



**New York City Voter Assistance Advisory Committee
2011 – 2012 Voter Assistance Annual Report**

Public Meeting June 11, 2012.5:30PM
40 Rector St. 6th Floor, Manhattan, 5:30PM

Statement by Marjorie Kelleher Shea, Elections Specialist, WOMEN'S CITY CLUB OF NYC

Thank you chairman Chang for this hearing on the annual report of the NYC Campaign Finance Board voter assistance unit. As you know the Women's City Club supported the successful 2010 referendum to incorporate voter assistance within the CFB and we welcome the chance to evaluate this first annual report.

Chapter 1054(b) of the NYC Charter lists seven tasks to be performed by the board with the advice and assistance of the committee and the coordinator of voter assistance. Perhaps the best format for a discussion is to compare your reported activities with the charter-assigned tasks:

1. Encourage and facilitate voter registration and voting by all residents of New York City - While it's too soon to tell about voting rates, you have done a good job in this area. For the first time CFB's online Voter Guide covered state and Congressional special elections and this year's Presidential and Congressional primaries. You propose a major improvement to New York's voter registration system by going paperless --register online. We need to hear more about cost, experience in other states and security.
2. Identify groups or categories of residents who are underrepresented among those registered and voting - Much more needs to be done to target your efforts to populations with low voter turnout. Your partnership with city academic institutions such as the Wagner School is encouraging.
3. Coordinate activities of all city agencies and educate youth - You have done an excellent job in this area working with youth and military voters and monitoring agency-based registrations.
4. Make recommendations to government officials and bodies to improve voting rates – The report makes several recommendations for reform of NYS Election Law. As you note, most require changes to NYS Election Law.
5. Facilitate voting by eligible residents of NYC who are limited in English proficiency – WCC agrees with your recommendation to simplify distribution of non-English voting materials by allowing voters to select their language

preference as part of voter registration and maintain this information in the Board of Elections' database. Over-distributing these materials is costly.

6. Prepare and publish reports – The charter suggests that the board collect, analyze and publish statistics on “number and characteristics of citizens registered and unregistered during the previous primary, general and special elections.” Again, as suggested above, this type of effort may best be performed by an academic institution or a foundation such as The Pew Center on the States.
7. Receive citizen complaints – You have provided a forum for citizen complaints regarding the voting process with the new electronic scanners. WCC agrees with the Brennan Center that error messages must be improved. Also, closing procedures involving the NYPD must be clarified.

As we move forward to a June 26th congressional primary we compliment the VAAC for informing voters in the seven CD's with Democratic primaries and the Republican U.S. Senate race. Voters need good information as some poll sites have been changed and congressional districts have been renumbered. Now more than ever, voters need easily accessible, accurate information. WCC looks forward to working with you as we move into the presidential election season.

Contact: Marjorie Kelleher Shea (212-580-2895) margieshea@RCN.com

Women's City Club of New York + 307 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1403 + New York, NY 10001