

**BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE
CITIZENS UNION
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP (NYPIRG)**

Board of Elections of the City of New York
42 Broadway, 6th Floor
New York, NY

April 27, 2012

Dear Commissioners:

At the weekly meeting of the Commissioners on April 17th, the Board contemplated two different mock ballots presented by staff to accommodate the addition of a fifth language to the ballot at certain poll sites in New York City, as required by federal law. The first mock ballot included all offices and candidates on one page, but a five point font was required to limit the ballot to one page. The second mock ballot spanned two pages to accommodate larger font, but required that certain offices and candidates be placed on the second page of the ballot.

Our groups call on the Commissioners to consider a third approach: bilingual ballots that include English and just one other foreign language. This would result in a separate ballot for each of the five required languages. This approach would allow for a readable font size while including all offices and candidates on a single page. It is not without its drawbacks – for example, increased complexity for pollworkers distributing ballots and potentially higher printing costs – but we believe these shortcomings may be offset by a more readable ballot. The Board can additionally utilize its current targeting of language interpreters by poll sites to determine which ballots with separate languages are sent to particular poll sites. With the implementation of the new voting machines in 2010, the font size of the ballot was arguably the greatest complaint among voters. Indeed a City Council survey, conducted with the participation of many of our organizations following the 2010 general election, revealed that 1 in 3 voters found the ballot to be difficult to read.

We respectfully request that Board staff create a third mock ballot for consideration by the Board with English and one other foreign language so that the Commissioners may consider this option, and members of the public may provide their feedback on this ballot and the previous two mock ballots at upcoming meetings at which this issue is discussed. In addition to soliciting public input on these mock ballots and bilingual ballots, the Board should consider acquiring the feedback of usability experts in the design of any ballot.

We thank the Board for its open discussion at its Commissioners' meetings of options to accommodate the addition of a fifth language to the ballot. We welcome further discussion of

this issue. Should the Commissioners or Executive Staff be interested in discussing further this issue with our organizations outside of the weekly meetings, please contact Alex Camarda, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy at Citizens Union at 212-227-0342 ext. 24.

Regards,

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