

Hearing of the New York City  
Charter Revision Commission

Moderated by Richard Buery  
Wednesday, May 28, 2025  
5:37 p.m.

Queens Borough Hall, Helen Marshall Cultural Center  
120-55 Queens Boulevard  
Jamaica, NY 11415

Reported by: Oweinama Biu

JOB NO: 7359714

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Christine Quinton, American Sign Language Interpreter

Madeline Labadie, Chief of Staff, New York City

Charter Revision Committee

Edward Kiernan, Member, New York City Charter Revision  
Commission

Anthony Richardson, Member, New York City Charter  
Revision Commission

Grace Bonilla, Member, New York City Charter Revision  
Commission

Richard Buery, Chair, New York City Charter Revision  
Commission

Carl Weisbrod, Member, New York City Charter Revision  
Commission

Anita Laremont, Member, New York City Charter Revision  
Commission

Shams DaBaron, Member, New York City Charter Revision  
Commission

Kathy Wylde, Member, New York City Charter Revision  
Commission (by videoconference)

Sharon Greenberger, Vice Chair, New York City Charter  
Revision Commission (by videoconference)

Leila Bozorg, Secretary, New York City Charter  
Revision Commission (by videoconference)

1                   A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont'd)

2       List of Attendees:

3       Dr. Lisette Nieves, Member, New York City Charter  
4       Revision Commission (by videoconference)

5       Julie Samuels, Member, New York City Charter Revision  
6       Commission (by videoconference)

7       Diane Savino, Member, New York City Charter Revision  
8       Commission (by videoconference)

9       Valerie White, Member New York City Charter Revision  
10      Commission

11      Frank Morano (by videoconference)

12      Raquel Centeno (by videoconference)

13      John Kaehny (by videoconference)

14      Paul Johnson (by videoconference)

15      Cassandra Stuart

16      Kim Svoboda

17      Richard Fox

18      Bella Wang

19      Michelle Jackson

20      Candace Prince-Modeste

21      Janet Wootten

22      Elyse Mendel

23      Caroline DiNola

24      Cariage Paul

25      Richard Mitagliaro

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Kimberly Cruz

Shane Moynihan

Levi Anthony [ph]

Dareth Ogle [ph]

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MS. LAREMONT: Okay. We're going to  
3 start. Good evening and welcome to this public  
4 meeting of the charter review commission. My name is  
5 Anita Laremont and I'm honored to serve on this  
6 commission. Our commission's mission is to look at  
7 ways to make city government more transparent and  
8 responsive with a particular focus on the city's  
9 housing crisis. It is this commission's  
10 responsibility to review the entire charter and  
11 suggest changes to the voter's consideration.

12 Only if voters agree to those changes  
13 at an election will any changes to the charter go into  
14 effect. I know that I speak for my fellow  
15 commissioners when I say that we are committed to  
16 hearing from a broad spectrum of New Yorkers and to  
17 pursuing the best ideas that we can find. This  
18 hearing is just one of many public hearings across  
19 every borough to hear ideas from experts, community  
20 leaders, elected officials, and indeed any member of  
21 the public who wishes to testify.

22 Importantly, this is an independent  
23 commission. In making our recommendations to the  
24 city's voters, we are bound only by our judgment and  
25 our values. We will pursue ideas regardless of who

1 proposed them and regardless of who supports them.  
2 Joining me in this commission are 12 other  
3 commissioners.

4 There's the chair, Richard Buery, vice  
5 chair, Sharon Greenberger, secretary, Leila Bozorg,  
6 Grace Bonilla, Shams DaBaron, Dr. Lisette Nieves,  
7 Anthony Richardson, Julie Samuels, Diane Savino, Carl  
8 Weisbrod, Valerie White, and Kathryn Wylde. Although,  
9 as I said, we will be considering the entire charter,  
10 the commission is looking in particular at our  
11 charter's approach to housing and planning.

12 From my perspective, there really is no  
13 more important challenge for this body to take up.  
14 Our city is in the midst of a profound affordable  
15 housing crisis. For millions of low income New  
16 Yorkers, housing costs are the central struggle of  
17 their lives. For millions more, especially low income  
18 New Yorkers, our housing crisis severely limits where  
19 New Yorkers can live, what schools they can attend,  
20 how they get to work, and whether their families can  
21 even stay together.

22 Our commission is also taking a close  
23 look at the problem of chronically low voter turnout  
24 in city elections. Although our city does have a  
25 vibrant civic life, we suffer from consistently low

1 turnout in local elections. We are also particularly  
2 interested in how to ensure that nonprofit partners  
3 who provide really vital services for New Yorkers are  
4 paid on time for their work.

5 The commission staff recently released  
6 a lengthy preliminary report summarizing what our  
7 commission has heard at public hearings thus far and  
8 identifying areas to explore going forward. That  
9 report is available at [nyc.gov/charter](https://nyc.gov/charter). As the report  
10 reflects, your thoughtful testimony has driven and  
11 will continue to drive this process as it unfolds.  
12 Testimony on any topic is welcome at today's hearing.

13 So let me just say a few words about  
14 how the hearing will -- will unfold. We will  
15 generally hear from those who have attended this  
16 meeting in person before turning to virtual testimony.  
17 However, we have a few invited panelists who are  
18 joining us from around the country and we will hear  
19 from them during the first part of our hearing today.  
20 Members of the public are asked to testify for no more  
21 than three minutes.

22 We will call for testimony from three  
23 people at a time followed by any questions from the  
24 commission. I'll ask commissioners to hold their  
25 questions until the entire panel has finished. If you

1 wish to testify virtually, there's an form online.  
2 You can find it on the meeting page for this hearing.  
3 Go to [nyc.gov/charter](https://nyc.gov/charter), click on the meetings tab, and  
4 select the Queens hearing. We will also drop a link  
5 to the form in the chat.

6 We will do our level best to hear from  
7 everyone who wishes to speak today. This meeting is  
8 scheduled to run until 8 p.m. In the event that we  
9 don't hear from you this evening, there are many more  
10 opportunities to submit testimony. This is but one of  
11 many public hearings that have been announced. You  
12 can visit [nyc.gov/charter](https://nyc.gov/charter) to find information about  
13 all of our public hearings.

14 You can also submit written testimony  
15 to the commission by emailing  
16 [chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov](mailto:chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov). And if you  
17 cannot attend a hearing, each of the commission's  
18 hearings will be public livestreamed and recorded for  
19 archival purposes. With that, let's get into our  
20 testimony. Our first testifier will be councilmember  
21 Frank Morano who is on Zoom.

22 MR. MORANO: Thank you very much. I  
23 appreciate and thank you for the opportunity to  
24 testify before you today, chairperson, members of the  
25 commission, and fellow New Yorkers. As you mentioned,



1 my name is Frank Morano and I'm -- I'm new to the city  
2 council, but not new to the charter revision  
3 commission process, especially not some of the  
4 electoral reform issues that you have focused on in  
5 the preliminary report.

6 I've testified before this commission  
7 twice already in favor of nonpartisan elections with  
8 ranked choice voting just as I've done before, every  
9 single charter revision commission that has existed in  
10 New York City since 2002. This is an issue I care  
11 deeply about because it's about making our city's  
12 democracy actually work for the people that live here.

13 On April 29th of this year, I was  
14 elected to the New York City Council in a nonpartisan  
15 special election using ranked choice voting. No party  
16 labels, no backroom deals, just a group of candidates  
17 competing on ideas, character, and a record of public  
18 service. The result: an election that was clean,  
19 fair, efficient, and, imagine this, actually  
20 representative of the voters, not the parties.

21 And that's exactly how all of our  
22 municipal elections should be conducted. New York  
23 City is long overdue for a full embrace of nonpartisan  
24 elections with ranked choice voting. Not just for  
25 special elections or temporary pilot programs, but

1 across the board. This system is already working for  
2 us. It has for 30 years. We shouldn't stop halfway.  
3 We should finish the job. Let me be absolutely clear.

4 Nonpartisan elections with ranked  
5 choice voting, the very method by which I was elected,  
6 are not radical. They're the gold standard for local  
7 democracy. And I'm not alone in thinking that. In  
8 fact, nearly every major city in the U.S. that uses  
9 ranked choice voting uses it in nonpartisan elections:  
10 San Francisco, Minneapolis, Oakland, Salt Lake City,  
11 the list goes on. And let's zoom out a bit more.

12 Nearly every city in America with  
13 more -- with more than a million residents, Chicago,  
14 LA, Houston, Dallas, San Diego, uses nonpartisan  
15 elections. The only exception, that I could find  
16 anyway, Philadelphia. And, honestly, if you looked at  
17 how that's going, not very well. Nonpartisan  
18 elections are the norm, not the exception. They allow  
19 voters to focus on the person, not the party.

20 They empower independence. They reduce  
21 toxic partisanship and restore the focus of local  
22 government to what it should be: competence,  
23 leadership, and public trust. And yet in your  
24 preliminary report, you floated, I think, a  
25 dangerously confused alternative, so-called open

1 primaries, as a counter proposal to true nonpartisan  
2 ranch choice elections. Let me channel George Carlin  
3 here. Words matter.

4 An open primary has a clear, well-  
5 established definition. Political parties still  
6 nominate their own candidates. But any voter can  
7 choose which party's primary to vote in. That's how  
8 it works in states like Texas, Georgia, and Alabama.  
9 And you know what those states tend to have in common?  
10 Some of the least represented, most gerrymandered and  
11 ideologically extreme governments in the country.

12 So when I see this commission use the  
13 term open primary to describe California's top two  
14 jungle primary. It's not just wrong. It's Orwellian.  
15 What you're describing is not an open primary. It's a  
16 nonpartisan primary with a top two runoff. Those are  
17 not the same thing. Not even close. And California's  
18 top two system, it's been a disaster in at least four  
19 documented cases.

20 Vote splitting led to deep blue  
21 districts ending up with two Republicans on the final  
22 ballot or, vice versa, completely disenfranchising the  
23 majority of voters. Why would we want to do that  
24 here? It also shuts out minor parties and Independent  
25 voices. Why should a libertarian, Green, or

1 conservative have to out-poll two Democrats or two  
2 Republicans just to make the November ballot?

3 It's not democracy. That's electoral  
4 Darwinism. Let's talk about cost and clarity. Ranked  
5 choice voting lets us settle elections, primaries in  
6 general in one round, one. No runoffs, no second  
7 bites at the apple, no months-long campaign extensions  
8 or extra extensions, just one, clean decisive vote.  
9 That's the government. And contrary to what  
10 doomsayers claim, voters can handle it. In fact, they  
11 already do.

12 Cities like San Francisco, Oakland, and  
13 Minneapolis, they've been using ranked choice voting  
14 for years in non-partisan local elections. The sky  
15 hasn't fallen. In fact, voter participation has  
16 improved and elections are more competitive and more  
17 civil. But above all, I beg you, be precise with the  
18 language of democracy. Stop calling a horse or cow  
19 just because they both eat grass. Using open primary  
20 to mean top two is a bait and switch and voters  
21 deserve better.

22 So here's my bottom line. Put real  
23 nonpartisan ranked choice elections, the same like I  
24 just had in April, on the ballot this November. Make  
25 one set of elections for New York City. Not one set

1 for specials and one set for generals. Don't water it  
2 down. Don't confuse voters. Don't let them need a  
3 decoder to figure out what system we're voting with  
4 today. Don't distort what works.

5 Let's give New Yorkers a system where  
6 every vote counts, where no party has a monopoly, and  
7 where candidates rise on merit, not machinery. If we  
8 can trust New Yorkers to rank their choices for mayor  
9 in a special election, we can trust them to do it in  
10 every other election too. Let's be honest, if New  
11 Yorkers can navigate alternate side parking and the  
12 subway schedule, they can definitely handle ranked  
13 choice voting. Thank you. I apologize for going a  
14 little bit over my time.

15 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

16 MR. MORANO: Thank you.

17 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much for your  
18 testimony, councilmember.

19 Next up is Raquel Centeno.

20 MR. CENTENO: Oh, hi, commission  
21 members. I'm really excited to talk with you today.  
22 My name is Raquel Centeno. I'm a post-doctoral  
23 scholar at the Caltech Center for Science, Society,  
24 and Policy. And I'm here to talk to you today about  
25 some research I've done with your colleagues on the

1 demobilizing effect of primary electoral institutions  
2 on particularly Asian American and Latino voters.

3 So we use survey data that includes  
4 validated voter data to evaluate across different  
5 states the impact that closed versus open versus top  
6 two primary elections have on participation in general  
7 elections. And what we ultimately find is that closed  
8 partisan primaries are associated with lower levels of  
9 turnout in the general election for all groups of  
10 voters -- all groups of -- racial groups of  
11 Independent voters.

12 But we argue that closed primaries  
13 actually have a larger impact on Asian American and  
14 Latino voters because we know from a lot of existing  
15 political science research that Asian American and  
16 Latino voters tend to identify as Independents or non-  
17 party preference voters at higher rates than White and  
18 Black voters.

19 And what that means is that in a city  
20 like New York City where you have many immigrant  
21 communities, you have large numbers of especially  
22 young people from these populations that, essentially  
23 in a closed primary system, you are kind of probably  
24 mechanically reducing participation, of course, at the  
25 closed primary level. But that -- that also can spill

1 over into the general election, which could mean that  
2 part of why you might see lower participation of  
3 especially these groups in a large general election is  
4 because people don't have this habit of turning out to  
5 vote in the primaries.

6 So what we find and suggest in the  
7 paper is that a move from any kind of closed primary  
8 to something like an open primary, a top two or top  
9 four kind of primary, can result in positive gains of  
10 turnout for Independent voters from these different  
11 groups. And that there could be additional benefits,  
12 particularly for these groups of voters as, like,  
13 Asian Americans and Latino voters that tend to  
14 identify as Independents.

15 They may vote with a particular party,  
16 but they are not necessarily registered with that  
17 party and because of that are not engaged in elections  
18 in the same way. Of course, you know, I want to note  
19 that this doesn't necessarily mean that this is a  
20 panacea for reducing any kinds of, you know,  
21 disparities and turnout gaps or anything like that.

22 But that, you know, moving away from  
23 closed primaries can be one way to improve  
24 participation of a lot of these groups that  
25 historically have been under-engaged or disengaged in

1 these kinds of elections in the first place. I'm  
2 trying to keep to time. So that is kind of my initial  
3 sort of summary of the research that we've been doing  
4 and why we think that closed primaries are related  
5 with lower levels of turnout for these groups of  
6 voters and why you as a commission might want to  
7 consider moving away from those primaries.

8 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. I  
9 neglected to ask earlier if there were any questions.  
10 Okay.

11 Thank you so much, Ms. Centeno.

12 The next testimony is from John Kaehny.  
13 Please apologize if I mispronounce your name.

14 MR. KAEHNY: It's John Kaehny. Thank  
15 you. And thanks for the opportunity to comment today  
16 remotely. Appreciate that and compliments to the  
17 commission and your staff on your preliminary report.  
18 You know, my job is to read through stuff like this  
19 and yours is particularly good, so kudos to that. My  
20 organization, Reinvent Albany, advocates for more  
21 transparent and accountable New York government.

22 We have a staff of policy experts who  
23 have drafted and passed dozens of city and state bills  
24 and we're frequently called upon by journalists and  
25 elected officials to help them decipher complicated



1 public policy issues. So that preliminary staff  
2 report is excellent and it emphasizes longstanding  
3 concerns about New York City's poor voter turnout,  
4 which the preceding two commenters did a great job  
5 discussing.

6           The preliminary report identifies two  
7 basic interventions. One is even year elections,  
8 which are a very good idea and supported by enormous  
9 evidence, and some kind of open primaries. The  
10 commission report also notes that about a million New  
11 York City voters are unaffiliated and therefore can't  
12 vote in party primaries. So research by political  
13 scientists suggests that the two biggest factors that  
14 drive local election turnout is, one, whether the  
15 election's in an even year, which really matters  
16 because of federal elections, and, two, how  
17 competitive a race is.

18           Now, New York City rarely has a  
19 competitive Democratic primary and general election  
20 for citywide offices and typically has low turnout for  
21 one or both. So today, Reinvent Albany's here to urge  
22 you to place two charter changes on the -- that had to  
23 do with elections on the ballot. First, even year  
24 elections. Great idea. Don't need to get into the  
25 details. Many have spoken to this. Second, we ask

1 you to consider a vote once process, which FairVote  
2 calls single round RCV.

3 And that consists of a single election  
4 using ranked choice voting and no primaries. Those  
5 would be a big change. But as the councilmember  
6 noted, this is what dozens of cities and local  
7 governments across the United States are already doing  
8 and have been doing. And ranked choice voting has  
9 really changed everything. The possibility is that  
10 New York has to do things that are more rational and  
11 logical. And the overwhelming logic of ranked choice  
12 voting is to hold one election and eliminate  
13 primaries.

14 Turning eligible voters -- voters out  
15 once is pretty easy to do and far easier than turning  
16 them out twice. RCV elections guarantee a high level  
17 of competitiveness without splitting the vote. So  
18 that competitiveness is an attractive thing. Now San  
19 Francisco, which we heard mention, uses general  
20 election RCV process with no primary, a vote once  
21 system. And they had a voter turnout of 79 percent in  
22 their 2024 mayoral election. New York City's last  
23 mayoral election had 23 percent turnout. Seventy-nine  
24 percent versus 23 percent.

25 Now there's a lot of confounding

1 factors that we could look at, but that shows you the  
2 magnitude of the difference between those different  
3 systems. Another plus to what we call vote once is  
4 that it could dilute the ability of a single issue  
5 independent expenditure. And those you can't  
6 constrain. They're constitutionally protected by the  
7 Supreme Court now.

8 To sway an election -- sway an election  
9 in a general election with only two candidates, you  
10 could easily have an IE come in and drop ten, twenty  
11 million dollars to wreck a candidate on a single  
12 issue. And it's much harder to do that when you have  
13 a larger field in a ranked choice vote with large  
14 number of candidates. So, for instance, San Francisco  
15 limits their field to ten. Now vote once does not  
16 have to be nonpartisan. Candidates could list their  
17 political parties to help voters, you know, with more  
18 information about who they're voting for.

19 These people do care about that, but it  
20 doesn't have to. And of course it would save a bundle  
21 to not have to have two elections. It would save 30  
22 to 40 million dollars to only have one. And some of  
23 that saving could be put towards encouraging people to  
24 vote in other forms. Now, can -- can New York City do  
25 this through charter change? Probably not.

1                   But the charter has -- the city's been  
2                   doing things via charter change with the hope of  
3                   getting the state to pass state laws and enable them  
4                   with some success. And we think it's totally  
5                   possible. Now, if that's too scary to have the -- the  
6                   single vote RCB, vote once, we -- we think you should  
7                   look at semi-open primaries where anyone can vote in a  
8                   primary their choosing. Those are used in  
9                   Massachusetts and were recently approved in  
10                  Washington, D.C.

11                  Again, we think vote once makes a hell  
12                  of a lot more sense and has all the upside. But if  
13                  it's too politically bold, then semi-open primaries  
14                  would give those one million unaffiliated voters a  
15                  voice which matters. Lastly, unrelated to this, we  
16                  strongly support making Mayor's Office of Contract  
17                  Services a full mayoral agency with robust powers.

18                  As your excellent report identifies,  
19                  New York City procurement process is seriously screwed  
20                  up. Something that we look at carefully and we'd like  
21                  to see a strong MOCS with robust authority to  
22                  standardize procurement and get other agencies to get  
23                  their act together. So thanks again and happy to  
24                  answer any questions.

25                  MR. BUERY: Thank you so much for your

1 testimony. Are there any questions? Carl?

2 MR. WEISBROD: Yes. Thank you very  
3 much for your testimony. You suggested that we  
4 support even year elections. As you know, we don't  
5 have the power in New York City to unilaterally  
6 establish even year elections. We need state -- a  
7 state constitutional amendment. What is the advantage  
8 of making that charter change now without knowing in  
9 advance what the state legislature and the potential  
10 state constitutional amendment will do or what  
11 conditions such an amendment might place on what New  
12 York City could do?

13 MR. KAEHNY: It sends a strong signal  
14 politically to Albany that New York City voters  
15 support even year elections. And that will help get  
16 the charter change through the legislature, and then  
17 when the charter is before voters statewide, build  
18 momentum for it to pass. So as a political  
19 precondition, it's very important. You're right.  
20 Legally, it -- it's not, but politically it is. And  
21 it also keeps Albany from doing the old, you know, you  
22 guys got to go first thing. So we think it's very  
23 important for New York City to put into a charter.

24 MR. WIESBROD: Thank you.

25 MR. BUERY: Okay. Thank you so much.

1 Next we have Paul Johnson.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Well, first, I'd like to  
3 thank the committee and the state -- or the city of  
4 New York for taking a look at what I think is a very  
5 important issue. I was the mayor of the City of  
6 Phoenix. I am here to advocate for an open  
7 nonpartisan primary. Ranked choice voting or top two  
8 to me are -- are less important than opening the  
9 primary itself. I've run in both types of elections.  
10 I've run both in an open primary as well as in a  
11 closed primary.

12 And I'll just give you a little bit of  
13 experience so that you can think about this. When you  
14 run in an open primary, basically as a candidate I ran  
15 who was a democratic mayor and a democratic council  
16 person. But when you go run, you get a voting list of  
17 every Republican, every Democrat, and every  
18 Independent. You knock on their doors. You meet  
19 them. You hear people with differing points of view.

20 When I became mayor, it was obvious to  
21 me that there was a connection between business and  
22 the ability to produce commerce and social programs.  
23 That connection made sense. But when you run on a  
24 partisan primary, whether it's a Republican primary or  
25 a Democratic primary, what happens is, when you go get

1 a voting list, you don't go get a list of every voter.  
2 You get a list only of those people who are in your  
3 party.

4 And worse yet, you get a list of those  
5 people who turn out in a low turnout primary election.  
6 The result of that is that you end up with a much more  
7 skewed point of view. And it's problematic. It's  
8 problematic for a city to be able to operate because  
9 both of those things are important. What the two  
10 parties want you to believe is that either you have to  
11 be pro-business or you have to be pro-labor.

12 You have to be pro-business or pro-  
13 education. You're pro-God or you're pro-human rights.  
14 The thing that I've seen in running in a non-partisan  
15 primary is how can you be pro-business without being  
16 pro-education? How can you be pro-labor without being  
17 pro-business? And I don't buy into it for a second  
18 that God isn't pro-human rights. These things can be  
19 connected.

20 What you do is you give a much greater  
21 latitude to your elected officials to talk about  
22 issues as they're important and to find common ground  
23 between people which help make our governments more  
24 popular. Again, I'd like to thank the committee for  
25 looking at this. Certainly, I think a lot of other

1 cities and states follow New York, so I hope that  
2 you're successful in this measure.

3 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much for  
4 sharing your experience.

5 Any questions for Mayor Johnson? No.

6 Thank you so much for your time.  
7 Really appreciate it.

8 Okay. We're going to move to in-person  
9 testimonials and maybe I'll call up two people at a  
10 time if that's okay. First, Cassandra Stuart and Kim  
11 Svoboda. And just so you're ready, after Cassandra  
12 and Kim will be Richard Fox and Bella Wang. All  
13 right. Cassandra and Kim. Thank you so much.

14 MS. STUART: Good evening, members of  
15 the Charter Revision Commission. My name is Cassandra  
16 Stuart and I'm a lead budget and policy analyst at the  
17 New York City Independent Budget Office or IBO. IBO  
18 is a non-partisan independent government agency  
19 mandated by the New York City Charter. IBO's mission  
20 is to enhance public understanding of New York City's  
21 budget, public policy, and economy through independent  
22 analysis.

23 Our vision is to empower New Yorkers to  
24 engage with their government and shape the future for  
25 their families and their communities. Armed with



1 budget and policy information that's accessible,  
2 transparent, and timely. This evening I'd like to  
3 take the opportunity to present findings from an IBO  
4 report published in August 2024 on the topic of moving  
5 local elections from odd to even number years.

6 While IBO itself does not take a  
7 position on this proposal, this is an example of the  
8 kind of work that IBO does on behalf of stakeholders  
9 and members of the public. IBO conducted this  
10 analysis at the request of Citizens Union. IBO  
11 evaluated what the fiscal impact would be on New York  
12 City's budget if all local odd year elections were  
13 shifted to even number years alongside state and  
14 federal elections.

15 For this analysis, IBO included the  
16 cost associated with primary and general elections,  
17 but omitted special elections as the timing and  
18 frequency of these are variable. There would be  
19 fiscal year savings of approximately \$42 million every  
20 other year if the city held even year, on-cycle local  
21 elections. IBO's analysis assumed that the cost to  
22 run elections in even years would not significantly  
23 change as the infrastructure for conducted elections  
24 would already be in place and paid for in these years.

25 IBO noted that there may be additional

1 incidental costs such as increased printing or other  
2 promotional materials, that there may also be costs  
3 related to operational challenges in handling larger  
4 volumes such as ranked choice voting analysis. IBO  
5 calculated the five-year average of election-related  
6 costs in fiscal years 2014, '16, '18, '20, and '22.  
7 Though these are even numbered fiscal years, they each  
8 contain the cost for the November general election of  
9 the prior odd numbered calendar year.

10 For example, 2022 includes cost for the  
11 November 2021 general election. It should be noted  
12 that a given even numbered fiscal year also contains  
13 the cost of primary elections in even numbered  
14 calendar years. Total election related costs for the  
15 past five odd year elections range from 50 million in  
16 2016 up to 63 million in 2022. The five-year average  
17 of election costs for these years is \$42 million.

18 Even if IBO excludes 2016, for which  
19 there was only one primary election compared with two  
20 in most other years, the average of the other four  
21 years is 40 million. To put these costs into context,  
22 the Board of Elections has spent over \$200 million per  
23 year in recent years, inclusive of standard operating  
24 costs and the costs of election. Standard operating  
25 costs account for the bulk of BOE's expenditures and

1 include but aren't limited to personal costs and other  
2 than personal costs.

3 In terms of costs for elections, the  
4 cost of poll workers consistently comprises the  
5 largest share of election costs, while items such as  
6 full site furniture rentals and election staff  
7 transportation cost relatively less. Finally, IBO  
8 acknowledges that the timing of the local election is  
9 prescribed by the state constitution and a change at  
10 the state level would be necessary to facilitate the  
11 shift to on-cycle elections. Thank you for the  
12 opportunity to testify and I'm happy to answer any  
13 questions.

14 MS. SVOBODA: I'm not an expert. I'm  
15 an artist. I'm a homemaker in the city of New York  
16 City. I'm a political Independent and have been my  
17 entire voting life. I like to think of myself as a  
18 good citizen. I carry my food scraps out to the  
19 compost bin. I pick up after my dog. I pick up after  
20 other people's dogs if necessary. And I do volunteer  
21 work. I recently retired from a not-for-profit  
22 organization that works with inner-city youth.

23 I believe in civic responsibility. So  
24 not being able to vote in a primary election because  
25 I'm an Independent feels like I'm being stopped from

1 participating in my civic -- or the last 38 years  
2 since I moved to New York, I've been shut out of  
3 voting in primary elections. I'm not a newcomer to  
4 supporting open primaries. I've worked on the issue  
5 in the past. I have petitioned and I've campaigned.

6 Today, I feel it's urgent. Now more  
7 and more eligible voters are not registering with a  
8 party. And I believe every citizen has the right and  
9 should be able to vote in every election. And I urge  
10 the commission to act now and put open primaries in  
11 front of voters. Thank you.

12 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Are  
13 there any questions for Ms. Stuart or Ms. Svoboda?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you both  
15 for your testimony. Ms. Stuart, you were citing that  
16 the Board of Elections spends around 200 million a  
17 year and that the savings from shifting to even year  
18 would be around 42 million. Is there any evidence or  
19 anything in your report that suggests that the switch  
20 would also -- there would be other savings?

21 And as it relates to, you know, what  
22 the Board of Elections among -- I know you -- I know  
23 you said personnel a lot. But the idea of moving into  
24 even, does it -- are there exponential that you're  
25 not -- I don't know if your report speaks to that or

1 not.

2 MS. STUART: Our report strictly looked  
3 at the costs to conduct elections. It didn't account  
4 for costs related to, say, running the borough-based  
5 offices. There are offices in each borough. So there  
6 might be, but our analysis did not account for that.

7 MR. BUERY: Thank you. And, Ms.  
8 Stuart, I assume that there's no difference  
9 financially in aligning with gubernatorial and  
10 presidential elections. Is there any difference  
11 you're aware of?

12 MS. STUART: No.

13 MR. BUERY: Any further questions?  
14 Thank you both so much for your testimony.

15 MS. STUART: Thank you.

16 MR. BUERY: Next I invite Richard Fox  
17 and Bella Wang. Just that they're aware, the next  
18 folks will be Michelle Jackson and Candace Prince-  
19 Modeste.

20 MS. WANG: Thank you. My name's Bella  
21 Wang. I'm with the League of Women Voters of the City  
22 of New York. I just want you to say that I appreciate  
23 the opportunity from all the commissioners here today  
24 to submit testimony on your preliminary report, which  
25 I found very interesting. So as a multi-issue, non-

1 partisan political organization of over a century,  
2 League of Women Voters of New York City encourages and  
3 informs active citizen participation in government and  
4 works to increase understanding of major policy issues  
5 and influences public policy through advocacy and  
6 education.

7 I've been volunteering here for almost  
8 decade at this point, which is very -- so we read your  
9 preliminary report with interest. We submitted  
10 written testimony in the last round around ranked  
11 choice voting and around even year elections. Given  
12 the focus in the preliminary report on even year  
13 elections, I just wanted to dig into a few things that  
14 I think people have testified pretty thoroughly around  
15 most of the usual advantages.

16 But we wanted to highlight a few things  
17 around accessibility and access for people in the  
18 city. So people even this evening have already talked  
19 about the turnout problem in New York City, the  
20 effects on local election -- or on our local elections  
21 from moving from odd to even years as well as the cost  
22 savings. But a few things we would like to highlight.

23 First of all, we believe that it would  
24 generally promote a more inclusive and representative  
25 electorate benefiting communities of color, young

1 voters, as well as there's actually some evidence from  
2 the research that it might give more voice to renters  
3 as well as homeowners, which is definitely a balance  
4 of voice and representation that's very active in the  
5 city, because we're obviously very diverse as well.

6 Secondly, from an accessibility  
7 standpoint, moving the election timing would ensure  
8 compliance with HAVA, the Help America Vote Act, which  
9 is a federal law on ballot access. It guarantees  
10 certain ballot access protections to voters in federal  
11 elections, which then extends to any concurrent  
12 elections that are happening at state and local level.  
13 That means that these protections are not guaranteed  
14 in non-federal elections.

15 So putting our local elections in even  
16 years would put under the HAVA umbrella, which I think  
17 as we've seen with political developments lately, it's  
18 very important to protect things with existing federal  
19 laws whenever we can. Also, I think a thing that we  
20 are interested in is ensuring that voter education is  
21 covered. Voters experience election fatigue with  
22 constant elections and we do think it's important when  
23 voters are really tapped in during even years to take  
24 advantage of that time to educate on local as well as  
25 federal and state level issues.

1                   Lastly, I want to note a little bit  
2 around the how to actually get this as a ballot  
3 question. Again, from an accessibility standpoint, we  
4 realize, as people have mentioned, that the necessity  
5 of lining up the local and state elections makes this  
6 a little bit tricky.

7                   We are really dedicated to voter  
8 education and making sure that should this ballot item  
9 be up, that we're in support and really clear to our  
10 communities around -- essentially this is a part of  
11 the necessary but not complete part of the puzzle and  
12 really urge the commission when you're thinking about  
13 how to phrase it, to make sure you phrase it in with  
14 very, very clear for voters.

15                  Voters are pretty smart on average.  
16 You know, we feel confident in them, but we want to  
17 make sure they're aren't excessive double negatives in  
18 the wording so that it's very clear. And, lastly,  
19 I'll just note as a side note, we are currently  
20 studying the issue of non-partisan primaries. So we  
21 look forward to coming back with our conclusions later  
22 in the year. Thank you.

23                  MR. BUERY: Thank you.

24                  Mr. Fox.

25                  MR. FOX: I thank you for the



1 opportunity to testify. My name is Richard Fox. I'm  
2 an Open Primaries volunteer and a Brooklyn resident  
3 testifying to suggest that New York City adopt  
4 nonpartisan primary elections to the city charter  
5 through a ballot proposal in November. Currently,  
6 voters not registered with a party have no say in the  
7 choice of candidates that go to general election.

8 They're entirely blocked out of the  
9 primary election. And the nonpartisan primary system  
10 allows all voters, regardless of party affiliation, to  
11 participate in selecting the candidates who will best  
12 represent their interests. This change would increase  
13 voter turnout and ensure a more representative and  
14 inclusive process.

15 So some reasons why nonpartisan  
16 primaries are necessary: they would lead to majority  
17 support for winning candidates. Nonpartisan primaries  
18 allow candidates to reflect the preferences of the  
19 broader electorate rather than appealing solely to  
20 party members, ultimately leading to a more diverse  
21 and well-rounded candidates. It also combats the  
22 issue of a spoiler candidate to ensure that no vote is  
23 wasted.

24 Second point, it encourages positive  
25 campaign. Candidates will be incentivized to appeal

1 to a broader range of voters, fostering a more civil  
2 and constructive electoral environment. Third, it  
3 increases voter participation. Nonpartisan primaries  
4 will allow voters, including voters not registered  
5 with a party, to have a say in the selection of  
6 candidates, leading to greater voter engagement and a  
7 broader electorate, and, lastly, a reduction of  
8 polarization.

9 Holding nonpartisan primaries would  
10 force candidates to appeal to a wider range of voters.  
11 And this can help reduce partisan divisions and cause  
12 more collaboration, stability, and bipartisan  
13 cooperation. By adopting non-partisan primaries, New  
14 York City can build on the success of ranked choice  
15 voting and ensure that our primaries are more  
16 representative of the will of the people.

17 In addition, by adopting nonpartisan  
18 primaries, we can foster a political environment where  
19 voters' voices are heard and the election process  
20 becomes more reflective of our collective values.  
21 This legislation represents a crucial step towards  
22 enhancing democracy, fostering voter engagement, and  
23 promoting fair and more representative elections.  
24 Thank you.

25 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

1                   Ms. Wang, I have a question. You  
2 mentioned research showing that even year elections  
3 would lead to a more inclusive electorate, including  
4 giving greater voice to renters. Can you just speak  
5 more to that evidence?

6                   MS. WANG: Yeah. So I think overall,  
7 right, we know that it's -- we talk about lower  
8 turnout; right? But lower turnout is not spread  
9 equally across the population. We know in general  
10 more privileged populations, White, older, homeowners,  
11 that kind of thing, are simply more likely to vote in  
12 all of these elections.

13                   You know, we were looking at the  
14 history of -- of why elections are currently at odd  
15 years and the thought was, well, if we split them up,  
16 we'll make sure that people are get every issue with  
17 it's chance -- it's time to shine. We'll be able to  
18 have more time and focus on these issues.

19                   But what we've actually been finding is  
20 that the media market is disintegrating before our  
21 eyes, that it's very hard to get local news, and that  
22 younger and less privileged voters are simply less  
23 likely be learning in the first place about these  
24 issues. So basically anytime you have turnout go up,  
25 you're more likely to have a representative

1     electorate. And that has a lot of downstream impacts,  
2     we think, on everything from how we handle the budget  
3     to educational and other issues.

4                 MR. BUERY: And you spoke to this I  
5     think just instinctly in your answer, but you've heard  
6     some testimony or some concerns that with even year  
7     election, that might lead to less attention to local  
8     election and local issues because it would be  
9     dominated by the statewide or national election. Can  
10    you speak a little bit more about your perspective on  
11    that?

12                MS. WANG: Yeah. Sure. So it is  
13    interesting, right, because I think Citizens Union  
14    will say, you know, that was why they supported the  
15    switch back in the old progressive era days; right?  
16    And it just didn't pan out. You know, we did -- our  
17    study, we do a little bit of a review of, you know,  
18    the New York Times and other kind of major local  
19    newspapers.

20                How much coverage did they have of city  
21    council races comparing that to coverage of, for  
22    example, assembly races, which also tend to be  
23    somewhat lower profile and sort of during the even  
24    year equivalent. And it was kind of the same; right?  
25    All of the -- the attention went to mayoral and a

1 much, much larger portion went to presidential and  
2 federal elections.

3 But when we think about city council  
4 elections, assembly elections, that's something where  
5 we believe that the -- the attention on the election  
6 in the first place, the boost from that level of  
7 natural attention increased, frankly probably just  
8 outweighs the -- the loss of -- of attention to the  
9 city council race. Because frankly neither assembly  
10 races nor city council races were getting covered in  
11 the first place, which is a shame, but I think a  
12 little bit out of scope of this particular ballot  
13 question.

14 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Any  
15 questions? Thank you.

16 MS. LAREMONT: I had a question that  
17 related to what we heard previously about, you know,  
18 advocating for either single round ranked choice  
19 voting or open primaries, which are different things.  
20 And you talked about open primaries and can you at --  
21 at all give us some sense of why you think that that's  
22 preferable to the single one?

23 MR. FOX: So I actually was advocating  
24 for non-partisan primaries. Open Primaries is the  
25 organization that I'm with. So I'm advocating for

1 non-partisan primaries. So that would mean that just  
2 all different parties, Independents, can all vote in  
3 one election. This doesn't specify whether it would  
4 be only one election. It could be primaries in  
5 general.

6 Personally, I think one election would  
7 be better as the gentleman before mentioned. But  
8 nonpartisan would be the route to go, I think. I  
9 think open primaries would -- you know, obviously  
10 that's the organization name, but as a policy, open  
11 primaries is different. I don't think that would go  
12 as well as non-partisan. Thank you.

13 MS. WHITE: Hi. Thank you both for  
14 your testimony, Ms. Wang -- Wang, sorry. You -- thank  
15 you for your explanation in response to your -- your  
16 question about the even year and the anecdotal  
17 evidence for more inclusivity, not just racially and  
18 gender, but renters versus homeowners. It -- I don't  
19 know -- and if this was in your prior testimony,  
20 forgive me. I don't know if you have any specific  
21 statistics on that that could be helpful in, you know,  
22 us looking at this.

23 You also mentioned that you're in the  
24 process of doing a, you know, non-affiliate open  
25 primary, whatever the term is, or looking at all the

1 other options. When you do that analysis, if you can  
2 also include any statistics as it relates to more  
3 diversity in -- in participation, that would be  
4 helpful as well.

5 MS. WANG: Yeah, absolutely. So I  
6 think we -- you know, we did some research and we  
7 spoke to -- I've forgotten her name unfortunately.  
8 I'm going to send that to you afterwards. But there  
9 is a researcher at Berkeley, who was looking at school  
10 board election timing in California. Because they've  
11 got a useful kind of research position because they  
12 have -- they don't regulate whether school boards  
13 happen in even and odd years.

14 And there's been a fair amount of  
15 movement in California among those school boards where  
16 some localities have been switching; right? So  
17 there's some ability to actually track that in a way  
18 that's reasonably trackable with the data and  
19 therefore being less anecdotal. What they found  
20 particularly was that the Latino share of voters  
21 increasing by about 6 percent during even years.  
22 Asian share increases by a couple of percentage  
23 points.

24 The share of younger Americans almost  
25 doubles in presidential years. And there's a modest

1     increase in renters. This particular effect also was  
2     noted in that paper, to increase particularly in  
3     regions with a very diverse population, which is  
4     pretty much what you see here. So, for example, we  
5     found in New York City when we were looking at just  
6     the numbers, districts that have over 90 percent  
7     minority populations have turnout increases of an  
8     average of 232 percent in even year elections compared  
9     to odd years.

10                     And so, yeah, you know, in -- in recent  
11     presidential cycles, that means that turnout on  
12     younger voters end up being something like 60 percent.  
13     Obviously it's just way, way huger than it is for just  
14     overall turnout for odd years. And, again, because  
15     the increase is so much larger for those particular  
16     populations, you see them just naturally having a  
17     larger vote share.

18                     MR. BUERY: Thank you. And you said  
19     that research is detailed in your written testimony --

20                     MS. WANG: Yes. And I can email you  
21     all the paper.

22                     MS. LAREMONT: Thank you.

23                     MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

24                     MS. LAREMONT: And, again, when you  
25     look at the open primary, non-partisan primaries,



1 semi-open, whatever it is that you're looking at,  
2 hopefully all of them, you could include --

3 MS. WANG: Yes. We're looking at it  
4 right now --

5 MS. LAREMONT: -- support.

6 MS. WANG: Yeah. We're happy to circle  
7 back. I think we have a -- we have a sort of a  
8 grassroots concurrence process that we do. So it's  
9 currently going through our membership right now.

10 MS. LAREMONT: Thank you.

11 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

12 Next testimony will be from -- thank  
13 you. Any further questions? I apologize.

14 Thank you so much for your testimony.  
15 Thank you and appreciate it. Next we'll hear from  
16 Michelle Jackson and Candace Prince-Modeste. So that  
17 they're ready, they'll be followed by Janet Wootten  
18 and Elyse Mendel.

19 MS. JACKSON: Hi. Good evening. My  
20 name's Michelle Jackson. I'm the executive director  
21 of the Human Services Council. Thank you so much to  
22 the commission for having me back for another  
23 opportunity to testify about issues important to the  
24 nonprofit human services sector. As the director of  
25 the Human Services Council, we represent over 180

1 human services nonprofits in New York City and state.

2 And one of our primary issues is around  
3 procurement reform. As many of our members -- well,  
4 all of my members contract with the city and state to  
5 provide essential lifesaving services. I was really  
6 thrilled to see nonprofit procurement and payment as  
7 part of the commission's preliminary report. I've  
8 been testifying at commissions since 2008 and this is  
9 the first time we ever made it past the first hurdle.

10 So I'm really grateful for the  
11 attention that this commission is paying to this  
12 issue. And while systems changes like HHS Accelerator  
13 and Passport have improved certain structures in  
14 nonprofit contracting, payment delays persists despite  
15 changes in administration and engagement of the  
16 nonprofit sector.

17 While there are many pathways that  
18 could lead to reform, I want to focus my testimony on  
19 two issues: making MOCS a charter -- an agency in the  
20 charter, and also empowering the PPB to be required to  
21 have public meetings to help with their authority.  
22 This -- the charter, as is in the preliminary court,  
23 should establish a mandate describing the specific  
24 responsibilities for MOCS. It's crucial for MOCS to  
25 have charter authority.

1                   Having one unified agency that deals  
2 with all of contracting similar to OMB that deals with  
3 all financials and budgeting would be remarkably  
4 helpful as we see different city agencies have  
5 different approaches to invoicing and claiming they  
6 get to have a little bit of interpretation. Deputy  
7 mayor's change. Who oversees those agencies changes.  
8 So that would be really important.

9                   The Procurement Policy Board is also a  
10 really important vehicle for the public and for city  
11 council, controller, and the mayor to have some sort  
12 of authority or convening around procurement rules.  
13 And they do not have very -- they often do not have  
14 public meetings. And sometimes those public meetings  
15 are about one specific issue, so there's not a lot of  
16 opportunity for the public to weigh in.

17                   And they could also be a really good  
18 check on a charter level agency like the Mayor's  
19 Office of Contract Services to be able to address  
20 issues if the public or the nonprofit sector felt that  
21 MOCS wasn't doing everything that needed to be done.  
22 And my testimony by just saying, one, we do know that  
23 the city council and the mayor have announced recent  
24 initiatives and happy to answer questions about them,  
25 but we don't know that those pieces of legislation

1 will pass.

2 And we don't know that if a future  
3 administration will adhere to the standard advance  
4 policies and things like that. And since I last  
5 testified, things have actually -- the data shows that  
6 things have gotten worse with over 865 million in just  
7 unpaid invoices to the sector and delays across all of  
8 the human services agencies. So it's even more urgent  
9 than it was a couple months ago for the charter to  
10 submit some recommendations. And agency would be  
11 happy to answer questions about that. Thank you so  
12 much for your time.

13 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

14 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: Okay. Awesome.  
15 Good evening, everyone. My name is Candace Prince-  
16 Modeste and I'm speaking tonight in my capacity as  
17 president of the Jamaica branch NAACP. I join you  
18 this evening to express my deep concern and distrust  
19 in the proposal to introduce open primaries in New  
20 York City elections.

21 As a representative of a local arm of  
22 the nation's oldest and most impactful civil rights  
23 organization, my concern primarily focuses on the  
24 potential for open primaries to dilute the Black vote  
25 in New York City. Black people make up roughly 23

1 percent of the population of New York City. And Black  
2 voters in New York City are overwhelmingly registered  
3 Democrats.

4 We recognize -- we have been  
5 increasingly recognized as the base of the Democratic  
6 Party. Black-led organizations and their diverse  
7 allies have fought tirelessly to build political power  
8 and equity within the Democratic Party. And in this  
9 current political climate, it's difficult to ignore  
10 the suspicion that open primaries is a proposal  
11 designed merely to weaken or roll back the advances  
12 that we have made, ultimately allowing for greater  
13 infusion of special interest involvement in our local  
14 races.

15 Am I being paranoid? Maybe a little.  
16 But as a Black woman who can constantly has to justify  
17 her desire to take up space among others in our modern  
18 society, I hope you can understand why. I'm all for  
19 efforts to expand voter access and increase voter  
20 participation, but at what cost? With so many  
21 different primary models to choose from, how will this  
22 commission determine which one will best serve New  
23 York City voters?

24 How will the commission ensure that  
25 this effort does not dilute the voting strength of

1 black voters and other groups? How will the  
2 commission convince New Yorkers that voters with no  
3 vested interest in the policy platforms of a  
4 particular party be given the power to help elect the  
5 leaders of that party? I look forward to continuing  
6 this discussion and hope that this commission heeds  
7 the opinions and preferences shared here today. Thank  
8 you all very much.

9 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Are  
10 there any questions for either Ms. Jackson or Ms.  
11 Prince-Modeste?

12 MS. BONILLA: Thank you, Ms. Jackson  
13 for testifying. I have a quick question. There's  
14 been implications to -- around whether making MOCS a  
15 charter -- charter agency would create any confusion  
16 around the PPB and the -- the responsibilities of  
17 MOCS. Do you agree and what would you say would be  
18 the division of responsibilities among these two  
19 entities?

20 MS. JACKSON: Yeah, absolutely. Thank  
21 you for the question. I don't think there's  
22 confusion. There's certainly overlap, which is  
23 something we see often in city government. And I  
24 think checks and balances are a good thing for there  
25 to be shared responsibility and oversight. The

1 Procurement Policy Board is really designed to deal  
2 with procurement, which is how do we do competitive  
3 bids, how are we, you know, structuring oversight on  
4 the bidding process and who receives contracts?

5 Whereas MOCS is really responsible for  
6 the day-to-day invoicing. The PPB does not have a  
7 role, especially on a daily basis or even, you know,  
8 within its mandate, to tell city agencies how to  
9 submit budgets or how to implement something like the  
10 cost of living adjustments that human services workers  
11 got. And so there really is a division of Procurement  
12 Policy Board does a wonderful set of work that does  
13 influence and mandate MOCS to have certain  
14 responsibilities in terms of procurement.

15 But on the flip side, MOCS does all the  
16 invoicing, auditing, you know, all of those kind of  
17 daily insights. And -- and so there's certainly a  
18 division of those two responsibilities. And the PPB  
19 does have an oversight role if MOCS were to overstep  
20 or not implement rules that the public saw as  
21 satisfying.

22 MS. BONILLA: And as a follow-up  
23 question, your -- your testimony pointed to the fact  
24 that things are worse right now and that the sectors  
25 getting paid at even lesser rate than even last time

1     you testified. If MOCS were a charter agency today,  
2     how do you think that would be different?

3                   MS. JACKSON: Well, one of the  
4     things -- so I'm using data from the recent controller  
5     report. Just, you know, I didn't do this myself. And  
6     they found that in eight agencies it's kind of the  
7     worst that's ever been. Or they are seeing, you know,  
8     more delays than they were at this time last year.

9                   And those agencies include HPD, which  
10    is not under the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human  
11    Services, but is under the Deputy Mayor for Housing,  
12    Small Business Services, which is under the Mayor's  
13    Office of Operations. And you know, DYCD is under the  
14    Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives and not health  
15    and human services. The next mayor will divvy up the  
16    agencies in a different way to different deputy  
17    mayors.

18                   And so there isn't cohesion among who  
19    has authority amongst deputy mayors to be able to  
20    implement something across the system. So MOCS today  
21    could say we're streamlining invoicing, we're doing it  
22    this way, we are going to establish a SWAT team to  
23    come in and, you know, clear the backlog, we're going  
24    to register contracts this way, we're going to open  
25    renewals this way.



1                   And by having that authority similar to  
2   OMB tells people how to submit their money to them,  
3   MOCS would be able to say across deputy mayors and  
4   across agencies the ways in which things could work.  
5   And ideally, and, you know, I think especially in this  
6   current administration, I think that would be  
7   remarkably helpful for there to be one agency really  
8   dictating those processes.

9                   MR. BUERY: Thank you.

10                  MR. WEISBROD: Just a follow up on --  
11   on those questions. I mean, doesn't MOCS have that  
12   power today? I mean both MOCS and the procurement  
13   board are effectively under the control of the mayor;  
14   correct?

15                  MS. JACKSON: Well, the Procurement  
16   Policy Board is quasi under the control of the mayor;  
17   right? So there's appointees from the mayor's office  
18   and the -- from the mayor and the controller. But  
19   MOCS certainly is, but it only has the authority that  
20   the mayor establishes. Whereas by having it be a  
21   charter -- you know, an agency in the charter, it  
22   would have clear authority and, you know, the next  
23   mayor could decide that there's not -- there shouldn't  
24   be a MCS. So when we think beyond this administration  
25   and to administration's --

1                   MR. WEISBROD: No mayor has decided  
2                   that there shouldn't be a MOCS. And isn't -- isn't  
3                   the failures so far of MOCS or the lack of exercise of  
4                   its powers really within the jurisdiction, power, and  
5                   responsibility of the mayor -- whoever the mayor is to  
6                   address? And, I mean, one of my concerns is just  
7                   looking at the history of procurement, which is a  
8                   very -- as you say, a very sad history in the city  
9                   going back several mayors, the more -- sometimes the  
10                  more we require, the more problems we create.

11                 MS. JACKSON: So certainly I think  
12                 systems are only good -- as good as the people behind  
13                 them. And so I in no way think that establishing MOCS  
14                 as an agency is going to be, like, the sunshine and  
15                 rainbows of the procurement reform system. What I  
16                 would say is from my own experience under Mayor  
17                 Bloomberg, Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, the MOCS -- head  
18                 of MOCS, Marla Simpson, they worked very cohesively  
19                 together and were able to establish HSS Accelerator.

20                 So just to speak in this very one  
21                 specific way is because they partnered and they were  
22                 able to. Where -- where the MOCS chair did not have  
23                 authority to compel an agency to change the way they  
24                 did billing and claiming or procurement, Deputy Mayor  
25                 Gibbs agreed with the MOCS director and they forced

1 agencies to do that. Forced maybe being a strong  
2 word, although I was in some of those rooms, maybe  
3 not -- maybe not strong enough word.

4 And so this is something that hasn't  
5 been tried. The charter commissions have not picked  
6 up this as an issue. And so I think it's something  
7 that certainly should be tried. And I think it would  
8 create more authority within MOCS then, you know, the  
9 agency level it has now. And I don't know that it  
10 creates, like, more barriers to success and would  
11 certainly allow a MOCS, you know, director more  
12 influence across the different human services  
13 agencies.

14 MR. WEISBROD: I -- I guess my concern  
15 is, and you're sort of making my point, which is it's  
16 as good as the people behind it. And as you say,  
17 under Mayor Bloomberg and when Marla Simpson was the  
18 director, MOCS functioned in a much more -- much  
19 better way. The problem with creating a charter  
20 change is it's not something to try. It becomes  
21 embedded in an effect in the constitution of the city  
22 and it becomes calcified. And -- and isn't this  
23 principally a management issue as opposed to a  
24 structural issue?

25 MS. JACKSON: Well, I would say it's a

1 structural issue for sure. I mean, procurement --  
2 when we look at the size of the MOCS budget, when we  
3 look at the staff -- you know, the staff of the MOCS  
4 team and what they're charged with, all, you know, the  
5 billion dollars' worth of spending that New York City  
6 does, not just in human services but across agencies,  
7 goes through MOCS.

8 That's very structural. And so the  
9 idea of having them outside of the human services  
10 issues that I complain about on the daily, having MOCS  
11 as a -- in our -- embedded in our constitution would  
12 be a great thing for me. Not something to just try,  
13 but because it is the essence of, like, how we procure  
14 goods and services in New York City.

15 And so in a way I almost think it's  
16 been an error of our charter to not include something  
17 like that at all, how we do all of the contracting and  
18 contracting documents, to have it embedded in the way  
19 that the city operates on a daily basis.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. You kind  
21 of answered everybody --

22 MR. BUERY: I think commissioner --  
23 we'll go down the line.

24 MS. LAREMONT: I -- I had a question  
25 for the lady from the NAACP. You know, we're very

1 concerned about any impact that changing the nature of  
2 how elections are handled would be experienced by  
3 various populations here. And so, you know, to hear  
4 you assert that this would, you know, adversely  
5 impact, you know, Black communities is -- is  
6 concerning. And so I think it would be helpful to us  
7 if you had any data to support those claims because we  
8 would very much want to see anything like that.

9 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: Absolutely. And I  
10 appreciate the request or the question rather. I  
11 think that anytime we are venturing into anything new,  
12 you wish, right, for us, looking at past experiences  
13 will always help to inform. But also listening to the  
14 people. And just in the short time that this has come  
15 up, anecdotally the people don't understand it. They  
16 don't trust it. They don't like it.

17 Does that necessarily mean that  
18 automatically it's not good for us? Not necessarily.  
19 But I would simply ask of this body to put in and  
20 certainly not -- certainly just not on you all. I'm  
21 here as a partner with my colleagues around the city,  
22 around the state, but honestly are here as partners to  
23 help us find what works best for all of our  
24 communities. But also just keeping in mind that the  
25 concern is about the dilution of the Black vote. It

1 has come up and it's going to continue to come up  
2 with.

3 MS. WHITE: Thank you both for your  
4 testimony. What also would be helpful is to see if  
5 there is a statistical movement for younger -- younger  
6 people in particular. 'Cause you're NAACP; right?  
7 Black people that are moving toward not -- a non-  
8 affiliation registration. Because that's also -- you  
9 know, do you have sort of a natural dilution that's  
10 happening because of what's changing in society? If  
11 that's not an issue that would -- or if it is an  
12 issue, that would be good data for us to have.

13 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: Sure. I can  
14 definitely look on -- for both of those data points.

15 MS. WHITE: Thank you.

16 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: Thank you.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How are you  
18 doing? Thank you both for your testimony. Michelle,  
19 I just wanted to -- 'cause you kind of -- everybody  
20 asked excellent questions and you kind of got to a lot  
21 of what was on my mind, so I appreciate that. I think  
22 just so I can have a understanding, first I would ask  
23 if you -- I'm pretty sure you got testimony written  
24 that you're going to send with more of your  
25 suggestion.

1 I'm -- I'm going to ask, do you think  
2 that this adoption from the charter level is going to  
3 help to streamline the process? And you're saying  
4 create sort of, like, a separate agency with more  
5 authority. Do you think that there's a way that this  
6 is going to sort of, like, streamline -- streamline  
7 the processes to make sure that these things function  
8 and also does it still allow for checks and balances  
9 in the way that it should?

10 MS. JACKSON: Yeah, absolutely. So  
11 I'll answer the second part first because I think  
12 there's the Procurement Policy Board, also there's the  
13 city council who -- you know, MOCS issues a directive  
14 and the city council doesn't agree with that  
15 directive, they can certainly legislate. I mean,  
16 we're seeing that right now in the sense that the  
17 mayor announced fifty -- you know, 50 percent-ish  
18 advances for next year.

19 The council has legislation for 80  
20 percent advances. So there's always going to be the  
21 check and balance of the city council and the  
22 controller obviously in terms of their oversight role  
23 and then additionally the procurement policy board.  
24 And I think it would streamline things. Because right  
25 now the Mayor's Office of Contract Services, when they

1 want to do something like standardized invoicing, they  
2 don't get to just say, "This is how you should  
3 invoice."

4 And, you know, for a very specific  
5 example, nonprofits get their invoices rejected one at  
6 a time. And if you have a million dollar invoice that  
7 you submit to the city and they find -- this is a true  
8 story. Not the million dollars, but it's about  
9 250,000 -- 92 cents difference on a receipt, the whole  
10 invoice was rejected and sent back for the nonprofit  
11 to correct that error. They did not get paid that 250  
12 until that error had been corrected.

13 The Mayor's Office of Contract Services  
14 wants to do and -- and it has a issued a directive  
15 around partial payment. Pay the part of the invoice  
16 that is not contested and then wait for the other  
17 piece. So the 92 cents will, you know, hold that for  
18 a while. They don't get to just issue that directive  
19 across agencies.

20 They have to go to the different deputy  
21 mayors and the different agencies and negotiate that.  
22 And we have seen in the past, over the years, certain  
23 agencies have tried to opt out of some of those  
24 directives or say, "But we're special or we have a  
25 different way of doing this." And so MOCS should have



1 the authority to say, "We're the ones who receive  
2 invoices and send them onto OMB; we should be able to  
3 have a uniform policy around things like that."

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So -- so  
5 clearly, you know, that data that shows that this  
6 simple process -- or not a simple process, but this  
7 process actually delayed payments, which is the main  
8 issue and -- and caused -- because you have to go  
9 through these other mechanisms. So I think someone  
10 was speaking to -- one of the commissioners was  
11 speaking to, does that -- can that get handled on  
12 the -- well, there's the mayor's side of things, from  
13 that level, even if it's legislated through the city  
14 council, or does it require a charter?

15 MS. JACKSON: Well, something like  
16 the -- you know, if -- if the mayor and the city  
17 council agree on something, an invoice policy,  
18 although a lot of that -- you know, MOCS could do that  
19 now, but they have to go through the different city  
20 agencies and different deputy mayors. And so it  
21 depends on kind of -- like, something around late  
22 payments really couldn't be legislated.

23 It is a management issue, which is why  
24 having MOCS as, like, a level agency in the charter  
25 would allow for a clear stream of who's in charge and

1 management. And so in that sense it streamlines the  
2 process. I don't know if that's your exact question,  
3 but there's -- you know, OMB still has an oversight  
4 role. Legal still has an oversight role, Department  
5 of investigation.

6 So all those things would still exist.  
7 And MOCS, even as a charter level agency, wouldn't be  
8 able to, like, usurp that. And the city council could  
9 certainly legislate around issues of accountability  
10 and oversight and kind of components of that whole  
11 process in terms of get -- from the time you get a  
12 contract till the time you get audited. But MOCS as  
13 an agency would have more authority to just streamline  
14 those processes.

15 MR. RICHARDSON: Yes. Again, thank you  
16 both for testifying for Ms. Modeste. We -- we've  
17 heard some testimony suggesting that Black voters are  
18 still grappling with ranked choice voting and  
19 introducing something -- another change at this time  
20 would only kind of compound that confusion. I -- I  
21 noticed that you didn't take that position  
22 necessarily, but I will be interested to know what you  
23 think about that viewpoint.

24 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: I appreciate that.  
25 As someone who, another hat, has worked as a ranked

1 choice voting trainer, I push back against that  
2 notion. I -- the evidence that I've seen does not  
3 suggest that any group of people have any particular  
4 hardship with ranked -- with understanding ranked  
5 choice fully. I understand where folks are coming  
6 from, but that's not the position that I do.

7 MR. BUERY: Thank you. Commissioner  
8 Wylde, do you have any questions, before I -- I have a  
9 few others, but --

10 MS. WYLDE: No.

11 MR. BUERY: Question for Ms. Prince-  
12 Modeste. Is that right? Thank you so much. Thank  
13 you for your testimony. One thing I just want to note  
14 is that as part of our analysis, some of the things  
15 that we are doing about trying to evaluate whether  
16 there are any evidence for the idea that any of the  
17 changes to the primary rules would have the effect of  
18 the dilution of the votes -- dilution of Black vote as  
19 I think is required for -- under the state voting  
20 rights law.

21 So I appreciate you raising the issue,  
22 but, again, I think that -- I think we all want to  
23 make sure that decisions here are driven by data. You  
24 know, we all have reasons to be concerned about  
25 movement but I -- I think we can access that data.

1 And so, again, I'll just sort of repeat to the extent  
2 that you have data that suggests that it's the case,  
3 that would be helpful.

4 One of the things I do want to clarify  
5 is -- and I think one of the things that we're hearing  
6 about this challenge is language, because open  
7 primaries can be interpreted in different ways. And  
8 so I just want to just clarify your concern. Is your  
9 concern primarily with the idea that opening up a  
10 Democratic primary, for example, to non-registered  
11 Democrats would have a dilution of Black voting power  
12 as opposed to having a single primary, not Democrat or  
13 Republican, a single primary open to all voters? Is  
14 your objection to the former or the latter or both?

15 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: So your first  
16 example, particularly because Black voters are  
17 overwhelmingly registered Democrats.

18 MR. BUERY: But so to clarify, the  
19 objection is not to having a single primary where  
20 anyone of any registration can vote regardless of your  
21 primary -- or your party affiliation?

22 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: The -- so the --  
23 and I promise I'm not being difficult. The ultimate  
24 objection is to not dilute the Black vote. So any  
25 mechanism which would do that, whether on purpose or

1 by accident, we would -- I personally, and obviously  
2 speaking from our organization, would not.

3 So, again, I understand that there are  
4 lots of different models for open primaries, but  
5 certainly one that would allow voters who are not  
6 registered to a party to make decisions along with  
7 voters who are registered to that party, I believe  
8 would further dilute the power of the Black vote in  
9 New York City.

10 MR. BUERY: Thank you. Can I just ask  
11 it again because I just want to be clear for my -- I  
12 think I for one would not be in favor of any rule that  
13 would dilute Black voting power. So I -- I don't want  
14 to speak for my colleagues -- and so that's why I want  
15 to get clear about different proposals which operate  
16 differently.

17 So I understand you to be saying that  
18 in a Democratic primary, in a world where we have --  
19 we have today a Democratic primary, Republican  
20 primary, I understand to you have an objection to  
21 allowing non-Democrats to vote in a democratic primary  
22 for fear that -- that there could be all sorts of  
23 malfeasance and interference with the operation of  
24 that primary, if I understand that objection.

25 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: Correct.

1                   MR. BUERY: I'm asking about a  
2 different model which would not have a Democratic  
3 primary or Republican primary. It would simply be  
4 one -- wouldn't even call it a primary. Just a -- a  
5 first round of voting where Democrats could vote in  
6 that first one, Republican could vote, Independents  
7 could vote, socialists could vote, conservatives could  
8 vote. Is your objection to that model -- I understand  
9 what -- but do you -- maybe put it differently. Do  
10 you have a concern that that model would dilute Black  
11 voting power?

12                  MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: To an extent  
13 simply because Black voters in New York City are  
14 affiliated voters and so take it for what it is,  
15 but --

16                  MR. BUERY: But they can still vote --

17                  MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: No, I understand  
18 that they can still vote. But when you -- I am  
19 worried that when you open it up to everybody, it  
20 creates the potential for the Black vote to get lost  
21 in the sauce. I'm sorry. I would -- let me -- just  
22 to be perfectly clear, I -- I'm more familiar with the  
23 first example that you spoke about more so than the  
24 second example. I think the first example is used  
25 where -- where open primary are, I guess, I think that

1 first example is used more widely across the country,  
2 but I do want to be able to come back to --

3 MR. BUERY: I don't know that's the  
4 case, but I'm --

5 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: I'm more familiar  
6 with the first example.

7 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. I  
8 appreciate it.

9 MR. WEISBROD: Can I just -- just  
10 follow up on chairman's question? If I understand  
11 that you're saying the first one which is non-party  
12 people being able to vote in a party primary is your  
13 greatest concern. You may have concerns about the  
14 others as well. Is that --

15 MS. PRINCE-MODESTE: That's exactly  
16 correct. Thank you.

17 MR. BUERY: All right. Thank you both  
18 so much for your testimony. I appreciate it.

19 Next Janet Wootten and Elyse Mendel.  
20 Following them will be Caroline DiNola and Cariage  
21 Paul. And as always, forgive my generally terrible  
22 pronunciation. I apologize. Thank you.

23 MS. WOOTTEN: Good evening and thank  
24 you for giving us a chance to -- to speak to you. And  
25 it's great to have heard, you know, 15 erudite people

1 speak before I have to speak. Anyway, I am Janet  
2 Wootten,. I live in Manhattan. I am retired now. I  
3 had a career in public relations. I worked for Howard  
4 Rubenstein and his son Steven. I have worked with --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We'll forgive  
6 you for that.

7 MS. WOOTTEN: I've worked with many  
8 educational and cultural and civic institutions for  
9 years and years and years. So I'm an activist in the  
10 sense that I am a, you know, rebellious Independent  
11 and have been since I was 18 when I registered as an  
12 Independent. Didn't even know what that meant, but it  
13 is who I am.

14 And I'm here to tell you a couple of  
15 things that I've seen since I last sat before the  
16 charter revision commission in 2003 when there was up  
17 for grabs -- I think it was Mayor Bloomberg at that  
18 point, I think it was, who put it on the docket for  
19 consideration. And now 22 years later, it seems like  
20 this time has come for something akin to letting  
21 everybody in the city vote in the primary process  
22 since that in our town tends to be where the decisions  
23 get made.

24 I had a couple of statistics I'm  
25 bringing to you that, Ms. White, I heard you speaking



1 to the issue of young voters, and Ms. Laremont, I  
2 heard you speaking to the primary concern of  
3 housing -- housing and low voter turnout being the  
4 kind of focal points of -- of this moment. And I  
5 think these stats speak to both of those issues.

6 There -- as I think one of our  
7 colleagues said earlier, there's now 1.1 million  
8 unaffiliated non-party connected voters in New York  
9 City. But what's so stark is that close to 500,000 of  
10 them are younger than the age of 40. I'm grabbing  
11 these stats from the CFB voter analysis report. There  
12 was one in '22 and there was one in '24. So these  
13 are good stats.

14 So half of the unaffiliated non-party  
15 people in this city are young. They're under 40.  
16 Okay. It's people in my age bracket who are voting.  
17 So the other stark statistic was that 50, close to  
18 55 -- it's 54.6 percent of primary voters were over  
19 the age of 50. And in the last election, the average  
20 age of voters in the primaries was 57.

21 So you've got this -- you've got this  
22 confluence of all these young people coming in to  
23 register to vote and then you have a lockout in terms  
24 of when they get there. I'm giving you an anecdote  
25 because I feel very passionately about this. I stood

1 at the polls as I often do -- that during the --  
2 Obama's --

3 MR. BUERY: I'm sorry. You're at time.  
4 So you can just wrap up with --

5 MS. WOOTTEN: I'm wrapping now. And I  
6 had to turn voters away who come out to vote for  
7 President Obama and could not vote because they were  
8 registered Independents. That is not a good -- that's  
9 not a way that we should continue. Thank you for the  
10 chance to speak.

11 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

12 MS. MENDEL: Hello.

13 MR. BUERY: Hi, how are you?

14 MS. MENDEL: Hi there. Okay. So first  
15 thanks for the opportunity to testify. This is the  
16 first time I've ever done anything like this before in  
17 my life. And my name is --

18 MR. BUERY: Welcome.

19 MS. MENDEL: Yes. And my name is Elyse  
20 Mendel. And I live in Brooklyn and I'm retired from  
21 QME. I worked there for 30 years. And I now work as  
22 an emotional development coach. And I've been an  
23 Independent voter ever since I've registered to vote  
24 like -- like Janet here. I don't feel that having an  
25 allegiance to a party is helpful in supporting the

1 growth of the American people.

2 And I don't want to have to be  
3 affiliated with a party. I want to be affiliated with  
4 the American people. And I believe what's "growthful"  
5 is focusing on the issues and working to elect people  
6 that can make, you know, what we need and what we  
7 want -- to make that happen. And I feel deeply --  
8 deeply that people deserve to get what they need to  
9 leave -- to live a decent life.

10 I'm going to slow down. Sorry. And  
11 that that goes beyond party politics. And that part  
12 of what people need is the capacity to shape policies  
13 and programs in their city. And they need to be able  
14 to participate in every election. And here's the  
15 problem. My capacity to express my beliefs is totally  
16 blocked in a city where as -- as was mentioned, the  
17 primaries are almost always determined -- determines  
18 the winner.

19 I can't vote. And I'm -- I'm locked  
20 out. And I worked in -- you know, for the city for 30  
21 years and all my taxes, you know, were taken out and I  
22 pay my taxes every year and that supports elections  
23 that I can't participate in. So I -- I feel this is a  
24 critical issue and I'm one of those 1.1 million  
25 Independent voters, you know, in the city. And I

1 think we have the right to -- to vote in -- in the  
2 elections.

3 And, again, especially when the  
4 primaries do really determine, you know, who's going  
5 to be running in the general. And you have the power  
6 to do something about that. And you could put this  
7 issue on the ballot in November and -- and I think  
8 that's urgent for democracy. It's urgent for the --  
9 the betterment of the city. And I -- I really believe  
10 that all New Yorkers have the right to -- to vote and  
11 not have to be -- have to join the party as a  
12 prerequisite to participate in democracy. So thank  
13 you so much.

14 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. So for  
15 your first time doing that, that was excellent. Thank  
16 you.

17 MS. MENDEL: Oh, thank you so much.

18 MR. BUERY: Thank you. Any questions  
19 for the panelists? Thank you so much for your  
20 testimony. I appreciate it.

21 Next I'll invite Caroline DiNola and  
22 Cariage Paul. You'll be followed by Alton Smith and  
23 Mike Tagliaro [sic].

24 MS. DINOLA: Good evening. My name is  
25 Caroline DiNola. I live in Bay Ridge in Brooklyn.

1 I'm a freelance writer, an editor, and I've been  
2 involved in supporting political reform efforts for  
3 more than 40 years of my life. And one of those  
4 issues I've been involved in is the issue of open  
5 primaries. I'm a native New Yorker but I lived in  
6 California in the two thousands -- early two  
7 thousands.

8 And in 2010, I actually volunteered on  
9 the campaign for California proposition 14, which was  
10 for top two primaries. At the time, I had a full-time  
11 job, busy job, but I believed in the cause. And I  
12 went into one of the campaign offices every Sunday for  
13 many months and I called other Independent voters. By  
14 the way, in California an Independent voter was called  
15 declined to state.

16 Now we didn't really decline to state  
17 anything. We were Independents. We were stating what  
18 we were. But in any event, that's an example of how  
19 Independent voters often feel, that they don't even  
20 count. So we made the calls and amazingly enough that  
21 election was won. We won by 53 percent of the vote.  
22 Nobody thought it was going to be possible.

23 There was a tremendous campaign and a  
24 lot of money to try to prevent it, but it passed.  
25 Well, now here I am back in New York. I moved back in

1 2011, which means although we succeeded in passing  
2 open primaries in California, I never got the benefit  
3 of it 'cause I moved to New York City where there was  
4 no such thing. It doesn't feel reasonable to me.

5 Because I think New York City should be  
6 in the lead of doing more to -- to improve our  
7 democracy, to broaden the number of people who  
8 participate. To me, the -- the level of participation  
9 is the most important issue. The more people that  
10 vote, the more voices there are in politics. We all  
11 know and we've heard today that voter turnout is not  
12 good. And we all do know that when everyone can vote,  
13 more people participate.

14 And that includes everybody. So in  
15 every community, there's a whole population of people  
16 who don't vote for all kinds of reasons. We need to  
17 give those people a reason to vote as well. Every  
18 year in my neighborhood there are people petitioning  
19 to get candidates on the ballot and they ask me to  
20 sign and I can't sign a petition because I'm not a  
21 registered Democrat.

22 I'm a registered Independent. And when  
23 I say that to the petitioners, many of them are young  
24 people and they're shocked to learn that we  
25 Independents can't vote in every election. So I think

1     it's time for New York City to catch up. I think we  
2     can't keep waiting for the perfect moment. This is  
3     the moment to open up the process to everybody. Thank  
4     you.

5                     MR. BUERY: Despite your concerns,  
6     congratulations on making the wise choice to return to  
7     the correct state.

8                     MS. DINOLA: Thank you.

9                     MR. BUERY: Mr. Paul.

10                    MR. PAUL: Thank you to the commission  
11     for the opportunity to share my voice today. My name  
12     is Cariage Paul. I'm a volunteer for Veterans for All  
13     Voters. I proudly served as a Navy corpsman for five  
14     years and helped build out Javits as a hospital in the  
15     city during the height of the COVID-19 crisis. I was  
16     also raised prior in Queens about two blocks down  
17     there.

18                    And I've had the privilege of interning  
19     at the New York City's mayor office while pursuing my  
20     studies at John Jay College. I'm also one of the 1.1  
21     million Yorkers who identify as an Independent voter,  
22     those who have chosen not to affiliate with any  
23     political party. Like many veterans, my sense of  
24     service did not end when I left the military. I still  
25     believe in giving back just now in a different form.

1 I see voting as one of the most  
2 essential responsibilities we have in democracy. But  
3 here in New York City, that responsibility isn't fully  
4 respected because I'm an Independent. I don't get a  
5 say in the election that often matter the most, the  
6 primaries. Nearly half, 49 percent, of New York  
7 City's Independent voters are under the age of 40.  
8 Young voters aren't apathetic.

9 We're either shut out of voting or  
10 opting out because the political system isn't working  
11 for us. The same is true for the military community  
12 as well. Fifty-five percent of post-9/11 veterans  
13 identify as Independents, yet we're locked out of the  
14 same elections we served to protect, elections that  
15 other veterans have sacrificed their life for.

16 In the military, I learned to work with  
17 people of every background. We didn't ask who you  
18 voted for, where you came from. We asked whether you  
19 showed up for each other. And I think these values  
20 are representative of how our democracy should work  
21 too. When we talk about open primaries, we aren't  
22 talking about weakening parties. We're talking about  
23 stirring participation.

24 We're taking -- we're talking about  
25 welcoming the voices of the next generation and the



1 veterans and public servants who have already proven  
2 their commitment to our country. When is it ever  
3 acceptable to live in competition, whether in  
4 business, ideas, or elections? The answer is never,  
5 especially not in these United States. This is a  
6 practice we should no longer accept.

7 New Yorkers deserve a system that  
8 reflects the city we serve, not one that shuts out  
9 over a million of us or forces the people of the city  
10 to align with candidates that they may not agree with  
11 in the future. I urge you to keep open primaries on  
12 the table for -- ballot because our democracy deserves  
13 it. We're not asking for anything special. We're  
14 just asking that New Yorkers have the right to vote  
15 however they see fit. Thank you.

16 MR. BUERY: Thank you. Any questions  
17 for the panel? I do want thank you, Mr. Paul, for  
18 your service to the country and also to our city  
19 during difficult times. It's deeply appreciated.  
20 Thank you both for your testimony.

21 Next, Alton Smith and Mr. Mitagliaro,  
22 who will be followed by Kimberly Cruz and Shane  
23 Moynihan. Are you Alton or Mike [sic]?

24 MR. MITAGLIARO: Hello, Richard  
25 Mitagliaro. And I want to compliment you on

1 pronouncing my name correctly. Thank you very much.

2 MR. BUERY: I have so -- you have no  
3 idea how much anxiety I have -- thank you for that. I  
4 appreciate it.

5 MR. MITAGLIARO: Like -- like a few  
6 other people here today, this is my first time  
7 speaking at a function of the sort. So I thank you  
8 very much for this time. I'm here with Veterans for  
9 All Voters and I've lived in New York for ten years.  
10 During that time I vote. I vote early.  
11 Unfortunately, I vote early in the general election  
12 and I'm an Independent voter.

13 So I have a curious experience of  
14 walking to the ballot box and seeing most the  
15 decisions made for me already. So I really just want  
16 to highlight that feeling of doing that and  
17 understanding that a fraction of the voters in the  
18 city are making the decisions. And that just feels  
19 wrong. Like other people have said here today, you  
20 know, no group should have any more say at the voting  
21 box than others.

22 I feel that to my heart. And that is  
23 why I'm speaking here today. So I'm still going to  
24 vote early this year again in the general election. I  
25 just -- I hope that I -- I can vote for this proposal

1 to add nonpartisan primaries to -- to our voting here  
2 in New York. Thank you.

3 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Any  
4 questions? Thank you so much, Mr. Mitaglarlo. I  
5 appreciate it.

6 Is Alton Smith here? Okay. Next,  
7 we'll have Kimberly Cruz and Shane Moynihan.

8 MS. CRUZ: Hello. Happy memorial  
9 month. Happy mother's month. And my family's from  
10 Columbia, so (speaking Spanish). Religion, spirit,  
11 everything is right now coming to us all as the United  
12 States of America was founded by Christian fathers  
13 who -- Thomas Jefferson, he studied the Quran 11 years  
14 before he wrote the amazing living document that is  
15 getting destroyed in front of our eyes.

16 So I wanted to start with this amazing  
17 little excerpt because we need to bring the  
18 intellectual conversation to the spiritual world that  
19 we're in. And we are in a civil war. And the Soviet  
20 Union never really ended. And everyone is under  
21 attack, 195 nations, because we're letting our  
22 children's brain rot. Right now, federally, the same  
23 leaders that regulated the internet is regulating  
24 artificial intelligence.

25 We have at the federal level, Senator

1 Cruz, who carries my last name, saying that we, the  
2 United States, did everything right. We did not. The  
3 internet, I was eight years old, I was on Myspace.  
4 That is not okay. So now when the EU has had privacy  
5 data regulations, laws, that we could also adopt and  
6 have civic conversations around, we're not doing it.

7 We're focusing on primaries, which is  
8 what the -- want. So I'm going start with this. We  
9 have a finer body. The body which we see is the gross  
10 body. It's just like a shirt and a coat. Within the  
11 coat, there is a shirt. And within the shirt, there  
12 is a body. Similarly, the pure soul is covered by a  
13 shirt and a coat. The garments are the mind,  
14 intelligence, and false ego. False ego means the  
15 misconceptions that I matter, that I'm a product of  
16 this material world.

17 This misconception makes me localize.  
18 For example, because I've taken my birth in India, I  
19 thank myself Indian. Because I've taken my birth in  
20 America, I thank myself American. But as a pure soul,  
21 I am neither Indian nor American. I am a pure soul.  
22 These other designations, American Indian, German,  
23 Englishman, cat, dog, bee, bad, man, or wife, these  
24 are all designations.

25 In the spiritual consciousness, we

1     become free from all such designations. That freedom  
2     is achieved when we are constantly in touch with the  
3     supreme spirit. So no matter what religion, what  
4     culture, what country, what your mother tongue is, if  
5     you speak -- if you speak Spanish, if you speak  
6     Chinese. And these country (speaking Spanish). And  
7     so Columbia fell in 2022.

8                     Panama has fallen before because  
9     people, leaders in history, have decided to go into  
10    people's homes and tell them what they should believe.  
11    And you are all amazing leaders up there, all  
12    intellectuals from my universities, Ivy leaguers are  
13    going under because of our administration. So I've  
14    got five seconds, but I would love a question because  
15    I'm a civilian that is intellectual and I'm tired of  
16    these disrespectful conversations of just focusing on  
17    primaries during the civil war.

18                    MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

19                    Mr. Moynihan.

20                    MR. MOYNIHAN: Hello. Thank you for  
21    having me. Thank you for coming to Queens. I live  
22    just down the block. I spoke with you -- I spoke to  
23    you, several of you, maybe all of you a couple months  
24    ago. I'll try not to rehash everything I said back  
25    then. I agree with what everybody here has said since

1 I've gotten here 15 minutes ago about open primaries.

2 I think everybody in the city should have a voice.

3 I think primary -- you know, closed  
4 primary system is extremely flawed. It's obvious  
5 that, you know, people mention, like, oh, you know,  
6 maybe it turns -- we know it determines the election.  
7 We know that's what matters. But I don't want to  
8 believe that. I actually -- I came here today to  
9 reiterate that, but also to express my preference for  
10 the system of open primaries.

11 If you were to choose to put one on the  
12 ballot, I know people from Common Cause -- I saw John  
13 Admon [ph] last week or a couple weeks ago voiced his  
14 support for the top two system, which I don't agree  
15 with. Right now, we're going to have a general  
16 election with -- if Zohran doesn't win primary, you  
17 know, probably him, Working Families, Adams  
18 Independent, Sliwa Republican, and Cuomo Democrats.

19 We have four. Why are we going to turn  
20 that down to two? Maybe, you know -- personally, I  
21 don't want Adams or Cuomo in the race at all. But  
22 let's say we had someone else that was good,  
23 libertarian, Green Party. It's almost -- it's a very  
24 strong probability that a Democrat is going to make it  
25 and a Republican. Maybe two Democrats if they go hard

1 on the doors.

2 But why are we going to say -- why are  
3 we going to block that -- block out that third person,  
4 that third option? Alaska has the top four system.  
5 It's -- you know, it's fairly new, been used twice,  
6 but it's proven. They tried to -- they tried to tear  
7 it back. The last ones came out and they reiterated,  
8 like, no, we want -- we want freedom to choose, put a  
9 vote for -- we don't -- we don't want to be told we  
10 have to identify with a party.

11 So just use that system. If you -- if  
12 some of you have been thinking about the top two and  
13 leaning towards it, I think that will actually  
14 destroy -- have the possibility to destroy the  
15 electoral reform movement, the open primary movement.  
16 It helps that it has ranked choice voting compared to  
17 California where it didn't and shift -- boost -- you  
18 know, put millions on his Republican candidate and  
19 that gives a bad name, too. But even with RCV, it's  
20 too restrictive, and it's just why? Thank you for  
21 your time.

22 MR. BUERY: Thank you much for your  
23 testimony. Any question for the panelists? Thank you  
24 so much for your testimony. We deeply appreciate it.

25 MS. CRUZ: I just say one last thing?

1 You are here in the Queens Borough Hall --

2 MR. BUERY: We have to keep --

3 MS. CRUZ: -- and we have immigrants  
4 that are getting hurt and a healthcare system that is  
5 a new type of slavery. This is disrespectful. I saw  
6 melanated women here --

7 MR. BUERY: Ma'am, we have other -- we  
8 have other people who want to testify. Thank you so  
9 much. We're going to move on to the next Zoom  
10 testimony. First, Levi Lechak Anthony [ph] and  
11 Marialenna Giampino [ph]. I apologize. So, Levi  
12 Anthony [ph], you're up first.

13 MR. ANTHONY: I wanted to bring up  
14 three issues with the ranked choice vote. It  
15 should -- I don't know if there'll be time for all  
16 that tonight. I'll go with one and we'll see how  
17 long -- how time we have. Issue number one is in  
18 those of the states that have ranked choice voting,  
19 they allowed for ranking of all candidates. We'd only  
20 being able to rank five candidates.

21 You -- you got to have a full, complete  
22 say who wins or who loses the -- the person you want  
23 to win or the person you want to lose. And it's  
24 that -- and the 50 percent that the person reaches at  
25 the end of the -- you know, the round, is that a true



1 50 percent of the people. Why -- that's issue one.  
2 So we should be able to rate all candidates. Any  
3 questions or should move onto number two?

4 MR. BUERY: Please continue. Hello?

5 MR. ANTHONY: Yes.

6 MR. BUERY: You can continue.

7 MR. ANTHONY: Okay. Issue number two,  
8 batch elimination. As far as I'm aware, I think New  
9 York City is the only plate that has batch  
10 elimination. Batch elimination also takes away from  
11 the voters' -- from the voters' attention. As far as  
12 I read from -- I forgot from -- from which site it  
13 was -- the law -- the law site that gave the rules of  
14 the ranked choice tabulation is that in order to,  
15 what's it called -- to do batch elimination round, you  
16 need to make sure that it's not possible for any  
17 candidate to be able to surpass the ones before them.

18 But in order to do that, you need to be  
19 counted all -- all choices, you know, and not  
20 eliminating multiple candidates. So I -- and in order  
21 to know which -- where the vote goes after the next  
22 person, the next person, you need to do it one person  
23 at a time. And the -- since I assume this is already  
24 been -- being done, unless the -- you know, the Board  
25 of Elections is lying to the public, just release

1     that -- that information. That's issue number two.  
2     Any question or should I continue?

3                 MR. BUERY: Please continue.

4                 MR. ANTHONY: Issue number three --

5                 MR. BUERY: And I'm sorry. We're --  
6     we're actually at time.

7                 Are there any questions for  
8     Mr. Anthony? No.

9                 Well, thank you so much for your  
10    testimony. We deeply appreciate it. Next, I'd like  
11    to invite Marialenna Giampino [ph]. No? Okay. Next,  
12    Mr. Chad Peace.

13                MR. PEACE: Thank you commissioners for  
14    having me. First, I'd like to thank you for having  
15    this conversation. I think it's one of the most  
16    important that we could be having despite some other  
17    opinions. I'm Chad Peace. I've been the strategic  
18    advisor and council for the Independent Voter Project  
19    for 15 years. So, again, the I'd like to thank you  
20    for having a San Diegan come and testify.

21                As the authors of California's top two,  
22    which has been pointed out by a number of folks, there  
23    are unintended consequences to a top two nonpartisan  
24    system. One thing that I'd like to, you know, really  
25    focus on is that it's the fundamental right that's at

1 stake. Right now, our organization's actually  
2 advocating in California to move from a top two to a  
3 top five system to advance five candidates out.

4 That's not because top two's not  
5 working. I know the councilmember that spoke before  
6 suggested that the top two system in California has  
7 been a travesty, but then pointed to cities like  
8 Oakland and -- and San Francisco as examples of good  
9 governance, I suppose. I think as a Californian I  
10 would find that kind of interesting perspective.

11 But what's most important to us is the  
12 fundamental right that is at stake. It's that when  
13 you don't allow certain voters, because they choose  
14 not to affiliate with a party, to participate in the  
15 primary, which is a fundamentally important stage of  
16 the election, we're telling them that their vote is  
17 less meaningful. And to, you know, to address the  
18 perspectives that have been presented by the NAACP.

19 Independent voters, for example, are  
20 largely minority voters. Black voters, Hispanic  
21 voters, Latino voters are -- are in more numbers  
22 Independents than they are Democrats or Republicans in  
23 some states. And so the -- but the point being that  
24 if we're going to have a fair election process to  
25 everybody, our -- our first principle is that

1 everybody ought to have the right to participate.

2 In that when you're talking about an  
3 open primary, just the top two was opposed by both  
4 major parties, and some of the institutional forces  
5 may oppose open primaries. Open primaries are  
6 actually good for representatives in our view. And I  
7 think as -- as the top two has been in play over time  
8 in California, you see that representatives actually  
9 feel like they can govern better.

10 Some people may view nonpartisan reform  
11 as -- or advocating for Independent voter rights as  
12 anti-party. I think it's actually the opposite. It's  
13 that in the long run, the parties become more  
14 responsive to the electorate. They invite more voters  
15 in when they open their primaries. In fact, prior to  
16 our nonpartisan primary, California had a semi-open  
17 primary in which the Democratic party allowed voters  
18 to participate and the Republicans disallowed.

19 I don't think it's a coincidental that  
20 the Democratic party has succeeded in much -- much  
21 greater in California, because they've invited non-  
22 members to participate in the process since the  
23 beginning, I think in the state as a whole. Should  
24 not look at opening the primary system as one,  
25 frankly, revolutionary or -- or two have a negative

1 effect on -- on the process as a whole --

2 MR. BUERY: Thank you. Apologies.

3 We're at time. Are there any questions for Mr. Peace?

4 Really appreciate your testimony. Okay. Next

5 testimony is Dareth Ogle [ph].

6 MS. OGLE: Hello. Good -- good

7 evening. I apologize. I'm having trouble with my

8 camera. I thought it worked, but now that I'm

9 talking, it doesn't work. Nonetheless, my name is

10 Dareth Ogle. I was born in Queens, raised in

11 Brooklyn, and lived in New York City all of my life

12 thus far. And I'm now 28 years old. I have three

13 members of law enforcement a part of my family,

14 albeit, all retired.

15 And I'm here today to testify and ask

16 the charter review commission to adopt key to give the

17 Civilian Complaint Review Board real power to make --

18 I'm sorry, to move New York City from symbolic

19 oversight to real and effective accountability. As an

20 everyday citizen, as a prosecutorial paralegal,

21 previous prosecutorial paralegal, as a criminal

22 defense paralegal and as a paralegal/civil servant

23 handling civil litigation, I know that this is

24 necessary.

25 As an everyday citizen, I watch

1 officers -- not all, but a significant amount,  
2 engaging excessive and brute -- brute force against  
3 vulnerable populations and demographics. I watch how  
4 they are able to seize an individual's bodily  
5 autonomy, how we'll have three sets of hands on  
6 body -- officers tackling one person who only has two  
7 arms and two legs.

8 I see officers intentionally escalate  
9 interactions, then throw people to the ground,  
10 pressing citizens' faces and bodies to the filthy  
11 pavement. Then those very same officers hold  
12 themselves as heroes while they smirk and make  
13 disrespectful remarks and -- with condescending tones.  
14 I -- I see over time more policing with an ego as the  
15 norm and less as -- I'm sorry -- as an offset.

16 They -- they fully understand in those  
17 smirks and in those comments and in their body  
18 language, they fully understand that there are no  
19 consequences, no recourse to citizens. As a paralegal  
20 in the prosecutorial role, I immediately became aware  
21 of the systemic advantage with which officers and law  
22 enforcement have, immediate access to body-worn camera  
23 footage and resourceful criminal justice databases.

24 I would listen to officers casually  
25 disregard civilians' conditions in relation to

1 poverty. And often some of them remark that they  
2 would make that lesser known that they really don't  
3 care about public safety a lot of the time. Again,  
4 it's about their own ego and just getting a collar.  
5 And again, this is not all officers, but a significant  
6 amount.

7 As a paralegal in the criminal defense  
8 capacity, I watched how these interactions can have  
9 lasting and drastic effect in the lives of New  
10 Yorkers. And as a paralegal who handles civil  
11 litigation, I see how it is a burden that is passed on  
12 to, excuse me, the taxpayers of the City of New York  
13 through misconduct settlements and through salaries  
14 that are paid to the o--

15 MR. BUERY: And I apologize, we're --  
16 we're at time for your testimony. And I apologize.  
17 Is there any questions -- are there any questions for  
18 Ms. Ogle [ph]? Really want to thank you for your  
19 testimony for sharing your experience with us. We  
20 deeply appreciate it. So that is our last testifier.

21 In a moment, I'm going to ask for a  
22 motion to approve the minutes for the May 19th  
23 meeting, but before I do, I want to briefly take the  
24 chair's privilege. I read -- opened the newspaper a  
25 few days ago to read the quite alarming news that

1 Kathy Wylde was planning to retire as the leader of  
2 the New York City Partnership. And I have to say, I  
3 really can't imagine New York City without Kathy Wilde  
4 as the chair of the New York City Partnership.

5 I know there'll be many -- I don't know  
6 if Kathy's still on the line. I'm sure there'll be  
7 many more opportunities to celebrate her incredible  
8 work on behalf of the city. I -- I also do want to  
9 say just personally, I -- I'm just deeply appreciative  
10 of her mentorship, guidance, leadership, brilliance.  
11 I don't always agree, but I always learned.

12 And there'll be many more opportunities  
13 to say that, but I -- this is the first time I'm  
14 seeing you since I saw that news. I almost dropped my  
15 phone. And I could not let this opportunity pass  
16 before saying what I hope will be the first of many  
17 times. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you,

18 MS. WYLDE: Thank you. With you from  
19 Puerto Rico.

20 MR. BUERY: And I -- and I'm also -- I  
21 was always jealous of you. With that, I'll entertain  
22 a motion to approve the minutes of the May 19th  
23 meeting. And with minute -- and with time to spare,  
24 happy to, in Kathy Wylde's honor, entertain a motion  
25 to adjourn or meeting early. Is there a second.



1 Thank you all so much. Thanks for being here. Thanks  
2 for being part of our democracy. It's deeply  
3 appreciated. Thank you.

4 (Off the record.)

5 MR. BUERY: I call the meeting back in  
6 order. I'll once again entertain a motion to approve  
7 the minutes. Is there a second? All in favor?

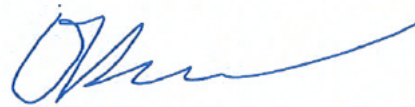
8 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

9 MR. BUERY: Any opposed? The motion  
10 passes. We are adjourned.

11 (Whereupon, at 7:24 p.m., the  
12 proceeding was concluded.)  
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CERTIFICATE

I, OWEINAMA BIU, the officer before whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that the proceedings were recorded by me and thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

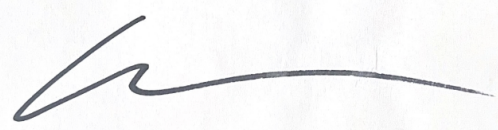


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I, RONALD MOORE, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from the digital audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'RONALD MOORE', written over a light blue rectangular background.

RONALD MOORE

<b>1</b>	<b>2024</b> 18:22	<b>53</b> 69:21	86:4
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<b>11</b> 75:13	<b>22</b> 26:6 64:19	<b>57</b> 65:20	39:5 46:20
<b>11415</b> 1:12	65:12	<b>5:37</b> 1:7	53:9 55:10
<b>12</b> 6:2	<b>23</b> 18:23,24	<b>6</b>	<b>accelerator</b>
<b>120-55</b> 1:11	44:25	<b>6</b> 39:21	42:12 50:19
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<b>15</b> 63:25 78:1	<b>24</b> 65:12	<b>63</b> 26:16	<b>acceptable</b> 73:3
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<b>16</b> 26:6	<b>250,000</b> 56:9	<b>7359714</b> 1:22	31:9,10 45:19
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<b>lone</b> 65:12	<b>32756</b> 90:18	<b>9</b>	<b>account</b> 26:25
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<b>2003</b> 64:16	<b>42</b> 25:19 26:17	22:22 39:17	<b>accurate</b> 90:9
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