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Testimony before the New York City Voter Assistance Advisory Committee
Calling all Voters! NYC Votes Public Hearing on the 2016 Elections

By Alvaader Frazier, Esq
New York City Independence Clubs
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My polling site is on 158 Street between Amsterdam and Broadway in Harlem/Manhattan.

On Election Day, November 8, 2016, I went to vote around 6:00 PM. Whereupon, I discovered that I had been given two (2) long sheet ballots.

I saw a man walking around directing people. I approached him and asked for help. I directed him to the table and the woman who gave me the ballots.

They got into a heated exchange regarding matching page numbers. He gave me one ballot back and walked me over to a voting machine and watched me feed the ballot into the scanner. To state the obvious, this should never happen.

Further, I was denied my right to vote outright three times in 2016 because I am a registered independent voter. New York City and State's closed primary system did not allow me to vote in the April Presidential Primary, the Congressional Primary in June for an open Congressional seat in Harlem, and the State Primary in September. Taxpayer dollars were used to pay for these primaries that denied nearly one million New York City voters the ballot.

There are over 3.4 million voters who are independent of the Democratic and Republican parties in New York State. 15% of African America voters are independents and 22% of African Americans under 30 are independent. 22% of Latino voters and 35% of Asian Americans are independents. We are a growing community of voters and we are being barred from voting in the primaries, which all too often are the only rounds that are competitive and where our voices can make a difference.

I live in the 13th Congressional District, where for the first time in 45 years there was an open seat with the retirement of Congressman Rangel. That race was decided in a so called hotly contested Democratic Primary. However, only 13.1% of registered Democrats voted,

which is only 10.4% of the total voters in the district. In the general election, the race was essentially over before the polls opened.

As an independent voter throughout this year, I was very hurt, dismayed, disappointed and humiliated. My citizenship was disregarded and disenfranchised, as an African American who fully understands the bloody history of the fight for the right to vote. Assistance is needed and it is imperative to open New York City and State primaries to ALL voters. No American should be forced to join a political party in order to be able to vote.