio Reynoso.** "The 2021 election will determine so much of our City's trajectory and it is essential that voters be given all the information possible to prepare them for how this election will be different from previous years. I fully support the Mayor's efforts to inform voters about how the RCV system works and I look forward to being a partner in getting out the message to all voters ahead of the June 22nd primary."

"When New Yorkers go to the polls in June, their ballots will look different than usual. It's imperative that we dedicate resources to ensure voters are as informed as possible on the new Ranked Choice Voting process, which will ultimately result in leadership that's reflective of New Yorkers' wants and save taxpayer dollars," **said Council Member Keith Powers.**

"With the June primary fast approaching, it's all hands on deck for educating voters on Ranked Choice Voting. I'm glad to see the Administration amplifying information in multiple languages and across various media that can help New Yorkers understand the new ballot process. Looking forward to coordination of this effort across all of our election and public-facing agencies," said **Council Member Carlina Rivera**.

"I support Mayor de Blasio's initiative to ensure every New Yorker is educated on the new voting system that we will be using this June. It is especially important to educate the senior voters who have chosen a single candidate for years. I expect that big investments will be made to ethnic media who will help spread this important educational campaign. The June primaries this year will determine the future of New York City, we need to make sure people are well aware they will be able to choose up to 5 different candidates in preferential order," said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**. "I look forward to continuing to work alongside Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Corey Johnson, my colleagues at the council, and advocates to ensure we are providing the resources every New Yorker needs to cast their vote this June and every election after."

"This crucial investment in RCV resources is one step towards building trust between government and the people by informing, activating, and empowering them as partners in civic engagement," said **Chair & Executive Director of the Civic Engagement Commission Dr. Sarah Sayeed**. "The Civic Engagement Commission is proud to join with DemocracyNYC and all of our governmental and community partners in making sure that diverse New Yorkers are prepared to use Ranked Choice Voting. In changing how we vote, New York has the opportunity to empower voters with more choices and to encourage candidates to engage with more voters."

"Our city is stronger when all our communities are fully engaged and represented in our democracy. That's why we are excited to welcome this critical investment in Ranked Choice Voting education," said **Bitta Mostofi, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs**. "As millions of New Yorkers prepare to vote for the first time using Ranked Choice Voting, it's vital to help our immigrant communities understand the new process so that their voices are heard. With this new investment in voter education, including new We Speak NYC video content that will make this information accessible to English language learners, our communities will walk into the polls with the knowledge they need to shape our city's future."

"The Public Engagement Unit is excited to continue our work supporting the city's civic engagement initiatives through our proactive outreach model," said **Interim Director of the Public Engagement Unit Adrienne Lever**. "With this increase in funding, we'll be able to expand the use of our innovative tactics and technology to reach historically marginalized communities and ensure that voters across the city have the information they need to make their voices heard at the ballot box. We are thrilled that this funding will also facilitate a partnership with CUNY's Recovery Corps Summer Youth Employment Program, through which we'll be training students to engage their communities and their peers in our democracy."

"Ranked Choice Voting puts more power in the hands of voters and often leads to a more diverse candidate pool," said **Sideya Sherman, Executive Director, Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity and EVP for Community Engagement & Partnerships, NYCHA**. "This robust

outreach and education campaign, which includes leveraging trusted and culturally competent partners, will ensure all New Yorkers are well informed and prepared to exercise their vote."

"As we prepare for the biggest city election in decades, we are happy to see this investment in making sure New Yorkers are ready for Ranked Choice Voting and prepared to cast their vote with confidence. This new commitment of funds will help NYC Votes and our partners reach more New Yorkers with the best guidance in more languages and on more platforms," **said Campaign Finance Board Executive Director Amy M. Loprest.**

"YMI is proud to support DemocracyNYC in empowering our communities through providing Ranked Choice Voting education," said **Jordan Stockdale, Executive Director of the Young Men's Initiative.** "Through our efforts, trusted, community-based organizations will educate New Yorkers across the City -- paying special attention to historically disenfranchised communities."

"SBS is excited to support an educational campaign for ranked choice voting as it promotes an equitable democracy," said **Jonnel Doris, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS).** "By working with small businesses and other trusted community institutions, we can empower communities to fully exercise their right to vote using ranked choice voting effectively."

"Democracy means that every person's voice is heard," **said Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Commissioner Victor Calise.** "In order to create true democracy, we must ensure every voter has the information they need to cast their ballot. This DemocracyNYC initiative will help educate people with disabilities regarding the new Ranked Choice Voting system and help them get out the disability vote."

"Every New Yorker's vote determines not only who represents us, but also how resources are distributed and how policies are made," **said Executive Director of the Racial Justice Commission Anusha Venkataraman.** "This investment will be critical to reach and inform New Yorkers about the expansion of voting rights and further engage New Yorkers in the democratic process."

"Ranked Choice Voting creates opportunities for representation that most reflects the diversity of New Yorkers. We thank all our critical partners for their efforts in this city-wide mobilization to educate and empower voters," said **Community Affairs Unit Commissioner Roberto Perez.**

"Older adults are historically the most reliable voters. It is crucial that we equip them with the education and knowledge they need to cast a well-informed voting choice in the upcoming election. We, older adults, take voting seriously, and are accustomed to voting for the candidate of our choice and are unfamiliar with Ranked Choice Voting. Older adults vote because elected officials shape the future of the communities we helped build, where we worked, and raised our families, and we want to continue to make a difference. Most of all, we know that voting is not only a privilege, it is a right and our civic duty. This outreach will help educate and ensure that we continue exercising this civic duty," said **Department for the Aging Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez.**

“New York will join a growing number of U.S. cities allowing voters to rank their ballots this June. Along with our community partners and Common Cause/NY, we’ve been working on the ground to get the word out about Ranked Choice Voting. This investment from the Mayor will go a long way to making sure RCV education reaches every New Yorker so they can take advantage of the new system,” said **Sean Dugar, Education Campaign Program Director at Rank the Vote NYC.**

“This June, New Yorkers will have the incredible opportunity to rank candidates on their ballots and elect representatives with consensus support. We are glad to see Mayor de Blasio stepping up with a significant investment by New York City that, in addition to the work we and Rank the Vote NYC have been doing for months, will ensure that voters across the city are educated and empowered when they head to the polls. New Yorkers are ready to rank — let’s make sure they have the tools to do so,” said **Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause NY.**

“CUNY is pleased to continue our traditional role of engaging New Yorkers in important and timely civic issues that impact everyday life,” said **CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez.** “This partnership with the City will engage our students, who represent the future of New York City in helping communities participate in ranked choice voting, as well as build on our successful WeSpeak collaborations to inform New Yorkers about important changes to this years’ primary process.”

"In less than two months, New York voters will go to the polls to choose the city's leaders for the next four years," said **Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition.** "For many months, NYIC has been conducting Ranked Choice Voting outreach, and we are proud to join the City's \$15 million RCV education effort to ensure every New Yorker, especially those whose first language is not English, are ready to rank their ballots."

“Citizens Union long advocated for bringing Ranked Choice Voting to New York City elections, and we were delighted when voters overwhelmingly approved this reform. Ranked Choice Voting will foster more positive, issue-focused campaigns, give voters more choice, ensure that elected officials are accountable to a broader spectrum of their constituents and avoid costly runoff elections. But in order for it to be a success, voters need to know how it works,” said **Betsy Gotbaum Executive Director of Citizens Union.** “We applaud Mayor de Blasio for making a significant, \$15M investment in Ranked Choice Voting education that will reach all of New York's diverse communities, and look forward to working with the City to ensure all New Yorkers are prepared for this crucial election.”

“Ranked Choice Voting brings the power of multiple selections to the ballot box. It allows all voters, including traditionally marginalized voters of African descent and voters of color, to assess and vote for their values, instead of the lesser of two evils. It is a good system for New York and ultimately good for democracy as it forces candidates to build broad coalitions and to consider the needs of every voter, not just the privileged and powerful,” said **Lurie Daniel Favors, Esq., Interim Executive Director at the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, CUNY.** “CLSJ is committed to educating our communities about Ranked Choice Voting and is already engaged in outreach. Funding from the City will enable

organizations like ours to continue the important work of preparing voters for the upcoming election.”

“As Latino voters must have accessible and up-to-date information on how Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) will work, we applaud the New York City Mayor’s office investment in robust RCV education,” said **NALEO Educational Fund CEO, Arturo Vargas**. “Given the existing barriers Latino voters face when casting their ballots, it is even more paramount that with the new RCV system, the community is directly engaged and has access to resources in English and Spanish. Ensuring that Latino voters have the information they need to participate in this new voting process will be vital as to whether or not RCV is successful in New York City.”

“Reversing the decades-long decline of voter participation in our local elections should be a priority for all civic leaders in this city. We know that the outreach efforts of diverse community media and trusted community organizations can increase voter turnout,” said **Martha King, senior program officer at the Charles H. Revson Foundation and co-chair of the GoVoteNYC Fund**. “This investment, not a minute too soon, offers significant opportunity to ensure that all of NYC’s communities will be heard at the polls in 2021 and that in turn our city government will be more representative, responsive, and accountable in the years to come. ”

“The League of Women Voters of the City of New York, a non-partisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, enthusiastically applauds City Hall for its tremendous commitment of money and resources to educate voters about Ranked Choice Voting. We have well trained Telephone Information Service volunteers, and Speakers; our volunteers are active in all parts of the city, and on all platforms. We look forward to collaborating in service to the voters of NYC,” said **League of Women Voters Elections Specialist Kate Doran**.

“The upcoming primaries represent a critical opportunity to elect a new generation of local leaders that will directly shape and impact the lives of New Yorkers. Our city's voting electorate must reflect the diversity of our immigrant communities including those who are left behind in the political process because of linguistic, economic and social barrier,” said **Sandra Choi, Civic Participation Manager at MinKwon Center for Community Action**. “We welcome the City's additional investment in funding inclusive voter education and outreach that prioritizes language access so that Asian-American and New Americans are prepared to vote with Ranked Choice Voting this June.”

"Women Creating Change is thrilled that the Mayor is investing in Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) education and language accessibility," said **Carole Wacey, President & CEO of Women Creating Change**. "Research shows that more women and people of color win elections in places that use RCV, which is a boon for our democracy and ensuring diverse voices are represented in elected leadership. This investment is vitally important because RCV is new and will only be effective if voters understand how it works and what to expect in the voting booth."

"CIDNY joins DemocracyNYC in supporting Ranked Choice Voting and emphasizing the importance of reaching the disability community so that we can fully participate in the process,"

said **Monica Bartley, Community Outreach Organizer for the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY).**

"Our mission at DUSA is to empower our community to vote and show them there's a place for their voice in the electoral process. Our goal for RCV is to create educational resources that will not only teach how it works but also let them understand the value of Ranked Choice Voting and how it can impact elections and their communities," said **Eddie Cuesta, Dominicanos USA (DUSA), Executive Director.**

"We believe anyone can make a difference. We applaud efforts to democratize civic engagement and want to encourage New Yorkers to exercise their right to vote," said **Rahsaan Harris, CEO of Citizens Committee of NYC.**

"The \$15 million investment announced by the Mayor today is a great step towards increasing ballot access for everyone in New York City. This initiative will improve language access and provide culturally competent educational resources to ensure that all New Yorkers understand Ranked Choice Voting and its benefits. Hispanic Federation continues to engage the more than 1 million Latino eligible voters about the importance of having their voices heard and casting an informed ballot." said **Frankie Miranda, President and CEO of the Hispanic Federation.**

"This funding will go a long way to build civic engagement across the city. Ranked Choice Voting is still new to New York, so it's imperative that communities are informed and enabled to choose the representatives that will address the issues that impact them the most ahead of the June primary. This applies especially to neighborhoods like Hunts Point where community members are disproportionately impacted by barriers to health care and economic support," said **Desireé Caro, Deputy Director of Casita Maria.**

"Changes to the way New Yorkers vote, even those that deliver increased voting power like Ranked Choice Voting, require dedicated public resources to raise awareness, multilingual educational materials to ensure fairness, and targeted outreach to underserved communities most vulnerable to marginalization or misinformation. The Mayor's investment of \$15 Million ahead of New York City's first-ever RCV primary will help ensure that all primary voters are ready and able to make their voices heard this June," said **Jarret Berg, Co-Founder and Voting Rights Counsel at VoteEarlyNY.**

"Ranked Choice Voting will give New Yorkers more choice and more voice in our elections. This additional \$15 million in funding for media, language access, and outreach will help ensure that all New Yorkers will have their voice heard at the ballot box. We thank the Mayor's Office for this crucial investment in our democracy," said **Nicholas Stabile, Board Chair of Ranked Choice NY and former Counsel to the New York City 2019 Charter Revision Commission.**

"Women For Afghan Women applauds efforts to improve language accessibility and ensure that all communities have equal access to critical information on the new voting process. We look forward to working with government and civic stakeholders to educate our immigrant communities across NYC on the importance of Ranked Choice Voting. Our hope is that this process will ensure greater representation and diversity for all minority communities in our City," said **Roshni Ahmed, Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator, Women For Afghan Women.**

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