

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

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HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: SANDRA UNG, CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS: GALE A. BREWER
SHAHANA K. HANIF
LINCOLN RESTLER
LYNN C. SCHULMAN

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

BETSY MACLEAN, Mayoral Office of
Engagement

KATHLEEN DANIEL, Chief Democracy Officer
at Democracy NYC

ALLIE SWATEK, Director of Policy and
Research at NYC Campaign Finance Board

RICK SCHAFFER, CFB Board Chair

AMANDA MELILLO, Deputy Director of Public
Affairs

BEN WEINBERG, Director of Public Policy
at Citizens Union

ZULTAN HAGNAL, Professor of Political
Science University of California

SARAH GOTH, Deputy Director Common Cause
New York

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Governmental Operations.
4 Today's date is Junne 7th, 2023. Located in the
5 Committee Room. Recorded by Steve Sadowsky.

6 SGT. SADOWSKY: Good morning. And
7 welcome to the Committee on Governmental Operations.
8 At this time, please place all phones on vibrate or
9 silent mode. If you want to submit testimony, send
10 it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that's
11 testimony@council.nyc.gov. At any time during this
12 hearing do not approach [inaudible]. Thank you for
13 your cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: [gavel pounding]
15 Good afternoon. I'm City Council Member Sandra Ung.
16 Chair of the Committee on Governmental Operations.
17 At today's hearing the Committee will be conducting
18 an oversight on voter turnout in Municipal Elections.
19 Voting is a bedrock of our democracy. People have
20 fought, even died for the right to vote, yet, so many
21 New Yorkers take this hard earned right for granted.
22 Over the past two decades turnout in Municipal
23 Elections the City has averaged only 30 percent. In
24 the most recent Municipal Election in 2021, where the
25 City was electing a new Mayor, a new Controller and

2 almost an all new City Council, the turn out rate for
3 the primary was only 26.5 percent which was actually
4 the highest turnout for a Municipal Primary in
5 several decades. While the turnout for the General
6 Election hit a historic low at only 23 percent.

7 These numbers are truly alarming. And these broad
8 numbers don't tell the whole story. Turnout is not
9 even throughout the city and varies by location and
10 demographics. In 2021 over 33 percent of the voters
11 on Staten Island went to the polls for the General
12 Election. While only 17.5 percent of voters in the
13 Bronx responded to vote. While over 37 percent of
14 City voters age 70 to 75 voted that year only 11
15 percent of voters between the ages of 18 and 29 went
16 to the polls. But we know that voters in the Bronx
17 are young voters, are not totally sure who represents
18 them. In 2020, over 56 percent of registered voters
19 in the Bronx casts a ballot. Over 59 percent of
20 young people age 18 to 29 cast their ballot for
21 President. They need to figure out ways to engage
22 these groups in other low propensity voters in local
23 elections. Though New York City contains a Finance
24 Board along with a Civic Engagement Commission, all
25 tasked with improving voter turnout. Today we will

2 be hearing from both of these agencies about we can
3 improve turnout in Municipal Elections. I look
4 forward to discussing ideas to improve participation
5 in our local elections with our panelists. In
6 addition, the Committee will be hearing Intro 348
7 sponsored by Council Member Powers in relation to the
8 classifying credit card processing fees and bank fees
9 as exempt expenditures. This bill would provide that
10 credit card processing fees or bank fees paid by a
11 campaign for contributions received by the campaign
12 would not count against the expenditure limitations
13 under the Campaign Finance Regulations. We also are
14 hearing Resolution 646 which I am proud to sponsor
15 which calls for an approval on the State
16 Constitutional Amendment that would move Municipal
17 elections to even numbered years to coincide with
18 Gubernational elections. New York City odd-years off
19 cycle elections which are mandated by State
20 Constitutions were put in place over 125 years ago in
21 an attempt to weaken the corrupt political machines
22 that dominated New York City politics at the time.
23 However, the off-year elections have a frank
24 depressing turnout for local races. The Campaign
25 Finance Board have proposed moving local elections to

2 even-numbered years, improve voter turnout. And this
3 Resolution caused the State Legislature to begin the
4 process of amending the State Constitution to
5 municipal elections to even-numbered years to
6 coincide with Gubernational elections. And for that,
7 I want to thank C.J. Murray and Erica Cohen for my,
8 from my essential staff for their work in putting
9 together this hearing as well as the Chief of Staff,
10 Asenta [phonetic] and Communications Director Shane
11 Miller for their assistance. I will now turn over to
12 our Moderator, Committee Counsel, C.J. Murray to
13 swear in this panel.

14 C.J. MURRAY, COUNSEL: Thank you Chair.
15 Our first panel will include Betsy MacLean and
16 Kathleen Daniel. Panelists, please come up to the
17 table now. And before we begin, I'll administer the
18 affirmation. Please raise your right hand. Do you
19 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
20 but the truth before these Co-, before this Committee
21 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

23 C.J. MURRAY, COUNSEL: Thank you. You
24 may begin your testimony.

2 KATHLEEN DANIEL: Thank you Chair Ung,
3 members of the Committee on Governmental Operations
4 for holding tis hearing and for the opportunity to
5 submit testimony on the important topic of voter turn
6 out in New York City's Municipal Elections. My name
7 is Kathleen Daniel and I am the Chief Democracy
8 Officer at Democracy NYC professionally known as
9 DNYC. As my predecessor outlined in testimony before
10 this Committee in April of 2022 Democracy NYC was
11 created in 2018 as a Mayoral Initiative. And
12 pursuant to Mayoral Executive order 88 is now a
13 program of the New York City Civic Engagement
14 Commission known as CEC. This merger has further
15 streamlined engagement efforts to ensure that we have
16 maximum impact through closer coordination. The
17 Mayor recently established the City's first ever
18 Office of Engagement led by Betsy MacLean who is
19 present at this hearing and at the table with me.
20 This office oversees the CEC and works to ensure that
21 the City coordinates community engagement efforts
22 across agencies, systemically learns from communities
23 to inform policy and programs. Builds the capacity
24 of all City Agency's outreach to engagement teams and
25 advances community driven solutions. Among these

2 community driven solutions is the CECs Charter
3 mandated citywide participatory budgeting process.
4 The people's money. A program that works to provide
5 pathways into civic engagement for New Yorkers
6 typically left out of the Democratic process. We
7 have the pleasure of working with many Council
8 Offices through this process with the goal of moving
9 community voice into action. A goal that is shared
10 by Democracy NYC. DNYCs mission is to foster civic
11 engagement, increase voter access and promote voter
12 turnout for all New York City residents. From voter
13 registration to the act of voting itself we believe
14 the participation in our democracy must be as
15 accessible as possible. Our work is focused on
16 utilizing grass roots organizing strategies for
17 direct voter contact and developing communication
18 strategies and educational materials to encourage
19 City residents to exercise their right to vote and to
20 do in their own language. This week we announced a
21 \$2 million Get Out to Vote Campaign to educate New
22 Yorkers on Ranked Choice Voting, the rights of
23 Limited English Proficiency Voters and to activate
24 voters to turn out to the polls ahead of the June
25 Primary. This comprehensive campaign will include a

2 grassroots direct to New Yorker outreach and
3 canvassing operation of \$1.1 million targeted,
4 multilingual, ethnic and community media advertising
5 campaign and a CUNY Corps Democracy Developers of 100
6 participating students and participate in
7 partnerships with community and faith-based
8 organizations. Our \$1.1 million multi-million dollar
9 Media Campaign will comprise of ethnic and community
10 media, TV, radio and print advertising and out of
11 home campaign which includes subway, bus shelters and
12 newsstand ads, digital screens in bars, restaurants,
13 barbershops, nail salons, the NYC Ferry, Link NYC and
14 more. It will also comprise digital media and social
15 medial and streaming services, promotion of multi-
16 lingual digital games which help New Yorkers practice
17 and understand how Ranked Choice Voting works. Our
18 Direct Outreach component is a campaign invests in
19 Community and Faith-based organizations to conduct in
20 person outreach and voter education and activation
21 including in the 33 neighborhoods hardest hit by
22 COVID-19. Hosting and facilitating multi-lingual
23 voter education teachings, conducting Citywide Days
24 of Action including Phone Banking, Peer-to-Peer
25 Texting, Community Canvassing to Get Out to Vote for

2 the June Primary. We are developing the CUNY Student
3 Corps as I mentioned to conduct voter outreach, voter
4 education and volunteer recruitment. We are
5 collaborating with NYC Service and the Spread Love
6 NYC campaign to build a volunteer base of New Yorkers
7 committed to help stop the drop between voter
8 registration and voter activation. We have language
9 access and accessibility resources as part of its
10 core programming. The CEC provides language
11 interpretation at poll sites. Investing in
12 translation of key voter education resources in
13 multiple languages including printed materials and
14 public service announcements and sharing culturally
15 competent video advising New Yorkers of their right
16 to vote in their own language. Language access is an
17 integral part of the civic inclusion in New York City
18 where 49 percent of New Yorkers speak a language
19 other than English at home and 23 percent are limited
20 English proficient. One of the CECs mandates under
21 the City Charter is to expand access to language
22 interpreters at poll sites throughout the City. For
23 LEP voters, which is part of CECs larger commitment
24 and mission to increasing support available to LEP
25 vote New Yorkers in the CECs programs and services.

2 To further meaningful access to the electoral
3 process, the CEC has expanded poll site assistance
4 for LEP New Yorkers and work to increase awareness of
5 poll site interpretation rights. To accomplish this
6 work, the CEC established a language assistance
7 advisory committee to provide recommendations for the
8 development and implementation of the program. The
9 CEC will provide these services at Early Voting and
10 Election Day poll sites in the following languages,
11 Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Cantonese, Mandarin,
12 French, Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian,
13 Urdu and Yiddish. It is also important for us to
14 provide highlights, examples and context of the
15 inter-agency collaboration that has supported voter
16 engagement work in recent years. DNYC has partnered
17 with New York City Public School and PEU on Civics
18 Weeks and the annual Student Voter Registration
19 Drive. We partner with the Mayor's Office and
20 Immigrant Affairs to provide language assistance at
21 poll sites and ensure the materials about voting
22 including voter registration forms are translated and
23 accessible to LEP New Yorkers. We work with the
24 Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and the
25 New York City Campaign Finance Board to make voter

guides available in American Sign Language. These are just a few examples of the collaborative pro-voter; inter-agency works that DNYC has prioritized over the past few years. Since 2019, PEU has been a key partner with DNYC supporting voter registration and direct voter engagement. DNYC and PEU have partnered on Student Voter Registration Drives as part of Civics Week/Civics for All Initiative. In addition to collaborative registration work, DNYC and agency have prioritized increasing voter turnout and engagement, an extremely important task given the City's persistently low voter turnout numbers. The NYC Elections Consortium founded by DNYC brings together good government groups, community-based organizations and elected officials offices regularly to discuss and address issues related to NYC elections as they arise. The CEC and DNYC work in close coordination with the CFB amplifying shared messages, cobranding outreach materials and triaging civic engagement outreach efforts. DNYC is committed to building a movement to create a cultural voting in New York City. The vote is one of our sacred rights and one of the keys to building community power. We look forward to further discussing improving voter

2 turnout and other ways we can work together with the
3 Council, City agencies and other stakeholders.
4 Although we are experiencing the dramatic decrease in
5 voter participation DNYC is committed to continuing
6 its work with interagency coordination and
7 collaboration with external groups such as community-
8 based organizations in our campaign to Stop the Drop
9 between voter registration and participation. Thank
10 you again to Chair Ung and the Committee Members for
11 your time today.

12 CHAIR SANDRA UNG: Thank you for your
13 testimony. Before we go to the questions, I would
14 like to turn to City Council Member Powers to give a
15 statement on his bill.

16 KEITH POWERS: Thank you. And thank you
17 to Council Member Ung for holding this hearing today.
18 Thank you everyone for being here to testify and
19 without question a really important topic today being
20 heard because we are in an election year and we are
21 in an odd election year when it comes to just having
22 the City Council Elections. I think few New Yorkers
23 know about so all of us should be striving to help
24 enhance turn out this year and make sure we have
25 competitive elections. I want to speak just briefly

2 about a bill I have on the agenda today Intro 348
3 which I introduced in response to direct concerns I
4 heard from candidates in previous elections and of
5 course all of us have been candidates at one point in
6 time. It's true that no one likes credit card fees I
7 think and that's particular truth for political
8 campaigns that are bound to strict expenditure
9 limits. My bill will ensure that bank fees and
10 credit card processing fees paid for by a campaign
11 for contributions they would receive will no longer
12 count against the expenditure limits for that
13 campaign. It's a simple fix to a problem that needs
14 to make significant but for campaigns that are on
15 tight budgets and why use those funds to communicate
16 directly with voters this certainly makes sense that
17 that money should be spent on that. We are in just
18 living in the world where I think campaigns are
19 fueled by credit card contributions and I want to
20 thank the CFB who has in most recent years put up
21 their own platform to make it easier when he was for
22 compliance and for fund raising to use their system
23 in a credit card processing system. Yet every month
24 I recanted it here gets that strike fee. If you use
25 that that goes right into your disclosure and counts

2 against your spending limit despite not really have
3 spent any money. So, I've heard from citywide all
4 the way down to local candidates that they would like
5 to see the change and introduce the bill in response
6 to that simple fix and of course here to work with
7 the CFB and everyone else who will be implementing to
8 that to make sure it works. Certainly, designed for
9 this year's elections because we know that we are
10 underway on that already and we have a primary coming
11 up in a few weeks but to make sure down the road and
12 this may not even apply to me as a candidate that it
13 will make people's lives a little bit easier and have
14 the money spend on the actual elections not for just
15 a simple act of raising money. With that I will say
16 thank you again to the Chair for hearing my bill
17 today and having this important hearing. I'll be
18 bouncing back and forth in the hearing next door.
19 Thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak.

20 CHAIR SANDRA UNG: Thank you City Council
21 Member Powers. Great, so. I just have a few
22 questions. The Mayoral Office of Engagement,
23 currently right now how much staff do you have?

24 BETSY MACLEAN: So, the Mayor's Office of
25 Engagement is a small team.

2 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Uh-huh.

3 BETSY MACLEAN: Uh, we are a team of
4 three people. And then we oversee four City agencies
5 including Community Affairs Unit, the Public
6 Engagement Unit, the Civic Engagement Commission
7 which includes Democracy NYC, and NYC Service. So,
8 combined among all of those agencies it's probably
9 north of 300 people.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Okay.

11 Understood. And does the Office of Engagement itself
12 have any money for Voter Engagement activities?

13 BETSY MACLEAN: No. We don't.

14 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Got it. I just
15 have a question about the announcement that was made
16 about this Get Out to Vote Investment. So, there's a
17 1.1 million multilingual media campaign. How does
18 that, is that separate CFB because they also have
19 their own, you know, media campaign.

20 KATHLEEN DANIEL: Yes. So, this is
21 separate from CFBs media campaign currently but we
22 are in constant communication and participate in
23 meetings in the election switching with the CFB. And
24 so, we make sure that we are working in, we're
25 augmenting all of the efforts. The B of E also has

2 an advertising campaign and so it is our goal to
3 ensure that it's all hands-on deck. Because we are
4 experiencing this crisis in democracy. So, we are
5 aware of the other campaigns as they are becoming
6 aware of ours. Ours is recent, as one of the newest
7 campaigns and we are working in conjunction with
8 everyone to ensure that we are reaching the widest
9 possible number of voters in this campaign.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: No. That's
11 great so, so the CFB, you and BOE have its own
12 campaigns you know with the media. So how is it that
13 to ensure that there's not. Yeah. Like multiple
14 efforts in the same fund rather than you said
15 augmentation which is great. But how is it, do you,
16 you know how is it? Is there coordination and what
17 type of coordination is there?

18 KATHLEEN DANIEL: So, one of the ways
19 that we're all coordinated is that the messaging is
20 the same as far as rank choice voting. We are making
21 sure that everyone has the same message on what rank
22 choice voting is and how to conduct rank choice
23 voting is and how to conduct rank choice voting
24 because this is the second ever rank choice voting
25 race. And the ways in which the messages are

2 different, they are different looks and feels because
3 there is not one way to reach every New Yorkers. And
4 when you look at the Broadway Production that is
5 voting in New York City the Board of Elections has a
6 physical plan, the amphitheater and the stage hands,
7 the CFB has the Play Bill and promotes all of the
8 actors, the participants on the stage and pays them,
9 finances them and then the Civic Engagement
10 Commission and Democracy NYC we bring the audience.
11 But we're facing a season where many people are no
12 longer going to the theatre and so it's going to take
13 all hands-on deck to continue to collaborate in order
14 to ensure that we are getting to everyone so that
15 they know that it is an election season. Very few
16 New Yorker's know that right now that there is an
17 election in two to three weeks. And to ensure that
18 they're activate and get out to vote.

19 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Understood.
20 Thank you. So, let's look at both the ethnic and
21 community media, TV, radio and print advertising.
22 How is that working out? Again, back to who makes
23 that decision? How much money goes into that? And
24 how is that separate from what CFB and what BOE is
25 doing?

2 KATHLEEN DANIEL: So, it is again, I see
3 the campaigns. We at a Democracy NYC see the
4 campaigns as multiple layers. We are all talking
5 about Rank Choice Voting. We are all telling people
6 to get out and vote and we at CDC are focusing
7 greatly on the Right to Vote in your own language
8 which many New Yorkers are simply unaware of. And
9 our campaign be when we look at our data from the
10 Census Data, we are seeing that the predominant
11 limited English proficiency languages are Chinese and
12 Spanish in the districts only 21 of which are having
13 a primary race. And so, we are focusing on that and
14 again with different looks and feels but all a very
15 significant consistent message on rank choice voting.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Okay. So, like
17 we're going to get down a little bit further to the
18 more details. So, speaking of that, how, how is that
19 decision being made? You said, yeah. So, you need
20 to reach out to you know the Spanish and Chinese
21 voters. So how is that being made, like what, you
22 know, practically speaking would I be seeing of an
23 opening up like there are four Chinese newspapers out
24 there, would I be seeing an ad from CFB, from DCD,
25 from BOE so how? You know, what's happening there?

2 KATHLEEN DANIEL: So, thank you for that
3 question, Council Member Ung. We are working with at
4 different advertising agencies. So that we're
5 spreading the wealth. We are communicating with the
6 community-based organizations that we work with that
7 are in the CDC with the tree neighborhoods because
8 they are telling us this is what we read. This is
9 what we read in this community. This is, you know,
10 these are the vehicles that are most important to us,
11 particularly with radio. Because we are seeing that
12 there area some differences in different
13 neighborhoods and this is not a city-wide race. And
14 we are taking our information from different
15 populations. From the justice involved to the youth
16 as to where we should invest because there are only
17 21 races and so we are very focused on hyper-local
18 information. As well, because there are three
19 different methodologies for the campaigns, we think
20 that that expands our reach because different people
21 are paying attention to different agencies. We are
22 again facing a great crisis in civic trust and there
23 are people that will trust one agency because they
24 communicate well with that agency and there are
25 people that will trust another agency.

2 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: No. I think
3 it's great you're reaching out to the community and
4 to the CBOs that the community does trust to have
5 informed decisions. So is there a list of CBOs that
6 you all have that you are reaching out to and so is,
7 you know, can you share that list of CBOs and if
8 there's a way, you know. I, you know, could take a
9 look at that list or other City Council Members that
10 we could update that list to?

11 KATHLEEN DANIEL: Absolutely.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Great. And now
13 the second question I have about the direct outreach.
14 About investments in community and faith-based
15 organizations to conduct in-person outreach voter
16 education and activation. Can you walk me through
17 how that actually works would grants be provided to
18 these groups? Like how does that process work?

19 KATHLEEN DANIEL: To we're funding for
20 Democracy NYC we are funding 10 community-based
21 organizations to conduct electoral work to at \$10,000
22 each. The CDC has been working for several years now
23 with what we call a Tree Coalition. The 33
24 neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID 19 and they have
25 received funding to do civic engagement work that

2 includes electoral work. And they are participating
3 with us in getting out the vote for Participatory
4 Budgeting as well. And all of these organizations
5 tomorrow are convening where we are not a train to
6 trainer bootcamp on the electoral campaign, how to
7 conduct phone banks or text banks or city-wide data
8 of action. And how to conduct our teaching and build
9 this movement of educated savvy voters that know
10 their rights and are excited to go to the polls.

11 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you. And
12 you said, Democracy NYC has 10 groups for \$10,000
13 each.

14 KATHLEEN DANIEL: Yes. In addition to
15 the coalition work with the CDC.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Right. Do you
17 have a list of those 10 groups?

18 KATHLEEN DANIEL: Yes. We can provide
19 that as well.

20 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Great. And the
21 coalition of the 33 hardest neighborhoods, right? Do
22 you also have a list of those groups too?

23 KATHLEEN DANIEL: Yes. We can provide
24 that.

2 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Great. And I
3 see is there any thoughts of a position wherein that
4 location election should be moved to even number
5 years?

6 KATHLEEN DANIEL: Democracy NYC is in
7 support of anything that will expand access to voters
8 and activate voters to come out and vote. So, if we
9 find in our research and in our work with
10 organizations that having fewer elections will
11 increase turnout then we absolutely support it.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Okay. Great.
13 Thank you. That's all the questions I have.

14 KATHLEEN DANIEL: Thank you Council
15 Member.

16 C. J. MURRAY, COUNSEL: Thank you. Our
17 next panel is representatives from the Campaign
18 Finance Board. And before we begin, I'll administer
19 the affirmation. And let's please raise your right
20 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
21 truth and nothing but the truth before this committee
22 and respond honestly to Council Member questions.

23 ALLIE SWATEK: Yes.

24 C. J. MURRAY, COUNSEL: Great. Thanks.
25 You may begin.

2 ALLIE SWATEK: Thank you Chair Ung and
3 members of the Governmental Operations Committee for
4 the opportunity to speak today. My name is Allie
5 Swatek. I'm the Director of Policy and Research at
6 the New York City Campaign Finance Board. Joining me
7 today is the CFB Board Chair Rick Schaffer and Deputy
8 Director of Public Affairs Amanda Melillo. The
9 Campaign Finance Board is a nonpartisan and
10 independent City agency that administers the City's
11 matching funds program. Our agency strives to make
12 our local democracy more equitable and inclusive by
13 matching small contributions from average New Yorkers
14 with public funds. NYC Votes - an initiative of the
15 CFB - works alongside community organizations,
16 volunteers, elected officials, and other City
17 agencies to register, educate, and engage voters
18 across the city. The CFB produces an annual report
19 with information on the past year in voting, analyses
20 of the electorate, recommendations to improve voter
21 participation, and more. We call this report the
22 Voter Analysis Report or the VAR. The Policy and
23 Research team spearheads the VARs creation but the
24 report involves vital contributions from staff across
25 the agency. We appreciate the opportunity to present

2 the staff's hard work to the Committee today. A key
3 component of our agency's mission is to make sure
4 that the City's voters are well-informed and prepared
5 to cast their ballots on Election Day. We conduct
6 voter outreach and education year-round, focusing on
7 underrepresented New York City voters. We do this by
8 meeting voters where they are with accurate and
9 digestible information, as well as by engaging strong
10 partnerships with community-based organizations and
11 elected officials. In 2022, we held 103 virtual and
12 in-person events with over 2,000 attendees. In
13 addition, our social media accounts and NYC Votes
14 website continued to be invaluable resources for New
15 Yorkers seeking election information. The Voter
16 Guide is a fundamental part of our outreach and
17 engagement efforts. In previous years we offered
18 Voter Guide in the five federal Voting Rights Act
19 languages. Thanks to recent City Council
20 legislation, our website, the online and print Voter
21 Guides, and all Rank Choice Voting materials will be
22 available in all 13 designated citywide languages in
23 2023. Distributing the Voter Guide and conducting
24 direct voter engagement are not the only ways the CFB
25 approaches voter education. The VAR or the Voter

2 Analysis Report just to remind you, also allows us to
3 make voting information and data public, so voters
4 can learn about their communities, council districts,
5 boroughs and the entire City. The "On the Ballot"
6 section of our Voter Analysis Report includes the
7 detailed examinations of voter registration and
8 turnout that are of interest to many New Yorkers.
9 By the end of 2022, New York City had nearly five
10 million active registered voters, representing a
11 voter registration rate of 85.2%. However, roughly
12 1.8 million New York City voters participated in the
13 November general election or 38.3% of registered
14 voters. Overall turnout for eligible voters the June
15 and August primaries were similar rates but even
16 lower than the general election, 14.5% and 14.7%
17 respectively. These low turnout numbers are not
18 unusual for state and federal elections and emphasize
19 that driving turnout, the top of this hearing is the
20 most important voter education objective. This VAR
21 also contains the agency's first in-depth analysis of
22 New York's special elections turnout. The lack of
23 literature and available data on this subject limited
24 our analysis. However, we concluded that turnout in
25 special elections was higher among older voters and

2 in boroughs that have historically high turnout
3 already. As New Yorkers continue to participate in
4 special elections, we hope better understand how
5 voters in these elections differ from primary and
6 general voters. In this year's report, we also
7 studied a once in a decade phenomenon called
8 redistricting and analyzed the influence of the
9 public testimony on the Commission's process. In
10 2022, New Yorkers submitted over 5,000 pieces of
11 testimony to the New York City Districting
12 Commission. Our analysis found that Council
13 Districts with higher proportions of people of color
14 submitted fewer testimonies. This issue could be one
15 of awareness and addressed by disseminating mailers
16 to City households, and generally better notifying
17 New Yorkers of the redistricting process and the
18 opportunity to submit testimony. However, our
19 overarching conclusion was that the Districting
20 Commission incorporated much of the constructive
21 criticism offered in New Yorkers' testimonies into
22 the final maps. These groundbreaking findings show
23 that community members have a real impact on
24 decision-making when given the opportunity to voice
25 their opinions and highlight the importance of

2 ensuring that all communities are represented in
3 testimony. In addition to analyses of the
4 electorate, the 2022 Voter Analysis Report includes
5 two legislative recommendations. Our first
6 recommendation is to make ballot proposals more
7 accessible and easy to read. 1.3 million New York
8 City voters cast a ballot in the general election,
9 with each ballot proposal received roughly 1.5
10 million votes. This gap could be reduced by making
11 ballot proposals easier to understand. Ballot
12 proposals can be confusing for New Yorkers of all
13 backgrounds. To improve accessibility, the CFB
14 recommends that legislators require all State and
15 local proposals to be written in plain language which
16 is a way to present communications clearly and
17 concisely using everyday terms that are easy to
18 understand. This change would make ballot questions
19 more accessible for voters with disabilities,
20 including those with low vision, cognitive and
21 intellectual disabilities and also those with
22 limited-English proficiency. For this to work,
23 proposal drafters cannot exclusively rely on online
24 tools to assess readability and should also engage
25 experts and cross-section of New Yorkers to provide

feedback on the readability of the proposals. Our other recommendation is to consolidate elections to even years. As our VAR shows, there are significant disparities in New York City turnout for various elections in various years. From 2001 to the present, the average turnout for New York mayoral elections is 29.5%. The average turnout for gubernatorial or governors and presidential elections is 35.6% and 60.8%, respectively. Other cities have addressed their own turnout gaps by shifting their local elections to even years in the past decade. For example, after Baltimore aligned local elections with presidential ones, voter turnout increased from 13% to 62%. Los Angeles began voting for local races in even years in 2020 and two years later mayoral election, turnout nearly doubled the average of the previous four elections. Several legal changes are necessary to smoothly transition to even-numbered election years in New York City. Our VAR includes a flowchart of implementation options all of which require voters to approve a State Constitutional amendment. Given the complexity, this change may not happen in this decade but this does not mean that it is not worth pursuing. We are pleased that Committee

2 Chair Ung introduced Resolution 646, calling for a
3 Constitutional amendment to move New York City
4 elections to even-numbered years. Moving local
5 elections to even years has many clear and tangible
6 benefits, and we appreciate the Chair's commitment to
7 bettering local election turnout. The Committee is
8 also hearing Introduction 348 today. This bill,
9 sponsored by Council Member Keith Powers, would
10 exempt bank and credit card processing fees from
11 campaigns' spending limits. While we do not have a
12 position on this bill, the CFB greatly appreciates
13 the Council's continued commitment to modernizing our
14 city's campaign finance system. To assess the impact
15 of this legislation, we reviewed bank and credit card
16 processing fees for all for all matching funds
17 program participants in 2017 and 2021. In 2017,
18 these 200 candidates spent almost \$500,000 on bank
19 and credit card fees, which represented just under
20 1.3% of all spending. About 0.87% of spending for
21 City Council matching funds program participants went
22 towards bank and credit card processing fees that
23 year. In 2021, all program participants spent a
24 total of \$2.3 million on bank and credit card fees,
25 representing just over 1.3% of all spending. Roughly

1.1% of City Council candidate spending went towards bank and credit card processing fees in 2021. This slight increase from 2017 to 2021 aligns with the growth in online and credit card contributions from the same time frame which we studied in depth in our 2021 post-election report. We also evaluated the practical considerations related to implementation. Currently, this bill would go into effect 120 days after passage. As a result, these changes could impact candidates' ongoing activity in both the 2023 and 2025 election cycles. To add clarity, the legislation should specify an election cycle for which fees in that cycle and future cycles should be exempted. To implement this change, the CFB would need to amend its Rules and update C-SMART (our campaign finance disclosure application) so these fees are exempted from the expenditure limit in a way that does not burden the campaigns themselves. Our staff is available to discuss and provide additional information about this bill if necessary. Our Voter Analysis Reports serve as an annual opportunity to shed light on the incredible work of the CFB staff, including the impactful voter outreach efforts, exceptional data analysis, and legislative

2 recommendations. New Yorkers can use this
3 information to continue the invaluable mission of
4 supporting and improving New York City's electoral
5 process. We are grateful that the Council continues
6 to be an avid reader of the report. Thank you for
7 the opportunity to testify about the VAR, Resolution
8 646, and Introduction 348 today. We are happy to
9 answer any questions the Council may have.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you for
11 your testimony. I would like to welcome Council
12 Member Hanif on Zoom and Council Member Restler. You
13 know, I'd first like to tackle the bill about venting
14 the credit card fees from the limitation on the
15 expenditures. So, you did, it says that the
16 legislation should specify election year for which
17 that. Okay. So that's something we could definitely
18 work on. So, other than that, you need to amend the
19 rules and update C-Smart. Are those two processes
20 doable or not that doable?

21 ALLIE SWATEK: Sorry, can you repeat the
22 question. It just.

23 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Sure. So, in
24 your testimony you know it says legislation should
25 specify election cycle which is something on our end

2 which I'm sure we could do. The other part is you
3 mentioned two other things that CFB would need to do
4 is to amend the rules and also to update C-Smart.
5 Are those two actions or processes something that is
6 very complicated? Something that is doable? Or
7 something that is going to take quite an amount of
8 time?

9 ALLIE SWATEK: We discussed internally.
10 We do an annual review of our rules so that wouldn't
11 be totally unusual. But for updating in C-Smart we
12 discussed and actually Council Member Powers also
13 alluded to this that for credit card processing fees
14 that are brought through our NYC votes contribute
15 platform there is always a way of putting those into
16 C-Smart that is fairly automatic for the Campaign as
17 far as I understand. So, we would want that to be
18 something that would be more seamless for folks and
19 we would be able to automatically identify those fees
20 as exempt and that was just a coding change that
21 would have to take place.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Okay.
23 Excellent. So just for example I'm just thinking
24 about the timeline. So, for example, we clarify to
25 2023, would you have enough time to, you know, adjust

2 these two, amend the rules and also change the C-
3 Smart?

4 ALLIE SWATEK: So, we discussed the
5 timeline of the bill, just, it's, it's never our
6 preference to change something about the program,
7 mid-election cycle and for 2023 it's practically over
8 already.

9 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: So, okay. So
10 that's not really practical.

11 ALLIE SWATEK: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: It's, a, and
13 certainly I'm not exactly describing how you should
14 re-write this.

15 ALLIE SWATEK: Right. SANDRA UNG: Um
16 but we would just want to take into consideration
17 that folks have also started fundraising for 2025 and
18 just be very clear which contributions received by a
19 certain date would qualify for the exemption or if
20 possible and I'm not even sure because I myself am
21 not a lawyer but if there is a retroactivity
22 component as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Oh, right.
24 That's a good point, the retroactivity component
25 Okay. Understood. Thank you for clarifying that.

2 So, in addition to the credit card processing fees
3 and bank fees are there similar fees that you think
4 can be included in this bill?

5 ALLIE SWATEK: So, we thought about the
6 definition of bank fee as being a little broad
7 perhaps and maybe there's a public policy interest in
8 defining that term a little more specifically. But
9 credit card processing fees we know that they're,
10 they're at the point of contribution and so they are
11 more easy to identify I would say. As far as
12 additional fees that we would recommend, no, we
13 haven't looked at that.

14 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Great. Thank
15 you. Well, that's all the questions I have on the
16 bill. Does City, before, I move on to my other
17 questions. Uh, okay. Great. So, to the actual
18 question about moving to election numbered years.
19 I'm glad you know that was, that's supported. It's
20 something that we've been talking about long time.
21 So, there the other large cities in the United States
22 has moved their local elections to even numbered
23 years, including Los Angeles, Austin, Baltimore, El
24 Paso, Phoenix. Do you know if the turnout has
25 increased in all of those jurisdictions? Has there

2 been analysis done and how, what, what was the effect
3 of moving to the even number of years?

4 ALLIE SWATEK: So, we do not do this
5 analysis ourselves. We were inspired by an amazing
6 report that was put out by the Citizen's Union. And
7 I think they are going to speak in this same hearing
8 a little bit later. And they crunched some numbers
9 really good to local turnout and found that in all
10 cases turnout increased. It's important to just
11 emphasize that it's not that, the fact that there is
12 more offices on the ballot that draw greater
13 attention is what is increasing that turnout and
14 it's, it's more so that they are just adding the
15 local races to the existing presidential year or
16 gubernatorial year in some cases.

17 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Understood. So
18 actually, speaking about that, do you have a position
19 on whether or not like should it be presidential
20 years or gubernational years?

21 ALLIE SWATEK: So, we kept our
22 recommendation purposely vague. We know that the
23 process is really complex. And will take many years
24 to accomplish. So, we think it is more important to
25 kind of elevate the issue to the public and get folks

2 to pay attention to the issue and be able to make
3 that determination for New York State where there's
4 not a lot of data or studies on turnout as much as
5 there in other places because we're not a swing
6 state. We're not as influential in national races as
7 some other states are. So, there's a lack of data I
8 think on that topic.

9 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Great. Can you
10 actually walk us through the, just say if everything
11 going well. Like, can you just walk us through this
12 actual process of how long like does it say, the
13 state passes it, it goes through the referendum and
14 that goes well. Like what actually is the process?

15 ALLIE SWATEK: So, we included a really
16 great flowchart in our Voter Analysis Report that
17 goes through the implementation options. It has a
18 lot of arrows. I don't think I can do justice to
19 every step but that's, that's for our policy analysts
20 who did amazing work on this issue. But there are
21 other issues to consider that I think have
22 complexities such as the fact that there are district
23 attorney races that take place in completely
24 different years because they are county races. And
25 they don't even have like, not all district attorneys

2 are elected in the same years. They're just elected
3 throughout four years. And then there is also
4 judicial races for civil court, Supreme Court and
5 then judicial delegates and party races. So, there
6 is a level of coordination that would need to take
7 place at the State that I can't speak on how long
8 that time will take. And I think that since this is
9 kind of a new topic, we're bringing up it does take a
10 bit for these ideas to percolate and to get people on
11 board too. So, we know that passing a constitutional
12 amendment requires passing the law in the State
13 Legislature in two consecutive legislative cycles so
14 at a minimum you are looking at two to three years
15 just right there with that single piece. And then if
16 there is a component that requires action at the city
17 level that's another additional possible you know
18 Charter or Ballot proposal related to a term.

19 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: No. No thank
20 you. Thank you for bringing up all of these
21 concerns. So, another question we have which I think
22 probably you might have spoke about it in the
23 testimony is about the fact that you know, municipal
24 elections uses RCV other elections do not. So, in
25 terms of that, did that, you know. I think this

2 happened in 2021 when there was a you know city had
3 RCV. There was elections out there that did not use
4 RCV. Do you know did that lead to voter confusion
5 and what's their drop off between the two ballots?
6 Like did they vote in one, did they not the other?

7 ALLIE SWATEK: We didn't look
8 specifically at whether there was a drop off between
9 Rank Choice Voting races and single choice races.
10 But there were many different offices on the ballot
11 in 2021. I know there were and I think the important
12 thing to note for primary elections is there is a lot
13 of unique ways to elect certain party positions so
14 there is choose A, choose three. So, folks are
15 already being asked to do different things on
16 different parts of the ballot for different offices.
17 And there is also, I believe there are a few cities,
18 I can't off the top of my head name but who use Rank
19 Choice Voting and have moved to even year election.
20 And so, they have ballots that are relatively long.
21 Some of them have dealt with wanting to focus on
22 those local races by bringing them to the top of the
23 ballot. And that's, that's one solution for making
24 sure that there was a separation between certain

2 types of ways of voting on a ballot if that makes
3 sense.

4 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: No. Yeah.

5 Thank you and I know you have so much on your plate.

6 But does CFB have more thoughts about that part of
7 it, about making it less confusing when there are
8 more than the municipal elections of RCV when it does
9 coincide with other races.

10 ALLIE SWATEK: We did not address that in
11 the report. I think that what we've been seeing is
12 longer ballots. It does seem like something that
13 folks are getting a little bit more used to. You
14 know, flipping the ballot and that sort of thing has
15 become more of a common place understanding for how
16 to vote. And with the introduction of rank choice
17 voting folks, I think really emphasize reading
18 directions and making sure that in certain parts of
19 the ballot you are marking it correctly. We had a
20 relatively actually a very low rate of ballot errors
21 in 2021 with Rank Choice Voting and the single choice
22 elections on those ballots. So, I'm hopeful that
23 those low rates would continue.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you. And
25 now going to move past the resolution a little bit

2 more about voter turnout in general. So, I know CFB
3 engages in activities to improve voter turnout
4 including advertising the campaigns, distribution of
5 the voter guide, putting on candidate debates so how,
6 do we know how effective, how would you rate how
7 effective these programs have been?

8 AMANDA MELILLO: I will step in to answer
9 that. Thank you, Chair Ung. What I would say is
10 first of all its very difficult to separate out how
11 effective any one program actually is because there
12 are just so many factors that go into whether or not
13 voters turn out to vote. So, some of those factors
14 area systemic as you noted. Um, we had Right Choice
15 Voting then more generous matching funds rate in the
16 2021 election. That arguably drew more voters to the
17 polls. And that was a structural change. Then there
18 is the work that is done by just raising general
19 awareness and doing that person-to-person community
20 outreach paired along with that. So. one of the
21 things that we are starting to take a look at it to
22 do more program evaluation of our work. And for
23 example, we worked with our media buyers in the
24 November election to determine if people who saw our
25 ads were more likely to turnout than people who

2 didn't. And we actually did find there was a small
3 turnout lift. I saw small but it was actually
4 relatively large in relation to what most GOTV filled
5 experimentation looks like. If you look at the
6 research a lot of times people are looking at
7 different contact methods. And a lot of work goes in
8 to creating those contact methods that may only raise
9 turnout one person or less. And that's considered a
10 successful intervention. We know that our
11 advertising campaign last November raised turnout by
12 1.3% across the board but actually 2.3% among voters
13 under 30 which is one of our priority audiences. So
14 that to us is the beginning of research that we are
15 always continually building on to determine what was
16 really effective. And would also just add that there
17 are a couple of different ways of determining whether
18 something was effective. There are ways you can just
19 do research on the data. Were people more likely to
20 turnout or not. There were also some qualitative
21 ways of looking at it. If people feel like they were
22 more comfortable on their ballot. Did they
23 understand more about the candidates and the races
24 that they were voting in? Did they feel like they
25 received good and culturally competent information in

2 the language or media that they wanted to receive
3 that information in. So, we're always sort of
4 pairing our look at whether something was effective
5 from a data perspective with also gathering that
6 community feedback.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you. So,
8 speaking of the things. So, there are different
9 programs or ways to try and increase voter turnout
10 including early voting, pre-registration of 16- and
11 17-year-olds. Expansions of absentee voting. Do we
12 know how well those programs have been working out?

13 ALLIE SWATEK: I would say that's
14 something we're still continuing to look at. A lot
15 of these are relatively new. In New York City we
16 tend to be a little more cautiously when you
17 definitively declare whether something helped or not
18 and wait for a few election cycles before saying yes
19 or no. I will say for National Level Research that's
20 been done it's usually been determined that pairing
21 multiple reforms together is what increase turnout.
22 So, for example in other places early voting alone
23 might not have increased turnout, it really just
24 shifts the number of voters who are voting over more
25 days. But if you pair it with reform such as same

2 day registrations that's when you tend to see a
3 turnout bump. So, I think you speed turnout bumps
4 when generally the barriers are lowered and the
5 system is made to be more voter friendly. I also
6 want to note that the states a number of voting
7 reforms just went into effect so the state's
8 automatic voter registration system went into effect.
9 Online voter registration went into effect for people
10 who do not have a DMVID numbers. So, these are other
11 ways that in places that a have instituted these its
12 been shown to also be able to raise turnout because
13 you're essentially lowering the barriers for people
14 to even get into the electoral process.

15 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you. So,
16 I'm looking forward to see how those programs have
17 worked out. Someone who doesn't have a DMV license,
18 I appreciate the online one. DMV license. No. No.
19 I really had to do it by paper. It was that way.

20 ALLIE SWATEK: I did too when I first
21 moved to New York. I also had to use paper and
22 speaking as a millennial I was like what? Why do I
23 have to do this?

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: No. I mean also
25 just for seniors where all seniors you know who,

2 like, newer immigrants to the country. They might
3 not have a DMV license but they might want to
4 register to vote and it would be hard to do that
5 online. So.

6 ALLIE SWATEK: Yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Just something I
8 went through. So.

9 ALLIE SWATEK: Now all you need is a
10 social security number and it makes it much easier
11 for you.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Which is exactly
13 like the paper ballot. Which you, yeah. So, I
14 believe Council Member Restler has a few questions.

15 LINCOLN RESTLER: It's good to see y'all.
16 Thank you for your work. It's, I know it's CFB does
17 a lot of really great things for the City of New York
18 and you guys are in many, many ways a model for the
19 nation. So, I appreciate y'all. How does New York
20 City turnout compare to other large cities around the
21 country?

22 AMANDA MELILLO: I'm going to take this
23 one and maybe turn to Allie if she has anything to
24 add. What I would say is that our turnout in local
25 elections is actually, can be compared to turnout in

2 other places where it's roughly the same. And where
3 we're seeing those changes is where they realign
4 their elections with even years as opposed to having
5 them off cycle like we do in New York City. So, in a
6 lot of other big cities you still see about 25%
7 turnout in mayoral elections but as these cities are
8 starting to shift to align with governor elections or
9 presidential elections that turnout is starting to
10 change.

11 LINCOLN RESTLER: You think that aligning
12 on municipal elections with state elections is the
13 most consequential thing we can do to increase
14 turnout?

15 AMANDA MELILLO: My personal opinion
16 right now is yes. Allie, what would you say?

17 LINCOLN RESTLER: Yeah. Like I said each
18 of your personal opinions.

19 RICK SCHAFFER: Yeah. I think it is by
20 far the most consequential thing we can do. And I
21 want to point out one other thing, when elections are
22 held in even numbered, you not only get a higher
23 turnout but you get a somewhat different demographic
24 and it's an improved demographic in that in odd
25 number years a disproportionate share of the

2 electorate is older and is white. And in the city's
3 that have shifted to even numbered years, you get a
4 larger turnout among people of color and among the
5 young and I think that's an important benefit as well
6 as the higher turnout overall.

7 ALLIE SWATEK: I think that moving to an
8 even year elections is definitely the way to get the
9 most bang for your buck as far as turnout is
10 concerned if we are recognizing that turnout is
11 making the electorate more representative of the
12 population is our ultimate goal then as Amanda and
13 Rick have said, yes. I think it is the best one.

14 LINCOLN RESTLER: I think we've all been
15 disappointed by lack lesser turnout in New York City
16 local elections and voting in New York in general.
17 You know since the Democrats took control of the
18 State Senate a few years ago we've seen a number of
19 critical voter access reforms that I think are really
20 helpful and beneficial in addition to changing
21 municipal elections to even years which would in the
22 best-case scenario happen I guess in 20-, if it were
23 to move forward, I would say '27, '29. 2029 maybe
24 would be the next with two different legislatures and
25 then a referendum. I, so, so maybe at some point in

2 the future. What are the next most impact reforms
3 that you would recommend that we prioritize either at
4 the local level of state level to expand voter
5 participation?

6 ALLIE SWATEK: I would say voting by mail
7 and making voting by mail more expansive. In states
8 that have implemented that as a reform they do see
9 turnout boosts because you are literally removing the
10 need for people to leave their homes. I would also
11 note that a lot of people talk about online voting as
12 the next frontier. However, I think there is still
13 significant security concerns with that that would
14 need to be resolved before looking at seriously as a
15 reform. But I think a number of states are shifting
16 to voting by mail. They are seeing turnout increases
17 as a result of that however there are some like other
18 considerations to have like we saw a number of issues
19 with the US Post office. Particularly with federal
20 underfunding that happened in the 2020 election. So
21 that would be an ongoing issue to monitor if the
22 state were to seriously consider that as a reform.

23 LINCOLN RESTLER: Great.

24 AMANDA MELILLO: I would just add really
25 quickly that the states that showed the greatest

2 turnout increases for mail in voting are the ones
3 that automatically send and you can opt in to
4 receiving the ballot in the mail and those places
5 like Colorado, Washington, California there is a
6 significant cost to that and also just a
7 consideration that we should always be making and
8 there are tradeoffs as well as that in those places
9 there are fewer in person voting sites that are open,
10 what does that mean in a city like New York where
11 it's highly walkable and we are not driving to our
12 poll sites. Things like that that I think make us a
13 little unique when it comes to considerations like
14 that.

15 RICK SCHAFFER: Yeah. Okay. Did, the
16 next low hanging it would be same day registration.

17 LINCOLN RESTLER: Right. And for the
18 first time in the history of our city in 10 days
19 somebody will be able on that one day to register to
20 vote and vote, June 17th. That will be a very
21 special day for somebody in New York City.

22 ALLIE SWATEK: We really should find
23 those people and . . .

24 RICK SCHAFFER: And celebrate them.
25 Yeah.

2 LINCOLN RESTLER: Six districts where we
3 have competitive City Council elections somebody is
4 going into register to vote and vote that day. And
5 it will be joyous. Thank you very much Chair Ung. I
6 appreciate your leadership and I just want to say
7 both on Chair Ung's resolution and on Council Member
8 Powers bill, I'm strongly supportive. And, and just
9 on that operationally you noted in your testimony
10 that there would be meaningful operational
11 implications to the bill, tangible impact on CFB
12 operations and campaigns but you do believe you could
13 confidentially implement it. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you and I
15 just have a few more questions since I have you all
16 here. So, for the 2020-21 election there an earmark
17 of 10% of the budget for advertising in languages
18 other than English. Do you think this was efficient
19 use of funds? Do you think there should be more
20 funds, more budget to that, to that to the
21 advertising languages other than to English. And do
22 you plan to use the same, you know, percentage in
23 2023? Decrease? Increase? What's the, what's the
24 plan?

2 ALLIE SWATEK: So, we have actually
3 significantly, we have allocated significantly more
4 of our ads spent in language media than just 10%. We
5 even exceeded 10% in 2021 but last year for example
6 when we were still only translating into the four
7 voting rights act languages, in our August
8 advertising campaign, 44% of our advertising was in
9 language and we increased that in November to 48.5%.
10 So, this time around I will say determining where we
11 are going to be advertising and in what languages was
12 a bit of a moving target up until the last moment as
13 races were coming on and off the ballot. So, up
14 front we are committing over 33% of our ads spent in
15 language media and we are expanding two additional
16 languages for our ads for the first time ever in this
17 election. So, I believe right now we are advertising
18 in eight languages after looking at where the Council
19 Districts are. That are having primaries and
20 overlapping that with census data for where the,
21 where each language is spoken. But I would say that
22 we will not have final numbers ready to produce for
23 you until after the primary. Because a lot of our
24 spend is dynamic throughout the election. We are
25 continually re-allocating our spend to different

2 platforms after we determine what's effective. Who
3 needs more of it and things like that. So, it's
4 likely that we will end up with more than 33% of our
5 total spend in language.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you. And
7 I want to just ask the same questions that I asked
8 of the Mayor's Office of Engagement. How do you make
9 that determination of like where, I mean you did say
10 its where, actually there are elections where that's
11 going on and what's the make up of, you know, that,
12 the demographic of those elections. Is that the main
13 criteria pretty much?

14 ALLIE SWATEK: So, I'll say this election
15 was a little bit different than other elections and
16 part of that was because there was no top of the
17 ticket race.

18 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Uh-huh.

19 ALLIE SWATEK: So, we were really looking
20 at a much more localized media plan than what you
21 tend to see in every election. So, we might in a
22 different election rely more heavily on TV or
23 broadcast media that just didn't feel very effective
24 this time around because we were leading with the
25 Rank Choice Voting message. And the reality is like

2 half the city is not going to have a Rank Choice
3 Voting primary. So, this time around we really, I,
4 we literally had a map off of looking at community
5 districts and language data, looking at where there
6 were active Council races and then overlapping that
7 with ZIP codes because that's why media buyers work
8 in. In a different election, we would look at a
9 citywide spend and we would allocate more of our
10 money to what we've determined as priority areas.
11 The areas that we know just simply have lower turnout
12 and we would allocate more of our resources to be in
13 language media or being digital media to make sure
14 that we're reaching voters under 30 because they tend
15 to get their ads digitally. So, there are a number
16 of considerations that we have and we always start by
17 considering what are the conditions of the election
18 and who are we trying to reach and who has a race
19 where we're trying to get the word out. This
20 election was just a really, really unusual one and is
21 not how we usually make our media plan.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: No. Understood.
23 Thank you. And lastly you know for the 20-21
24 election I mean the general election obviously had
25 one of the lowest turnouts. You know, but then we

2 had one of the most representative and diverse city
3 council in the history so can you explain just you
4 know how this happened? Like what are your thoughts
5 about that?

6 AMANDA MELILLO: I have many and I'll say
7 some and I'm sure Allie will jump in with more and
8 possibly Rick. But what I would say is that in 2021
9 a lot of the races were actually determined in the
10 primary where they had less competitive general
11 elections. So, I think that there were two changes
12 that happened in 2021 election that were incredibly
13 important to the outcome. One of those changes was
14 Rank Choice Voting. I think a lot of people decided
15 to jump into the mix and run for office who might not
16 have decided to run for office otherwise because they
17 saw a more viable path to victory. So, I think you
18 saw just a different mix of candidates even at the
19 Mayoral level, I felt like there was a much different
20 mix than there had been in previous elections. Then
21 we had a more generous matching funds program that
22 allowed people to run for office entirely using
23 public funds and small contributions. So that really
24 ensured that you had a different mix of candidates
25 coming in the door and then we did see higher turnout

2 in the primary where races felt more competitive
3 because that, that sense of competition I think is an
4 important driver of turnout at the local level. So,
5 I think there were a lot of conditions like we had
6 the, I think we had good outcomes in terms of who ran
7 for office and who won office. And now we want to
8 make sure we are having those same outcomes for who
9 is coming out to vote.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Great. Thank
11 you. I'm done with my questions but I see Council
12 Member Powers here so I'm sure he has a few
13 questions.

14 KEITH POWERS: Thank you. Nice to see
15 everyone. I'm sorry, I missed your testimony. I do
16 have a copy of it in front of me as well. I just
17 wanted to ask a couple of quick questions. On my
18 legislation, but I'll just say, I just want to add,
19 just clarify you guys are in support of legislation?
20 Opposed to it? What's the position of the CFB on the
21 bill?

22 ALLIE SWATEK: We don't have a position
23 on the legislation but we respect that the committee
24 is seeking to always modernize the city's matching
25 funds program and our post-election report recognized

2 that there has been a huge amount of increase in
3 credit cards as the voting method of, I'm sorry, as
4 the contribution method of choice. So, we understand
5 how that's an evolving trend.

6 KEITH POWERS: And I recognize you said
7 it's 120 days until passage and I, I think many of us
8 being made to cycle would have to make sure we don't
9 impact existing elections. And it, are there any
10 like logistical issues that need to take place,
11 whether it is in C-Smart or in your rules or anything
12 else if we were to pass that legislation?

13 ALLIE SWATEK: Yeah. We, we are going to
14 review our rules and make sure that references to
15 fees and exempt expenditures is just clarifying what
16 types of fees we mean when we say credit card and
17 bank fees and we can speak about that too. And if
18 there are specifications in the legislation that's
19 fine also. And as an avid NYC Votes Contributor user
20 you know that the credit card fees that are incurred
21 through fundraising through that platform
22 automatically gets uploaded into C-Smart. We'd want
23 to make sure that we make it as easy as possible for
24 campaigns to make sure that something like, would
25 automatically flag those fees as exempt. Something

2 like that more of a software programing change. And

3 . . .

4 KEITH POWERS: And do you feel, please
5 you. Do you feel confident that if we give up with
6 the time its by the time you can do that?

7 ALLIE SWATEK: Yes. And we are currently
8 looking into how long that would take but I
9 unfortunately don't have the answer for you right
10 now.

11 KEITH POWERS: Okay. I appreciate that.
12 I want to bring up just one other things. First of
13 all, I, you guys probably don't hear from elected
14 officials that often but I keep recognition of how
15 tough your jobs can be and how, what's that. He was
16 nice. You should feel very thankful. You know you
17 guys have a lot of challenges and you threw them into
18 crunch time and it's not easy and it impacts people's
19 lives in a tough way so there is always a lot of
20 strong opinions about it. And you do more right than
21 you do wrong so let me just be on the record about
22 that. That's, that's a compliment not a criticism.
23 But there have been some issues recently when it
24 comes to technology and using your technology
25 particularly around campaign filings. I'm saying

2 this on behalf of a lot of colleagues, technological
3 changes, you know difficulties, systems being down.
4 Right at critical moments where people are about to
5 do things. Whether you vote, whether you want to
6 believe it or not those last few days are when
7 everybody's you know tying up the loose ends for
8 their filing and making sure that they have
9 documentation and they can merge names. They can do
10 all the other stuff and it puts a big strain on folks
11 when they're losing an afternoon. In some cases when
12 its around the Jewish holiday, last time, recently.
13 Can you just give us an update on that and also any
14 considerations you might give in the future to
15 campaigns. I was actually fine but for all the
16 fellows and my colleagues who may have a religious
17 need that might or anything else that might leave
18 them. Even for us as Council Members today I was in
19 the middle of a stated meeting when we are all very,
20 very busy. So, if there will be any extra
21 considerations can you just talk us through what
22 happened recently with the technology stuffy and what
23 might we expect in the future when something like
24 that happens?

2 RICK SCHAFFER: So, we acknowledge that
3 we've had some, some issues with our online resources
4 over the past few months. I think I stated that
5 publicly actually at our last public hearing. And of
6 course, we appreciate the patience of elected
7 officials and candidates in those situations and we
8 applaud our staff for helping to navigate those
9 issues in a timely manner. We've got some real
10 technological challenges ahead of us like if it's one
11 of the key priorities with any agency as reflected in
12 our budget. We simply have to update our technology
13 and we have plans to do so in the meantime while
14 pledges continue to happen, we will continue to be as
15 responsive as we possibly can. Where appropriate we
16 make adjustments to the scheduling so people have an
17 extra day or two and we are absolute mindful of
18 religious holidays and religious observance as part
19 of our consideration in thinking that do we need to
20 get an extra day or two for the filings. We hope to
21 reduce the number of occasions when that occurs. As
22 pretty much as soon as this primary is over, we have
23 a plan to begin updating some of our systems during
24 the relative quiet period of the summer. And that is
25 a multi-year project not only in terms of updating

2 the hardware if you will but also in bringing on some
3 of new software programs. So, we are very much
4 committed to that and we will remain as responsive as
5 we possibly can.

6 KEITH POWERS: So, to, two things I
7 wanted to ask about and I know this is not all on
8 turnout it's actually very much more specific than
9 that but we are candidates and how we run elections
10 matters. One is on the issue of, you might use some
11 statutory flexibility I'm not sure if you wanted to
12 extend like a day but you know for candidates, I
13 talked to who lost a day basically being without
14 access to their filing like it would be the whole
15 thing about giving people some more time. You know
16 after the, to allow further like the week before
17 Memorial Day so maybe through the weekend to
18 accommodate that. I think it is very reasonable.
19 But the other question I had was you asked for
20 filings at 5:00 p.m. on the day that they are due.
21 And I've heard from candidates on things which is why
22 not give us until midnight. And that's all
23 statutorially allowed and in fact we are not past the
24 days where I have to drop off my bank statements to
25 your headquarters like I think I used to have to do.

2 In fact, we are all online now and I think it would
3 be the easiest fix in the world to allow candidates
4 to comply and meet their compliance deadlines
5 especially in that period of time. Why are, why
6 don't we allow people to, why don't you take the full
7 day on the day its due to allow people to file?

8 RICK SCHAFFER: One answer to that is
9 that some of the cycles require us to do a four-day
10 turnaround. And so, during the four day turn around
11 every hour that we extend the filing deadline is an
12 hour less that we have to do the four-day turnaround.
13 So that doesn't answer the question completely,
14 because not all of the, not all of the payment
15 periods involve a four-day turnaround but certainly
16 during the four-day turn around period that's an
17 issue but that's all I can think of at the time.

18 KEITH POWERS: That would say that at
19 6:00 p.m. you're starting the process of that which
20 I'm not sure is happening. But at, just, it's a
21 recommendation.

22 ALLIE SWATEK: Yeah. I believe it's in
23 the best interest of the candidate to also ensure
24 that they're, you know, their CSU liaison is there if
25 they encounter an issue while they are submitting and

2 that is a highly, highly recommended deadline for
3 that reason just to make sure that we're giving the
4 customer service that's necessary if there is an
5 issue.

6 KEITH POWERS: Okay. And I want to ask
7 one last question and then I'm going to hand it back.
8 It's still on the, it's less technical and more on
9 the general campaign finance laws. I had a bill last
10 term that actually we dropped the qualifying amount
11 of the contribution from \$10 to \$5 to just make those
12 \$5 donations count towards your thing. It doesn't
13 seem to make any sense why it would be \$10. I took a
14 recommendation of yours from your report to require
15 that city-like candidates have to get 50
16 contributions from every borough in order to qualify.
17 I heard mixed reviews of that one from my colleagues
18 who have you know had to go to that system about
19 adding a layer of compliance. I did a report on it
20 too actually demonstrating past cycles, it's called
21 50 ways to love your borough. I think was the name
22 of it. A Paul Simon reference. And so, I want to
23 just hear you know your kind of current thoughts on
24 other ways to adjust the thresholds to make it easier
25 or in that case make it harder, but you know add

2 something else in terms of what you might need to
3 qualify for. In terms of, but I just wanted to hear
4 what any thoughts on those ideas or other
5 recommendations you have in terms of making it easier
6 to qualify?

7 ALLIE SWATEK: We are actually hugely in
8 favor of the bill being previously introduced to
9 reduce the qualify contribution from \$10 to \$5. As
10 you noted, I believe that was in our 2017 or 2013
11 post-election report. As far as other ideas, I kind
12 of famously say about the massive amount of changes
13 that we saw in 2021. We kind of would like a couple
14 of more election cycles to study the impact of those
15 changes before making any additional changes to
16 things like threshold because there were so many
17 candidates who qualified and received public funds in
18 2021 which is great news. That's exactly how the
19 program was designed to work. We studied whether
20 there was a difference between first time candidates
21 and those who had been running in the program for a
22 while and had received payments already. There was
23 no difference in compliance or between either of
24 those groups like the way they were treated, how they
25 were able to fundraise. So, the program is working

2 pretty close to how we would like to see it work.

3 And we plan on approaching I think a more holistic
4 study of what other changes could take place.

5 Hopefully after the 2025 election cycle when there is
6 another mayor's race and start city-wide race under
7 our belts. I don't know if anyone has any other
8 ideas.

9 KEITH POWERS: Thank you. I'm going back
10 to my other hearing but thank you guys for taking the
11 time. Thank you to the chair, thanks.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you all
13 for your testimony today.

14 C.J. MURRAY, COUNSEL: Thank you Chair
15 and panelists. We will now turn to public testimony.
16 Our first panelist will be Ben Weinberg from Citizens
17 Union. After that we will turning to Zoom panelist,
18 first Zultan Hagnal [phonetic] followed by Sarah
19 Goth. But before that we will hear from Ben
20 Weinberg.

21 BEN WEINBERG: Good afternoon members of
22 the Committee. My name is Ben Weinberg, and I am the
23 Director of Public Policy at Citizens Union. We
24 appreciate the opportunity to discuss the issue of
25 voter turnout in our municipal election and we thank

2 Chair Ung for holding a public hearing on this issue
3 specifically because it deserves, we believe, a
4 separate discussion and different solutions than the
5 common conversations about turnout. I have submitted
6 a longer written testimony and a report but I'll make
7 a few brief remarks. Significant improvements to our
8 elections in recent years have created a more open
9 and fair electoral system in which it is easier to
10 register to vote, to vote and to run for office but
11 voter turnout in elections for city offices has
12 consistently declined with each cycle regardless of
13 the type of the race, whether its an open seat for
14 Mayor, whether the Mayor is up for re-election or the
15 number of candidates. Now, this poses a re-challenge
16 to the democratic legitimacy of our local government
17 in the long run. And this problem is worsened by the
18 uneven nature of turnout across the city. So, the
19 Citizens Union believes that New York needs to take
20 transformative action to engage more people in our
21 local election and we therefore support Resolution
22 646, which proposes moving New York City's elections
23 from even-numbered years to odd-numbered years. Our
24 own research shows that aligning our local elections
25 with presidential or with mayoral elections

2 would significantly increase voter turnout overall in
3 city elections, both for the top-of-the-ticket with
4 Mayor or city-wide offices and for down ballot races
5 like City Council offices. We find that it would
6 benefit younger voters and communities of color, who
7 are better represented in high-turnout, even-year
8 electorates. The fact is that our odd-numbered year,
9 off cycle electorates are smaller, older, wealthier
10 and also whiter than the city's population. And our
11 even-year electorates are not that much. Now cities
12 that hold their local elections in conjunction with
13 higher offices do not suffer the same voter turnout
14 problem. We mentioned before the cities that have
15 made that change, but there are cities that have had
16 local elections in even-numbered years for years and
17 years and years. And the average turnout, you know,
18 we compared the six largest cities that hold their
19 election, their local election in even-numbered
20 years, average mayoral turnouts there ranges from 50
21 to 75%. And these are rates we can only dream of in
22 New York City. While the six largest odd-numbered
23 year cities have mayoral turnouts ranging from 10% to
24 38%, quite a difference. In even-year elections in
25 the city also yield higher turnouts for down ballot

2 races. So, assembly races although they are often
3 much less competitive than Council races, assembly
4 races that are held in even numbered years see higher
5 turnout than Council races held in odd-numbered year.
6 Sometimes its doubled or more turnout. Consolidating
7 elections in even numbered years would also narrow
8 participation gaps. Turnout is expected to increase
9 overall as we mentioned but our research shows that
10 the sharpest increase in turnout would be in
11 minority, majority districts. And the shift would
12 particularly impact young voters. In fact, turnout
13 for 18- to 29-year-olds in even years is three to
14 five-fold that in odd-year elections. Moving the
15 election year also brings additional benefits
16 including reducing costs and supporting election
17 officials giving them some time off to prepare for
18 the next year. Polls show that this policy is
19 popular among people of all partisan background and
20 every time it was before the voters as a ballot
21 initiative it was approved. It has never been
22 rejected. Citizens Union strongly supports
23 Resolution 646, but we offer one suggestion. The
24 Resolution calls for City elections to coincide with
25 gubernatorial elections. Now the data shows that the

2 benefits associated with raising turnout and
3 diversifying the electorate are strongest in
4 presidential years, and most cities that have changed
5 their local election year aligned it with
6 presidential elections though not all of them.
7 However, we acknowledge that there are other
8 considerations related to the types of elections on
9 the ballot. We recommend replacing the
10 constitutional requirement for "odd-numbered" year
11 elections with the words "even-numbered" to allow for
12 more flexibility or alternatively, just to remove
13 that constitutional requirement altogether leaving it
14 to the legislature to set the dates of municipal
15 elections or giving that power to local governments.
16 Thank you for allowing us to address you today. And
17 I am happy to take any questions.

18 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you Ben.
19 And thank you to Citizens Union on your work on this
20 topic. So, you do make a recommendation to coincide
21 the gubernatorial years and not the presential years?

22 BEN WEINBERG: No. I'm sorry if I . . .

23 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: I'm sorry. It
24 was the other way. I'm sorry. It's the Resolution
25 that says governable right?

2 BEN WEINBERG: Right.

3 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Could you go a
4 little bit more into that, into why that, you know,
5 that works out better. That it does increase the
6 voter turnout?

7 BEN WEINBERG: So, the data that we see
8 from other cities and from New York City is that the
9 turnout in presidential years is significantly
10 higher. And the question of who the communities that
11 benefit from those gains. We see much stronger gains
12 in presidential years than in gubernatorial years.
13 Most other cities have also moved their elections to
14 presidential years not all of them, for example, Los
15 Angeles who just had their first odd cycle election
16 had it in their gubernatorial year. But we did not
17 take a position on whether this should be in
18 gubernatorial or presidential. We know there are a
19 lot of considerations that play so we wanted to
20 highlight the negative impact of the current system.
21 And we think there are various ways to go about it as
22 I mentioned changing the words odd with even in the
23 Constitution or just striking that provision
24 altogether.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you. And
3 just, you know what, since we were just having a
4 conversation about all that needs to be done for this
5 to become reality. You know, so, you know in terms
6 of you know the, you know talking about having those
7 municipal elections, having the judge's elections,
8 having the municipal elections. Do you have any
9 opinions about how to, you know, do this in a way
10 that's most effective going forward?

11 BEN WEINBERG: That's a good question.
12 You know our focus was on elections to city
13 government in New York City because our group has
14 been working there too for over 100 years because
15 that is where we see the, the, the developing turnout
16 every cycle. It stands to reason that we would
17 eventually have to move all elections off the off
18 year and put them all together on even numbered year
19 elections. In terms of how to go about it some of
20 them can be done through, some of these changes can
21 be done through state law, district attorneys for
22 example that is governed by state law. The others
23 will have to go through a Constitutional change.
24 It's a long process as you know. We had, you know,
25 but we just had, we just implemented a statewide

2 public campaign finance program. You know we, we
3 have early voting which is something people have
4 pushed for, for decades and decades. So, its an
5 ambitious goal but we need ambitious goals to prevent
6 further drop off and turnout in New York City.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: Thank you. I
8 know small steps. Small steps. In a very good goal.
9 Just one last question, I know there is a lot of
10 concerns about overshadowing of local elections in
11 even years. Is that, I mean, is that as big of an
12 issue and can you talk a little bit more about your
13 findings?

14 BEN WEINBERG: Sure. Yes. Thank you.
15 It's a great question. So, I think there are two
16 ways to look at it overshadowing in terms of media
17 coverage and overshadowing in terms of kind of the
18 publics knowledge or, or how informed orders are.
19 It's hard, first of all it's hard to measure. It's
20 hard to measure voter's knowledge and familiarity
21 although there has been a couple of studies out in
22 California that check the voter's knowledge of school
23 board elections so very kind of the most, that would
24 be elections and found that there hasn't been a
25 significant change after they shifted school board's

2 election to even numbered years. And I think even
3 today what we see is that we do hold high profile
4 races like the US President with the same day that we
5 hold very, very local elections like assembly or
6 judges. I think what we see is that the more media
7 attention is given to politics in general, to the
8 fact that there is a election, the more people get
9 involved. I always like to give the example of the
10 2018 election. So, the national conversation around
11 that election was who will control the house after
12 Trump one. That drove all of the attention but it
13 translated into a different dynamic at the local
14 level in New York City and New York State which was
15 around the senate races of the IBC. So, you know,
16 it's, I think a national conversation about politics
17 pulls people to be more mobilized around their local
18 elections and I think that is most likely what will
19 happen in this case.

20 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: No. Thank you
21 that's a good point and I'm done with my questions
22 and really, I do have to thank you and the Citizen's
23 Union for your work on this issue. It's really, no,
24 I'm really very appreciative of our conversations.
25 Also of this report, so thank you again.

2 BEN WEINBERG: Thank you very much.

3 C.J. MURRAY, COUNSEL: Thank you. We
4 will now be turning to our zoom panelists. First, we
5 be hearing from Zultan Hagnal followed by Sarah Goth.
6 Zultan Hagnal you may begin when the Sergeant calls
7 time.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 ZULTAN HAGNAL: Thank you very much and
10 thank you for allowing me to testify here. My name
11 is Zultan Hagnal. I am a professor of political
12 science at the University of California in San Diego.
13 Many, many moons ago I received my PhD at the
14 University of Chicago and have been essentially
15 working on research on local elections ever since.
16 My work on the topic has been published in the New
17 York Times, the Los Angeles Times and in most of the
18 topic academic journals. As such I am probably the
19 world's leading expert on this particular topic. So,
20 I'm going to spend a few minutes telling you about
21 what I and others have found in our research. None
22 of my testimony will really be about your per se but
23 I think will nevertheless be very relevant to and to
24 making your decision here. So, I'm going to sort of
25 highlight five key findings from the research. So,

2 finding number 1 and probably the most important
3 finding for your interest here. That finding is that
4 moving local elections to the same day as statewide
5 elections essentially doubles voter turnout. Every
6 published study looking at this has found essentially
7 the same thing, about more than a dozen studies. So,
8 we know this has a huge impact on turnout. So,
9 that's number one. Number two, even year elections
10 as Citizens Union suggested made the voting
11 population look more like a city population. So, we
12 not only bring out more voters but we bring out a
13 more representative set of voters. Importantly it
14 dramatically increases the share of voters who are
15 under 30. It dramatically increases the share of
16 voters who are from communities of color. Finding
17 number three, even year elections make policy more
18 responsive to broader public. So, by bringing out
19 more voters, a greater array of voters, we help to
20 ensure that local government is more responsive to
21 the citizens as a whole and we have a number of
22 different studies showing that which I am happy to
23 talk about. Finding number four, voters love this
24 move to on-cycle elections. And it's not just
25 popular but it is also non-partisan. So, two-thirds

2 of Americans in surveys indicated that they would
3 prefer to vote in one election at one time in one
4 location rather than multiple days, multiple times,
5 multiple locations. So, unlike most other
6 conceivable reforms this is something that almost no
7 one will impose and also everyone will favor and
8 again it's also a non-partisan issue. So, in the
9 same survey majorities are democrats, majorities are
10 republicans and majorities of non-partisans all favor
11 the move to on-cycle elections. So finally, just
12 want to highlight one important fact, not necessarily
13 a finding but that is, this is not a new or untested
14 phenomenon. As others have mentioned, about one-
15 third of cities around the country have had on-cycle
16 elections. Most of the cities in California, in
17 Arizona and Nevada have more recently moved to on-
18 cycle elections and in those cases, it appears to
19 work without any major issues. So, the city clerks
20 surveys reveal no major issues. Voters have the same
21 level of information about local elections as far as
22 we can tell as they did before the move to on-cycle
23 election. So, this is very much a democratic move
24 that you can do today and it makes life easier for
25 your constituents. It also saves cities and state

2 money. So, the research suggests that it is
3 extraordinarily helpful. So, thank you for your time
4 and I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

5 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: I do not have
6 any questions but we have been joined here by City
7 Council Member Brewer.

8 C.J. MURRAY, COUNSELOR: Thank you. We
9 will now turn to our next panelist. Sarah Goth, you
10 may begin upon the Sergeants announcement.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 SARAH GOTH: Good afternoon. I apologize
13 I have a hoarse throat from the air quality. So, if
14 you have any trouble hearing me, I do apologize in
15 advance. I am the Deputy Director of Common Cause
16 New York. I would like to thank Chair Ung for
17 convening today's committee hearing. As many of you
18 know, Common Cause New York is a non-partisan
19 citizen's body and a leading force in the battle for
20 honest and accountable government for over 50 years.
21 Simply put, is improving voter turnout in any
22 election cycle with simple straightforward order of
23 product in one or two reforms there would be no need
24 for this hearing. However, improving voter turnout
25 on any election cycle is an elusive at that. Due to

2 the dynamics of consensus and factors typically in
3 any given election cycle. Some of the factors will
4 be on the policy solutions like competitive use of
5 races or the weather on election day. Other times
6 there area common things, reforms that include ease
7 and accessibility of voters by giving voters more
8 time and mor ways to vote. We have a long-standing
9 position that voting reforms and various policy
10 solutions should be enacted regardless of whether or
11 not they boost turnout as turnout should now be the
12 same metric of ethnicity or success. With that being
13 said, we wholeheartedly support resolution 646 and
14 will cite our colleagues at Citizens Union for their
15 excellent research that demonstrates both the need
16 and value of one of our election cycles to even
17 numbered years. In addition, we would also like to
18 echo the recommendations of the campaign finance
19 board to expand same day voter registration to all
20 days of early voting and on election day in the
21 coming years as well as clearly a comprehensive
22 statewide program that would dramatically increase
23 the options voters have in the days they can choose
24 to vote. I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank
25 you very much for your time.

2 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: So, thank you
3 for your testimony.

4 C.J. MURRAY, COUNSEL: And that concludes
5 our public testimony for today so I'll turn it back
6 to our chair to close this out.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANDRA UNG: I want to thank
8 everybody for coming here and having a very fruitful
9 conversation about you can do to move forward with
10 this really important goal of turning out voters and
11 making sure we can continue to turn out voters. So
12 again, I want to thank everybody who participated in
13 today's hearing. Thank you

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date June 28, 2023