

**BRENNAN
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE**

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Testimony of

Margaret Chen

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Before the

**Committee on Governmental Operations and Committee on Civil Rights
Council of the City of New York**

**Oversight Hearing: The Voter Assistance Commission and Its Efforts to
Increase Voter Registration Across New York City's Diverse Communities**

December 18, 2007

On behalf of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, I thank the Committee on Governmental Operations and Committee on Civil Rights for holding this hearing and for providing me the opportunity to discuss our work on voter registration.

The Brennan Center for Justice is a nonpartisan think tank and advocacy organization that focuses on issues of democracy and justice. We are deeply involved in the effort to ensure fair and accurate voting and voter registration systems and to promote policies that maximize participation in elections. We have done extensive work on the subjects of voter registration and the maintenance of voter registration lists, including conducting studies and publishing reports, providing assistance to federal and state administrative and legislative bodies with responsibility over elections, and when necessary, litigating to compel states to comply with their obligations under federal law and the Constitution.

My testimony today will focus on voter registration of people with felony convictions. There is widespread misunderstanding and misapplication of relevant

¹ I am not an attorney, nor am I admitted to the bar. My testimony has been approved by attorneys at the Brennan Center.

state law governing the voting rights of former prisoners and probationers. New York Election Law automatically restores the right to vote to convicted individuals once they have served their maximum sentence or been discharged from parole. Individuals who are sentenced to probation never lose their right to vote. The law imposes no additional burdens, conditions or qualifications on who may vote, aside from the usual age, citizenship, and residency requirements. Like all other registrants, people with felony convictions need only complete a registration form and sign an affidavit – they are entitled to the same presumption of eligibility as all other individuals seeking to register.

In 2003 and 2005, the Brennan Center conducted surveys of New York's 63 local election boards to determine how voter registration laws were being applied in practice. In 2003, more than half of New York's counties, including all five boroughs in New York City, wrongly refused to register people with felony convictions who failed to provide documentation of their eligibility.² In 2005, more than a third of New York's local boards were still getting the law wrong, reporting either that people on probation are not eligible to register to vote or that they did not know whether people on probation could vote.³ The 2005 survey also found that local boards were still refusing to register people with felony convictions if they could not provide certain documentation of their eligibility, contrary to state policy.

Imposing haphazard and inconsistent registration requirements on individuals with felony convictions unnecessarily burdens the fundamental right to vote and therefore violates the Equal Protection and Due Process guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment. Refusing to accept voter registration forms submitted by eligible voters with felony convictions also violates the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) which requires every state to ensure that all eligible applicants are registered to vote.

Misapplication of voter registration laws has a disparate impact in New York City, as the majority of people with felony convictions are residents of the five boroughs. In 2004, nearly one-third of all New Yorkers sentenced from probation lived in New York City. Fifty percent of people sentenced to prison and 61 percent of people on parole reside in the five boroughs.⁴

Because of this persistent misinformation, many New Yorkers with felony convictions do not know whether they are eligible to vote. In 2005, researchers found that about half of New Yorkers surveyed incorrectly thought they were ineligible to vote while on probation and about 30 percent believed they lost their right to vote if they had only been arrested, but not convicted, for a crime.⁵ Nearly 30 percent of

² Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law an Demos: A Network for Ideas & Action, *Boards of Elections Continue Illegally To Disenfranchise Voters with Felony Convictions* 3 (Mar. 2006), available at http://www.brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/download_file_34665.pdf.

³ *Id.* at 4.

⁴ *Id.* at 6.

⁵ Ernest Drucker and Ricardo Barreras, The Sentencing Project, *Studies of Voting Behavior and Felony Disenfranchisement Among Individuals in the Criminal Justice System in New York, Connecticut, and*

people with felony convictions in New York thought they would never be eligible to vote again.⁶

The Voter Assistance Commission website states: “To register to vote in the City of New York, you must: ... [n]ot be serving a jail sentence or be on parole for a felony conviction.”⁷ This language should be changed to accurately reflect New York’s voter eligibility law. The current language is inaccurate because the use of the term “jail sentence” is over-inclusive. Although anyone incarcerated in a state prison has been convicted of a felony and does not have the right to vote, the vast majority of people serving time in city jails have *not* been convicted of a felony and remain eligible to vote. Most people detained in jails are being held while awaiting trial or sentencing, or they have been convicted of a misdemeanor and therefore retain the right to vote even while in jail. Rather than tell eligible voters that they may not vote if they are serving a jail sentence, the Voter Assistance Commission should inform citizens that they are ineligible to vote if they have been *convicted of a felony and are currently incarcerated or on parole*.

The Voter Assistance Commission should take affirmative steps to ensure that eligible people with felony convictions are registered to vote. Members of the public and local boards of elections are misinformed about the voting rights of people with felony convictions. To remedy this misinformation, the Voting Assistance should:

- Provide training for city agencies, and community, church, and voter registration groups;
- Produce public service announcements in print media, television and radio outlets;
- Correct and post eligibility language and voter registration information on its website.

The Brennan Center is eager to work with the Voter Assistance Commission to enhance voter registration efforts across the city. In particular we are more than happy to help create training and public education materials on the voting rights of people with felony convictions, examples of which may be found on our website,⁸ to ensure that all eligible New Yorkers have the opportunity to vote.

Ohio 8 (2005), available at

http://www.sentencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/fd_studiesvotingbehavior.pdf.

⁶ *Id.* at 9.

⁷ See http://www.nyc.gov/html/vac/html/register/register_to_vote.shtml.

⁸ See Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, *The Voting Rights of People With Criminal Convictions in New York* (Apr. 2006), available at

http://www.brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/download_file_9371.pdf; Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, *Recommended Language for Automated Telephone Messages and Websites on the Voting Rights of People with Felony Convictions in New York* (May 2006), available at

http://www.brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/download_file_36194.pdf; Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, *Have You Ever Been Convicted of a Felony?* (Apr. 2006), available at http://www.brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/download_file_36193.pdf.



FOR THE RECORD

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Public Hearing Testimony
NYC Council, Governmental Operations
December 18, 2007
250 Broadway
Submitted by Mike Godino
Director of Advocacy, BCID

Good Afternoon my name is Mike Godino and I am the Director of Advocacy for the Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled (BCID). BCID is a not-for profit community based, consumer directed center, which advocates on behalf of the disabled community and provides services to promote independence and community participation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the expansion of voter registration among NY City's diverse communities. Given NYC has the most diverse population in the US, looking at ways to increase voter registration and thus participation is a means to a more inclusive society. The Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled (BCID) commends this committee for its leadership in taking the steps to increase and expand voter diversity.

Voting is a fundamental right provided to all citizens of the United States. It's a way for the citizens to participate in the governmental process. From the beginning, many people with disabilities have been denied access to the voting process only because of their disability. Additionally, we would like this committee to know, this discrimination is identical to the discrimination experienced by minorities being denied full and equal

access to their Civil Rights. Why can't people with disabilities get into polling sites? Because they never had to in the past. Why can't people who are blind use the voting machines? Because they can get assistance. Do we forbid people who can walk into a polling site access? No, we welcome and serve them to the best of our ability; however, when a person who uses a wheelchair cast their shadow on the door because they are unable to get through the door or up the steps, we simply shrug our shoulders and say someone should fix this problem. When a person who is blind signs the book to begin the Election Day voting process, the poll workers all look at each other wondering how this person is going to read the ballot and select his or her candidates. The blind person must have assistance in the voting booth; there is no other way for them to read the ballot. That too must be fixed, but it's not the poll workers problem: or is it?

I submit to you, as stated above, voter registration carries the same problems. When we speak about expanding voter registration to diverse communities, we must also consider the disabled to be one of those diverse communities. Consider the fundamental right to cast ones ballot, we must first register to vote. The registration application is available in some alternative languages: is it available in alternative formats? No, to date, the only format is print on paper. Handing a blind person or someone who is print impaired this form of voter registration is the equivalent of handing a Hispanic speaking person a registration in English: it is of no use. This barrier to voter registration and voter participation must be removed.

Given some training and willingness to fully include people in the voting process, the NY City and beyond can make the whole process accessible to people who do not read the printed language. Steps can be taken to provide the voter registration forms and all other correspondence in alternative formats. These formats could be Braille, large print, recorded or a simple phone call. I'm sure a person could provide the voter registration information via the telephone and show identification and sign the form and book on Election Day. People want to participate; however, society mostly forbids it. Please be a part of the move to include not refuse. Make the board of elections materials accessible to all minorities including those who do not read print on paper.

Again BCID thanks the this committee for your incite and commitments to see the people of New York are truly represented.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mike Godino
Director of Advocacy, BCID

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY



FOR THE RECORD

December 18, 2007

Testimony

Oversight – The Voter Assistance Commission and its Efforts to Increase Voter Registration across New York City’s Diverse Communities

Before

Committee on Governmental Operations
And
Committee on Civil Rights

By

Aaron Belisle
Voter Education & Access Coordinator



The Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

Voter registration for people with disabilities would increase if registration forms and other voting materials were readily available in alternative formats. Inaccessible materials make it difficult for people with disabilities to join our voting process, and unless changes are made by New York City and New York State, voters with disabilities will continue to be minimized and ignored on Election Day.

In consideration of the Help America Vote Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, we recommend the City and State take the following actions to improve the registration and participation of voters with disabilities in elections:

Create registration forms, ballots and other voting information materials in accessible and alternative formats, including languages other than English (HAVA and ADA mandated)

In order to comply with HAVA, New York State, New York City and the county Boards of Elections must develop all voting materials including registration forms, ballots and voter education materials in accessible and alternative formats.

- Accessible and alternative formats can and should be developed prior to the 2008 election cycle to ensure that they have been vetted and approved by experts in the field, including experts in the disability community who specialize in specific formatting: Braille, large print, disk, website accessibility, reading levels and languages other than English.
- Materials for Limited English Proficiency populations should be reviewed by local community groups like the New York Immigration Coalition and Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund for the readability and appropriateness of the translations. The translations should follow the large print guideline above.
- Groups that work with people with cognitive disabilities, such as YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities Network, should also review the materials for access.

Educating voters about the availability of accessible voting options (HAVA mandated)

New York City must develop a plan for the creation and distribution of materials that help voters understand the changes both the law and the new machines entail, including accessibility options beginning with the 2008 election cycle.

- All materials developed by the Board of Elections for distribution or display to voters should be available upon request in alternate formats prior to any election. Alternate formats include large print, on disk, in Braille, and in those languages other than English required by the Voting Rights Act. They should be in simple, direct language understandable by someone with a primary school level of reading comprehension. Information on





requesting these materials should be on all notices and mailings, and large and obvious in order to be seen and understood by voters with low vision or cognitive disabilities.

- Disability and language experts should be consulted at the beginning and throughout the material development process. For example, Lighthouse International can provide guidance in developing materials in Braille or large print.
- Materials should include any changes in voting procedures: new polling sites, accessible features, changes in voting processes, identification requirements for registration and voting.
- An initial mailing describing voting options and changes should be sent to voters at least one month prior to the 2008 Elections (these materials should clearly state that alternate formats are available to any voter).
- At least one more mailing should be sent to voters at least one week prior to the 2008 Elections with clear indication that directions to polling sites and procedures for using the new machines are available through local boards of election as well as on State and local boards of elections websites. This will allow enough time for people with disabilities to make travel arrangements for Election Day.
- **Media including TV, radio, print, internet:** In order to educate as many voters as possible about changes in voting law and voting procedures, the State and City must develop an outreach campaign that includes general print and broadcast media and disability media outlets and organizations.

All TV, radio, print and internet communications should include information on accessing all voter materials in alternate formats and should direct voters to sites where explanations of the new procedures can be accessed in detail.

A media campaign should begin at least one month prior to the 2008 election cycle and be scheduled through the 2010 elections.

- **Website:** All information on the New York State Board of Elections and County Board of Elections websites must meet accessibility standards, i.e., be Bobby approved (or the equivalent); must be accessible by assistive technology (i.e., readable with JAWS and other computer readers used by individuals who are blind, etc.) and must be available in large print and in the other languages that the Boards are required to produce for their ballots.



The State Board of Elections website should include general voter information on the changes in election procedures engendered by HAVA, information on voting machines, specific information on voter rights under HAVA and should include a section on how to access further information from local counties Boards of Elections.

County Board of Election websites should expand to include specific information on the machines that voters will use in their respective counties, including details about accessibility features and how to use them.

These changes should be made immediately and updated as appropriate with each new election cycle. Many country website contain outdated information that is misleading and confusing.

Concerted efforts to improve the accessibility of election forms and the quality, scope and availability of educational information will demonstrate to people with disabilities that the City and State consider them equal members of the voting community, and that their participation in our elections is as valued as any other voter.

Welcoming a diverse group of voters into a fully-integrated voting process—as required by the law—and correcting a lengthy history of inaccessibility and exclusion should be an important long-term goal for New York City and New York State. New York City must carefully reconsider its registration and education efforts in order to positively change the voting experiences and participation of people with disabilities.



CITY OF NEW YORK
VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

**TESTIMONY OF
ONIDA COWARD MAYERS, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR
NYC VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**STATEMENT ON
THE VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION AND ITS EFFORTS TO
INCREASE VOTER REGISTRATION ACROSS NEW YORK'S
CITY'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

**BEFORE JOINT HEARING OF THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEES ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND CIVIL
RIGHTS ON**

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

Good Afternoon. My name is Onida Coward Mayers the Executive Director of the New York City Voter Assistance Commission and VAC's Coordinator.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify on the New York City Voter Assistance Commission efforts to increase voter participation across New York City.

As is mandated by charter, VAC hears public comments and testimony at its bi-monthly meetings and annual public hearings. Over the past several years we have heard testimony from members of the community who have shared their voting experiences including those among the populations of new citizens/immigrants, women, youth, veterans, women, seniors, people with disabilities, and people with criminal convictions. They described their voting day experiences along with barriers their communities may face.



VAC's voter awareness activities seeks to address these concerns through workshops and symposiums as well as celebrate our individual right in this country to participate in American democracy.

During our Voter Awareness Month activities VAC aims to outreach to all New Yorkers with a special emphasis on groups that are traditionally underrepresented to increase overall electoral participation. In 2006 and 2007 VAC presented over 119 citywide borough-wide and neighborhood based voter events:

Type of Event	Number of events
Youth	29
Women	5
Seniors	7
New citizens and the immigrant population	38
Veterans	8
Disability	2
Criminal convictions	2
Community	4
Victim of Domestic violence	1
Homeless	2
Agency-based	16
Judicial symposiums	5

In 2008 VAC will step up its outreach to all New Yorkers thereby:

- 1 Increasing the #of organizations and groups participating in our voter education and awareness campaign.
- 2 Increasing the # of registered voters in New York City
- 3 Strengthening the quality of participation of existing partners and
- 4 Increasing civic awareness opportunities on voting issues.

VAC will launch a yearlong voter awareness campaign in 2008 beginning with distribution of voter registration materials at all 59 community boards encouraging voter registration in neighborhoods around the city.

During January, VAC will also work with the Department of Homeland Services to register new citizens at their Manhattan location.

VAC also looks forward to working with the city council representatives to provide materials and training on how to conduct a voter drive in your community. We currently have six voter drives scheduled by Councilman Comrie to be held at senior centers, churches and hospitals in his district during the month of January.

In April, VAC will present a series of discussions on informing the general public on the Electoral College.

October 2008 will be the annual celebration of Voter Awareness Month, which will feature citywide events and activities as well as voting forums and panels. In October, VAC will present an evening public program at the New York Historical Society featuring a keynote speaker to discuss the changing voting demographics in New York City history. A voting exhibit will also be on display during the month of October.

VAC will continue to promote our voter awareness activities through

1. Public service announcements translated into Spanish, Chinese and Korean
2. 2008 voter awareness calendar available on our website and
3. Monthly calendars dates printed in The Daily News

VAC partners and sponsors for 2008 will include The New York Daily News, the City University of New York, and Con Edison.

Voter Awareness Month 2007 Events

Event	Organization	Date	Type	Reg.	Dist.
Bronx					
Consumer Advisory Board Registration Drive	Care for the Homeless	10/4	Registration	7	33
Voter Registration Drive	Bronx Community College/CUNY	10/9-11	Registration	440	n/a
Voter Registration	Lehman College/CUNY	10/10	Registration	9	Approx. 50
Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us	Judicial Campaign Ethics Center, Daily News CUNY, NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/23	Awareness Education	2	20
Brooklyn					
Voter Registration Drive	Medgar Evers College/CUNY	10/1	Registration	133	Approx. 400
Voter Awareness Day	Ebenezer Preparatory PTA	10/1	Registration	0	70
Voter Registration Drive	Brownstoners of Bedford Stuyvesant Inc.	10/1	Registration	28	237
How to Become an Elected Official	Medgar Evers College/CUNY	10/1	Awareness Education	--	Approx. 100
Voter Registration Drive	New York Immigration Coalition	Tuesdays - Fridays	Registration	Approx. 2300	---
Voter Registration Drive	Cornerstone Baptist Church	10/4	Registration	5	25
Voter Registration Drive	NYC Family Justice Center	10/11	Registration	4	15
Citizenship Day – Russian-American Community of NY	Civic & Voter Education Initiative, Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst, NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/18	Awareness Education Registration	---	200
Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us	Judicial Campaign Ethics Center, Daily News, CUNY, NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/18	Awareness Education	---	50

Event	Organization	Date	Type	Reg.	Dist.
Manhattan					
NYC Board of Elections Commissioner's Meeting	NYC Board of Elections	Tuesdays	Meeting	---	30
Senior Benefit & Entitlement Fair	NYC Housing Authority	10/4	Registration	0	0
Bowery Residents Voter Awareness Day	Bowery Residents' Committee Inc. - Palace SRO	10/9	Awareness Education	7	25
Voter Information Fair	Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/10	Awareness Education	0	25
Meeting of the NYC Campaign Finance Board	NYC Campaign Finance Board	10/11 & 18	Meeting	---	---
Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us	Judicial Campaign Ethics Center, Daily News, CUNY, NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/16	Awareness Education	0	10
Voter Awareness Presentation	NYC Department of Transportation	10/18	Awareness Education	n/a	n/a
Queens					
Jackson Heights Voter Registration Drive	Latin American Cultural Center NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/2	Registration	15	75
Voter Registration Drive	American Martyrs C.W.V. Post 1772	10/6-7	Registration	60	65
Student Voter Registration Drive	York College/CUNY	10/11	Registration	18	60
Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us	Judicial Campaign Ethics Center, Daily News, CUNY, NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/30	Awareness Education	---	30
Staten Island					
Voter Registration Drive	NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/11	Registration	20	60
Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us	Judicial Campaign Ethics Center, Daily News, CUNY, NYC Voter Assistance Commission	10/25	Awareness Education	---	20
Total				3048	1600

* n/a: No answer

Dec-07

Voter Awareness Month Events 2006

Event		Organization	Date	Borough	Type	Reg.	Dist.	Att.
Youth								
	Voter Registration Drive	CUNY Citywide	9/14 - 10/13	NYC	Registration	3086	N/A	---
	Wagner College Voter Registration & Constitution Day	Wagner College NYC Voter Assistance Commission	9/18	Staten Island	Registration	50	150	---
	Voter Registration Drive	Bronx Community College/CUNY	9/18-21	Bronx	Registration	100	250	---
	Panel Discussion: The Constitution in Extraordinary Time -- How Circumstances Affect Constitutional Interpretation	Bronx Community College/CUNY	9/20	Bronx	Awareness Education	---	150	---
	Constitution Performance	Bronx Community College/CUNY	9/21	Bronx	Awareness	---	150	---
	Voter Registration Drive	Baruch College/CUNY	9/29	Manhattan	Registration	N/A	N/A	---
	Voter Registration & Information Drive	Boy Scout Troop 815	9/30-10/1	Brooklyn	Registration	128	9	---
	Voter Registration Drive	Medgar Evers College/CUNY	10/2-3	Brooklyn	Registration	540	2000	---
	Voter Registration Drive	Monroe College	10/3	Bronx	Registration	N/A	---	---
	Voter Registration Awareness Week	John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY	10/3-5	Manhattan	Registration	N/A	N/A	---
	Youth Civic Engagement Symposium	Dep. of Youth & Community Development Voter Assistance Commission	10/4	Staten Island	Awareness Education	---	50	13
	Youth Civic Engagement Symposium	Jeremy's Heroes Voter Assistance Commission	10/5	Manhattan	Awareness Education	---	75	60
	Youth Civic Engagement Symposium	Dep. of Youth & Community Development Voter Assistance Commission	10/10	Bronx	Awareness Education	---	35	25
	Voting Booth Seminar	DeVry Institute of Technology	10/12	Queens	Education	25	100	---
	Why Vote?	Baruch College/CUNY	10/12	Manhattan	Awareness Education	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Women							
	Voter Registration Drive	The League of Women Voters of the City of New York	9/17	Brooklyn	Registration	50	500	---

Event	Organization	Date	Borough	Type	Reg.	Dist.	Att.
Running Elections in America's Largest City	Women's City Club of New York Voter Assistance Commission	9/20	Manhattan	Awareness Education	---	1800	35
Building Leadership ... Women's Career Forum in Politics & Civic Engagement	Barnard College, Columbia University Dep. of Youth & Community Development Commission on Women's Issues Voter Assistance Commission	9/28	Manhattan	Awareness Education	5	200	35
Building Leadership ... Women's Career Forum in Politics	Wagner College Dep. of Youth & Community Development Commission on Women's Issues Voter Assistance Commission	10/4	Staten Island	Awareness Education	---	75	50
Senior							
Voter Registration Drive	The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing & Rehab Center	Mondays	Bronx	Registration	N/A	200	---
Senior Benefit & Entitlement Fair	The New York City Housing Authority	10/5	Manhattan	Registration	5	54	1000
Senior Stroll 2006	Department for the Aging The Aging in New York Fund	10/11	Brooklyn	Registration	N/A	500	---
Immigrants							
KALCA Gubernatorial Event	Korean American League for Civic Action (KALCA)	9/14	Manhattan	Awareness Education	127	450	250
Citizenship Day Festival	The New York Immigration Coalition NYC Voter Assistance Commission	9/17	Manhattan	Awareness	---	30	100
Voter Registration Drive	Hispanic Federation	Mondays & Tuesdays	Bronx	Registration	3500	15000	---
Citizenship Celebration Day of the Russian- American Community of New York	Civic & Voter Education Initiative (CVEI) NYC Voter Assistance Commission	9/20	Brooklyn	Awareness Education Registration	41	400	300
Voter Registration Drive	Latin American Cultural Center Voter Assistance Commission	9/20	Queens	Registration	35	200	---
Voter Awareness Day	College of Mount Saint Vincent – Institute for Immigrant Concerns	9/27	Manhattan	Education	N/A	20	75
Voter Registration Drive	Chinese American Voters Association	10/7	Queens	Registration	N/A	50	---

Event	Organization	Date	Borough	Type	Reg.	Dist.	Att.
New Citizens							
Citizenship Day	Medgar Evers College/CUNY Dep. Of Youth & Community Development Voter Assistance Commission Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Office of the Governor's Citizenship Unit Dep. Of Housing Preservation & Development	9/15	Brooklyn	Citizenship Application	20	150	40
Citizenship Day	Dep. Of Youth & Community Development Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs The City University of New York Latin American Cultural Center Voter Assistance Commission	9/27	Queens	Citizenship Application	25	100	50
Naturalization & Swearing-in Ceremony for New Citizens	US Department of Homeland Security The City University of New York Voter Assistance Commission	9/29	Queens	Naturalization Ceremony	584	1500	1500
Naturalization & Swearing-in Ceremony for New Citizens	US Department of Homeland Security The City University of New York Voter Assistance Commission	10/13	Brooklyn	Naturalization Ceremony	501	1300	1300
Veterans							
Voter Registration Drive in Manhattan	Voter Assistance Commission	9/19	Manhattan	Registration	10	85	---
Voter Registration Drive in the Brooklyn	Voter Assistance Commission	9/19	Brooklyn	Registration	7	50	---
Voter Registration Drive in the Bronx	Voter Assistance Commission	9/27	Bronx	Registration	6	50	---
Voter Registration Drive	American Martyrs Catholic War Veterans Post 1772	10/7-8	Queens	Registration	N/A	N/A	---
People with Disabilities							
Voting Information Forum for People with Disabilities	Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Disabilities Network of New York City Voter Assistance Commission	9/22	Manhattan	Awareness Education	2	50	20
Voter Information Forum for Students with Disabilities	The City University of New York Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Voter Assistance Commission	10/5	Manhattan	Awareness Education	---	100	75

Event	Organization	Date	Borough	Type	Reg.	Dist.	Att.
People with Criminal Convictions							
Justice Symposium ... Voting Rights in Criminal Convictions Part I	John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY Voter Assistance Commission	9/21	Manhattan	Awareness Education	---	300	20
Justice Symposium ... Voting Rights in Criminal Convictions Part II	Medgar Evers College/CUNY Voter Assistance Commission	10/11	Brooklyn	Awareness Education	---	200	75
Other							
Voter Registration Drive	NYC Taxi & Limousine Commission	9/18	Queens	Registration	4	69	---
Self-help Community Services Voter Registration Drive	Self-help Community Services	9/25	Brooklyn	Registration	0	0	---
Voter Registration Drive	Cornerstone Baptist Church	10/1	Brooklyn	Registration	5	200	---
					Total	Total	Total
					8856	26602	5023

* N/A: No Available

Dec-06

Media Coverage 2007

Voter Assistance Commission, Voter Awareness Month and Its Event Coverage

October 1	Voter Awareness Month Calendar	Daily News
October 9	Voter Awareness Month	Fox 5 - Good Day New York
October 11	Voter Awareness Month Calendar	Hora Hispana
October 14	Voter Assistance Commission Website Plug	Newspaper in Education (NIE)
October 16	Judicial Symposium in Brooklyn	Brooklyn Daily Eagle
October 21	Voter Assistance Commission Website Plug	Newspaper in Education (NIE)
October 23	Judicial Symposium in Brooklyn	Brooklyn Daily Eagle
October 24	Judicial Symposium in Staten Island	Staten Island Advance
October 28	Voter Assistance Commission Website Plug	Newspaper in Education (NIE)
October 30	Judicial Symposium in Queens	Daily News
November 6	Voter Assistance Commission	Daily News
November 7	Voter Assistance Commission & Voter Awareness Month	The New York Sun
November 7	Voter Assistance Commission & Voter Awareness Month	NY1 Morning Newspaper Review

Voter Awareness Month Public Service Announcement

October 1 – 11	BCAT	44 times
October 1 – 12	Cablevision	262 times
October 1 – 12	CUNY TV English Version CUNY TV Spanish Subtitled Version CUNY TV Chinese Subtitled Version CUNY TV Korean Subtitled Version	90 times
October 1 – 12	New York 1	Report Pending
October 1 – 15	NYC-TV	63 times
October 1 - 12	QPTV	144 times
October 1 – November 5	The Korean Channel	108 times
October 1 – 12	Time Warner Cable	98 times

Public Relations 2006

Voter Awareness Month and Its Event Coverage

September 14	Voter Awareness Month Press Conference	WNBC (Ch. 4) Evening News
September 15	Voter Awareness Month Press Conference	Daily News
	Voter Awareness Month Press Conference	New York Post
	Voter Awareness Month Press Conference	WNBC (Ch. 4) Morning News
	Voter Awareness Month Press Conference	NYC-TV
	Voter Awareness Month Calendar	The New York Times
September 16	Citizenship Day at Medgar Evers College	News 12 Morning News
September 21	Voter Awareness Month	Gothamist
September 29	Women's Career Forum at Barnard College	Media Korea TV
October Issue	Voter Awareness Month	NYC Housing Authority Journal
October 2	Voter Awareness Month Calendar	The New York Times
October 6	Voter Information Forum for Students with Disabilities	New York 1
October 15	Naturalization & Swearing-in Ceremony for New Citizens	Sing Tao Daily
October 16	Justice Symposium Part II	Brooklyn Daily Eagle

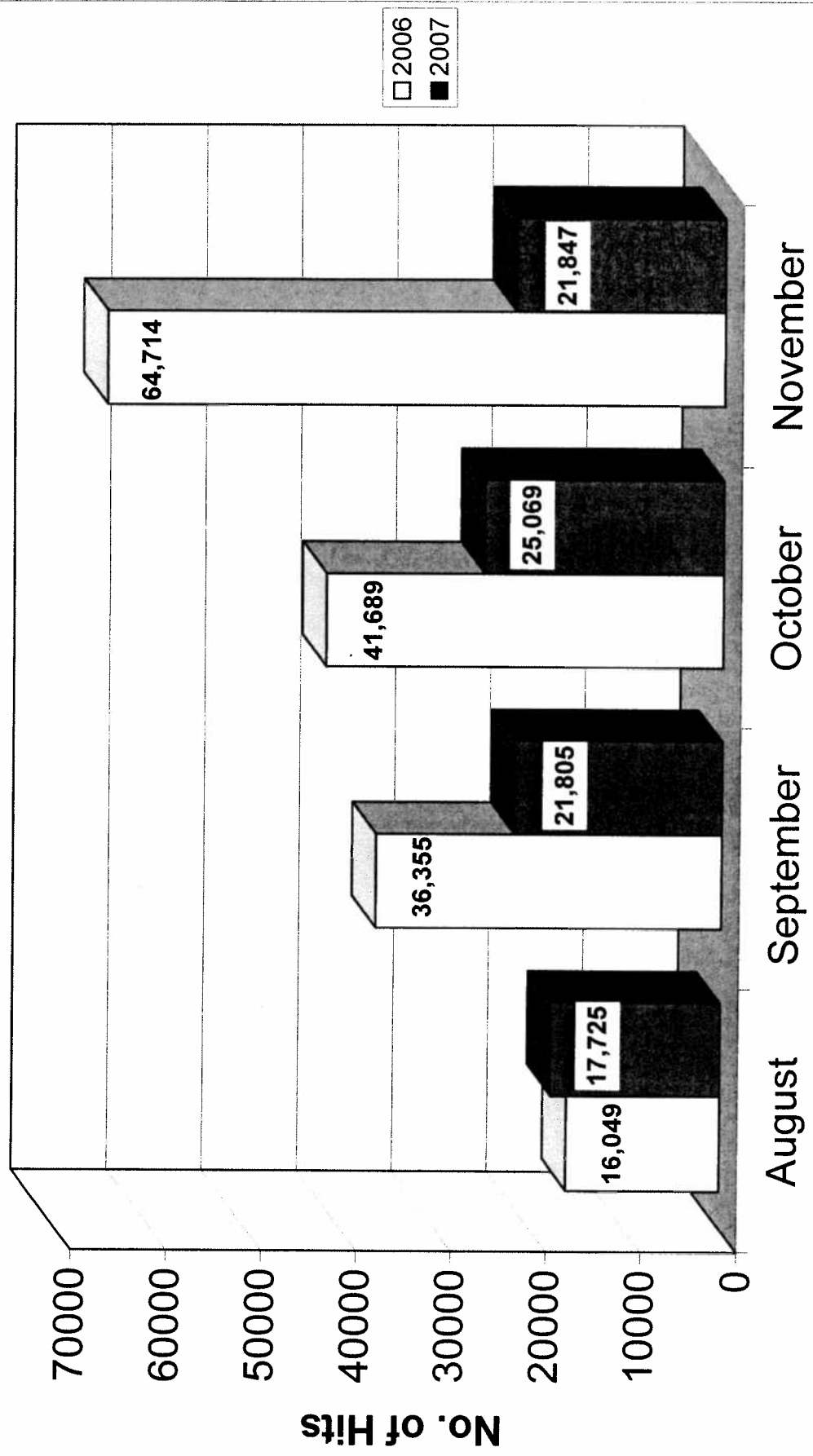
Voter Awareness Month Public Service Announcement

September 13 – October 13	Cablevision	603 times
September 13 – October 13	CUNY TV English Version	140 times
	CUNY TV Spanish Subtitled Version	
	CUNY TV Chinese Subtitled Version	
	CUNY TV Korean Subtitled Version	
October 1 -13	New York 1	49 Times
September 13 – October 13	WNBC (Ch. 4)	Awaiting Report
September 20 – October 13	NYC-TV	348 times
September 13 - October 13	MK TV	Awaiting Report
September 13 – October 13	The Korean Channel	Awaiting Report

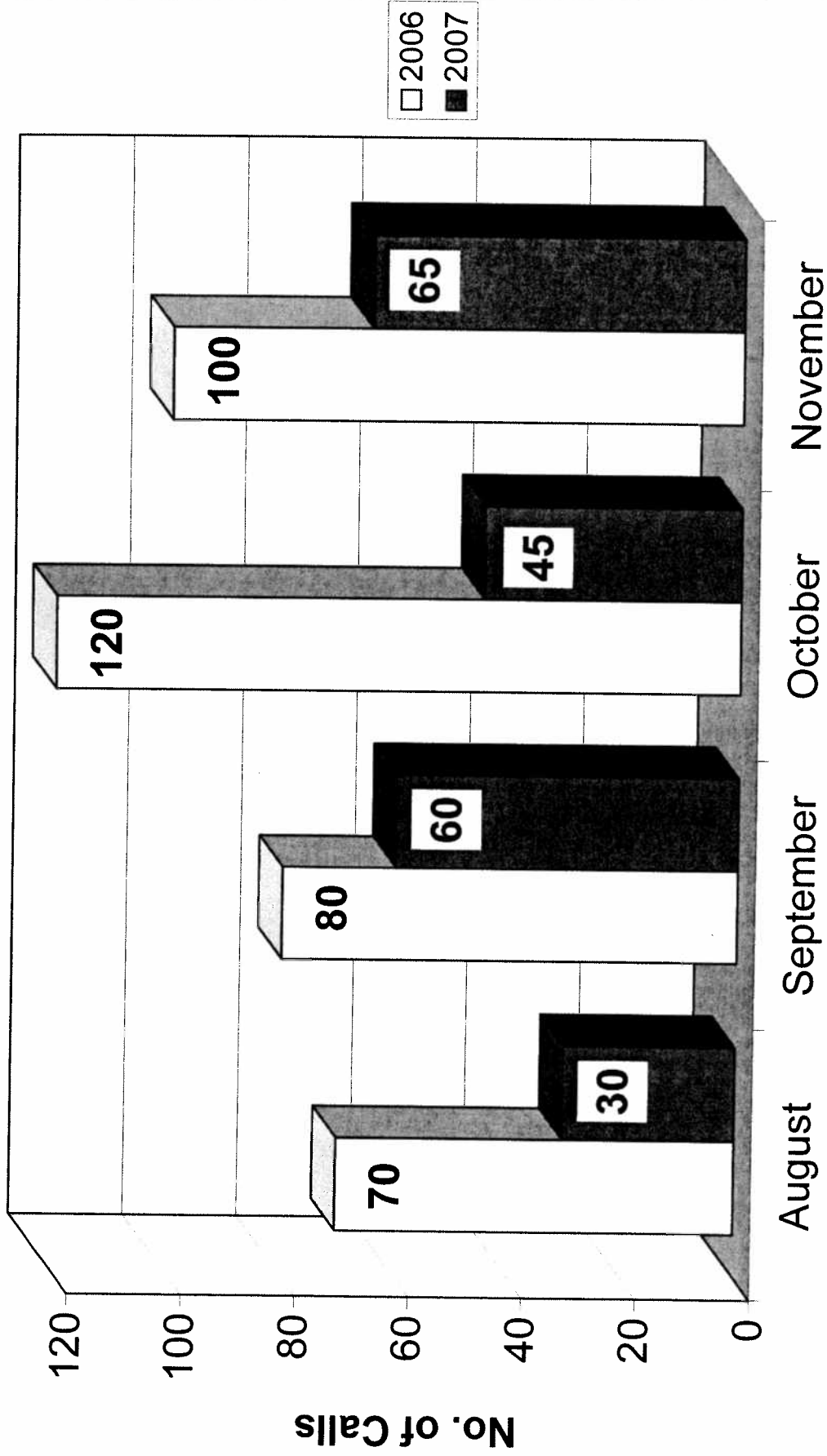
Voter Assistance Commission Coverage

November 6	Voter Assistance Commission	City Limits Weekly
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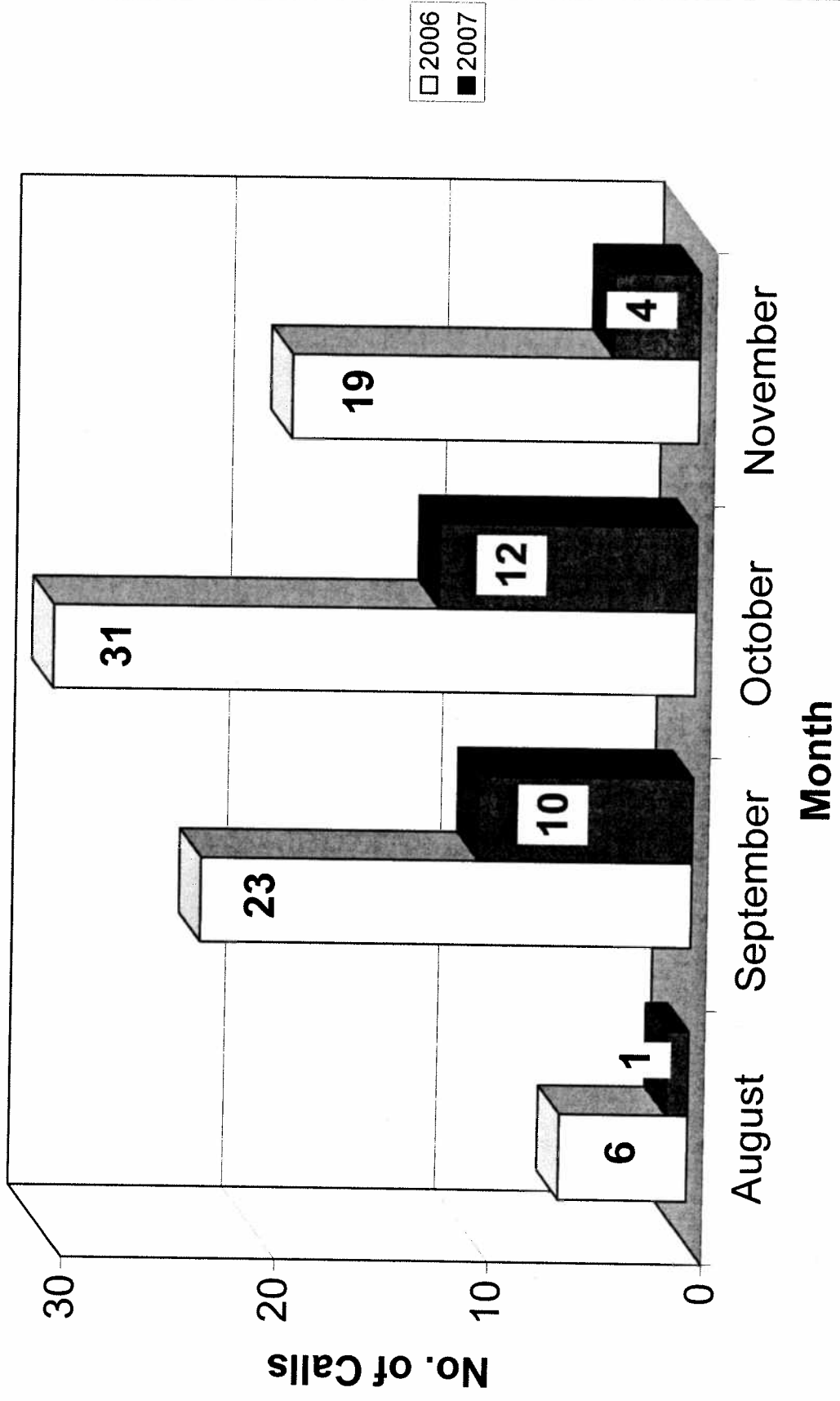
Hits on VAC Website



Calls into VAC



Calls into 311



Participation of VAC Commissioners and Representatives 2007

Commissioners	Events
Dr. Jeffrey F. Kraus (Chair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us (10/18, Brooklyn)</i> • <i>Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us (10/25, Staten Island)</i> • <i>Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us (10/30, Queens)</i>
Jane Kalmus (Vice Chair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us (10/16, Manhattan)</i>
Robert J. McFeeley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Voter Information Fair (10/10, Manhattan)</i> • <i>Voter Awareness Presentation (10/18, Manhattan)</i>
Nayibe Nunez-Berger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jackson Heights Voter Registration Drive (10/2, Queens)</i>
Elizabeth Sunshine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Voter Registration Drive (10/11, Staten Island)</i>
Glenn D. Magpantay	--
Morshed Alam	--
Campaign Finance Board Amy Loprest Elizabeth Upp Eric Friedman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us (10/16, Manhattan)</i> • <i>Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us (10/18, Brooklyn)</i> • <i>Understanding the Judicial Positions That Serve Us (10/30, Queens)</i>

Participation of VAC Commissioners 2006

Commissioners	Events
Dr. Jeffrey F. Kraus (Chair)	2006 Voter Awareness Month Kick-Off (9/14, Manhattan) Citizenship Day (9/15, Brooklyn) Justice Symposium Part I (9/21, Manhattan) Naturalization & Swearing-in Ceremony for New Citizens (9/29, Queens) Youth Civic Engagement Symposium (10/4, Staten Island) Building Leadership ... Women's Career Forum in Politics (10/4, Staten Island) Naturalization & Swearing-in Ceremony for New Citizens (10/13, Brooklyn)
Jane Kalmus (Vice Chair)	Justice Symposium Part I (9/21, Manhattan) Women's Career Forum in Politics & Civic Engagement (9/28, Manhattan)
Robert J. McFeeley	College of Mount St. Vincent Voter Awareness Day (9/27, Manhattan)
Nayibe Nunez-Berger	Latin American Cultural Center Voter Registration Drive (9/20, Queens) Citizenship Day (9/27, Queens)
Elizabeth Sunshine	Voter Information Forum for People with Disabilities (9/22, Manhattan) Youth Civic Engagement Symposium (10/4, Staten Island)
Glenn D. Magpantay	
Morshed Alam	- On leave -
Board of Elections	2006 Voter Awareness Month Kick-Off (9/14, Manhattan) Running Elections in America's Largest City (9/20, Manhattan) Voter Information Forum for People with Disabilities (9/22, Manhattan) Women's Career Forum in Politics & Civic Engagement (9/28, Manhattan) Voter Info. Forum for Students with Disabilities (10/5, Manhattan)
Public Advocate's Office	2006 Voter Awareness Month Kick-Off (9/14, Manhattan) Citizenship Day (9/27, Queens) Women's Career Forum in Politics & Civic Engagement (9/28, Manhattan)
Campaign Finance Board	Women's Career Forum in Politics & Civic Engagement (9/28, Manhattan)

New York City Voter Assistance Commission 2006 Voter Awareness Month Survey

Thank you very much for participating in NYC's first-ever Voter Awareness Month. Your feedback and comments are helpful to the growth of our Voter Awareness Month program.

Please answer the questions by circling a number, using the following scale.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Somewhat Disagree 3 = No Opinion 4 = Somewhat Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I want VAC to continue to present the Voter Awareness Month program in NYC. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I want VAC to continue to produce the Voter Awareness Month Calendar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I want VAC to continue to provide media promotion of Voter Awareness Month events. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I want VAC to continue to create the Voter Awareness Month public service announcements. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The VAC office was supportive and helpful with my event(s). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I had sufficient materials to conduct my event. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

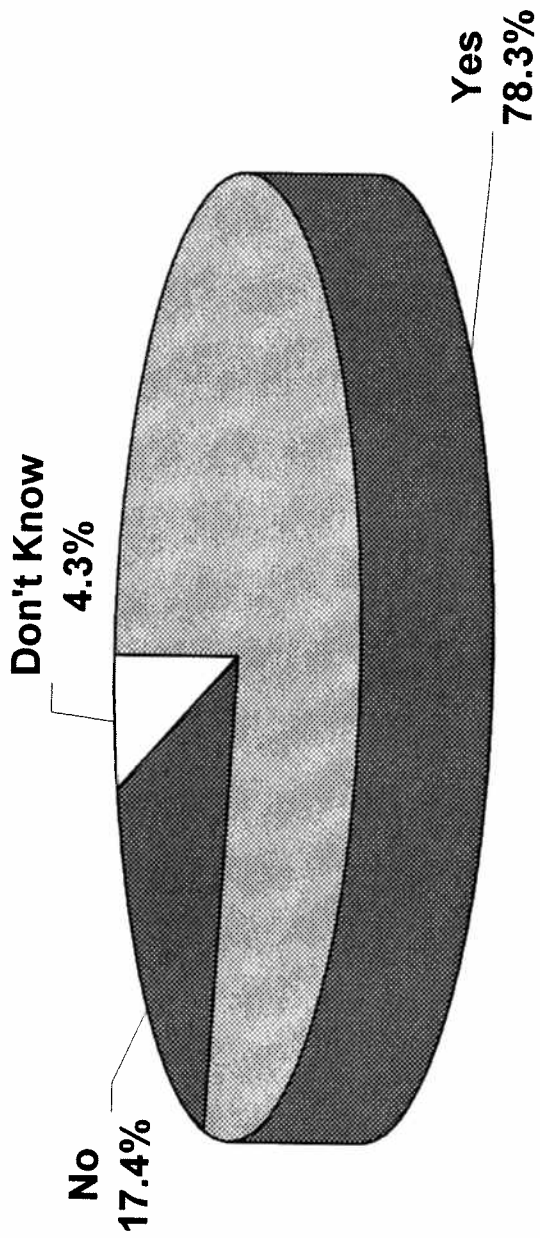
Please provide us with input on the following questions.

7. How was Voter Awareness Month most helpful? (Please circle the number of your response.)
1. Registering voters
 2. Creating civic engagement opportunities and activities
 3. Other (please specify) _____
8. This year, Voter Awareness Month was held from September 14 to October 13. Was this timing appropriate? (Please circle the number of your response.)
1. Yes
 2. No (when would you suggest?) _____
 3. Don't know
9. This year, we coordinated voting rights workshops/activities for the following populations: seniors, youth, people with disabilities, people with criminal convictions, women, and new citizens. Would you suggest a new group to be added to this list? (Please circle the number of your response.)
1. Yes (what group would you suggest?) _____
 2. No
 3. Don't know
10. How many people did your organization register to vote? _____
11. How many voter registration forms did your organization distribute? _____
12. How many people attended your event? _____

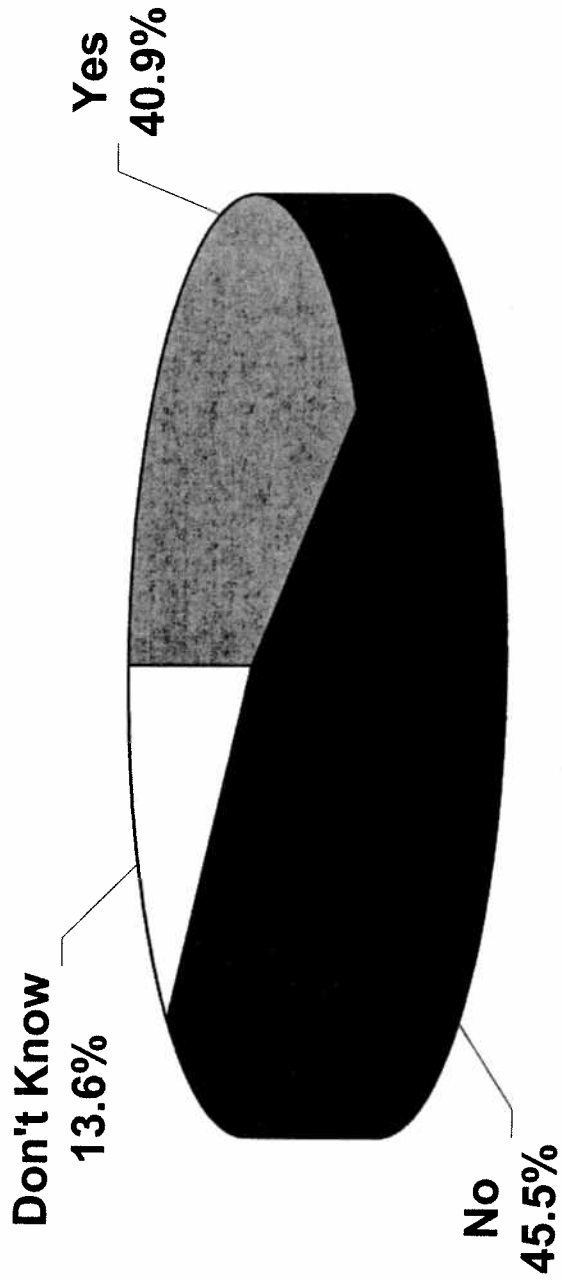
Comments/Suggestions

Thank you very much for helping us to improve Voter Awareness Month. Please fax this survey to (212) 788-2527. The results of this survey will be reported at our annual open meeting at CUNY Graduate Center, Elebash Recital Hall, 1st Fl., 365 5th Ave. on Thursday, December 7, starting 5:00 pm. We look forward seeing you again at the meeting.

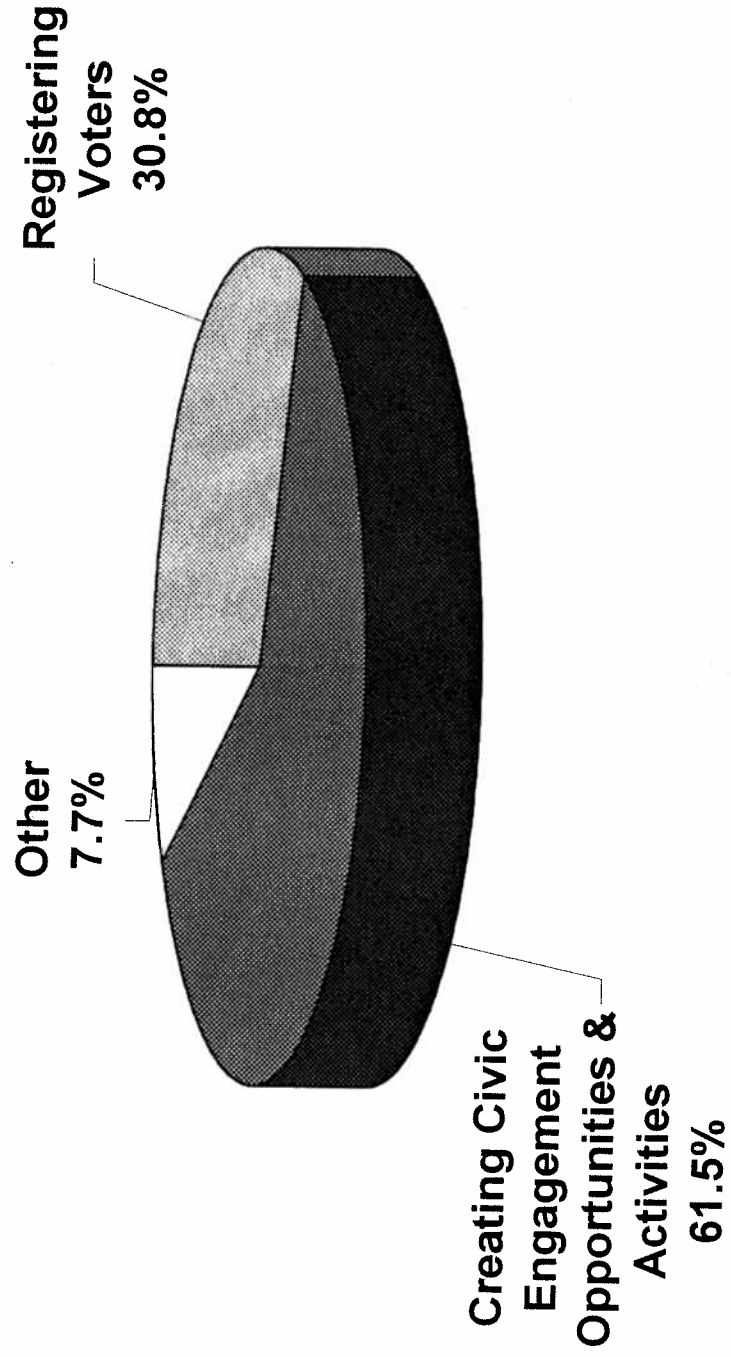
Q: This year, Voter Awareness Month was held from September 14 to October 13. Was this timing appropriate?



Q: This year, we coordinated voting rights workshops/activities for the following populations: seniors, youth, people with disabilities, people with criminal convictions, women, and new citizens. Would you suggest a new group to be added to this group?



Q: How Was Voter Awareness Month Most Helpful?



THE VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

The Voter Assistance Commission (VAC) is a nonpartisan governmental agency, created in 1988 by the New York City Charter to facilitate voter participation. The first agency of its kind in the nation, VAC stands as an important acknowledgement that government has an obligation to broaden and increase participation of all eligible voters in the election process. The Commission's mandate is to develop strategies targeted at achieving full participation of all New Yorkers.

To achieve this goal, VAC monitors voter registration and voting in New York City, and encourages electoral participation by working with public agencies, private groups, and community based organizations.

The Commission is strictly non-partisan. VAC does not promote any candidate, party or political agenda. Its sole mission is to increase participation in our democratic process.



Mayor

Michael R. Bloomberg

Chair, VAC Commission

Dr. Jeffrey F. Kraus

VAC Executive Director
Onida Coward Mayers

NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF ELECTIONS OFFICES

GENERAL OFFICE:

32 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10004
Tel: 1-866-V-O-T-E-N-Y-C
or 212-868-3692

MANHATTAN: 200 Varick St., 10th Fl. 10014
Tel: 212-886-2100

BRONX: 1780 Grand Concourse, 5th Fl. 10457
Tel: 718-299-9017

BROOKLYN: 345 Adams St., 4th Fl. 11201
Tel: 718-797-8800

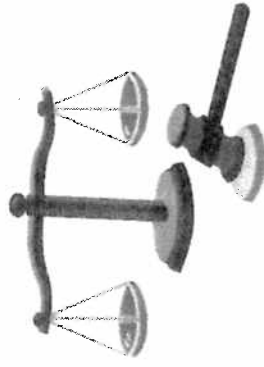
QUEENS: 126-06 Queens Blvd. 11415
Tel: 718-730-6730

STATEN ISLAND: 1 Edgewater Plaza 10305
Tel: 718-876-0079

NYC CAMPAIGN FINANCE BOARD
40 Rector Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10006
Tel: 212-306-7100

VOTER AWARENESS MONTH 2007

UNDERSTANDING THE JUDICIAL POSITIONS THAT SERVE US



New York City Voter Assistance Commission
100 Gold Street . 2nd Floor . NYC 10038
Tel: 212-788-8384 Fax: 212-788-2527
Website: www.nyc.gov/voter

Judicial Campaign Ethics Center
25 Beaver Street . 11th Floor . NYC 10004
website: www.nycourts.gov/ip/jcec



CU NY
The City University of New York
DAILY NEWS
HISPANA

2007
VOTER AWARENESS MONTH

This brochure is available in Spanish, Chinese and Korean.

Welcome to the 2007 New York City Judicial Elections

This year, New Yorkers in all five boroughs will vote for over 40 judges in the State Supreme Court, Surrogate's Court and City Civil Courts.

WHERE ARE THE RACES

MANHATTAN: Supreme and Civil Courts

BROOKLYN: Supreme, Civil and Surrogate's Courts

QUEENS: Supreme and Civil Courts

BRONX: Supreme and Civil Courts

STATEN ISLAND: Supreme and Surrogate's Courts

LEARN ABOUT CANDIDATES

Information about individual candidates is available on-line:

- *Judicial Candidate Voter Guide* (Information supplied by candidates available on 10/24) www.nycourts.gov/vote
- *Independent Judicial Election Qualification Commission Ratings* (available now) www.nycourts.gov/ijp/jcecd/candidateratings.shtml

ELECTIVE SUPREME, CIVIL AND SURROGATE'S COURTS JUDGESHIPS

NYC courts hear hundreds of thousands of cases a year, including family matters, personal injuries, commercial disputes, trust/estate issues, criminal cases, and landlord-tenant matters. Every one of these cases is important to the individual involved; many have implications for the larger community as well.

Supreme Court, a statewide court, generally hears cases outside the authority of the lower courts, such as civil matters beyond \$25,000, divorce, separation and annulment proceedings, and criminal prosecutions of felons. *Justices are elected to 14-year terms.*

Surrogate's Courts, located in every county, hear cases involving the affairs of the deceased, including the validity of wills and the administration of estates. These courts are also authorized to handle adoptions.

Judges are elected to 14-year terms.

The Civil Court of the City of New York decides lawsuits involving claims of up to \$25,000. Elective Civil Court positions include a small claims part for the informal resolution of cases involving amounts of up to \$5,000. The court also handles matters referred by the Supreme Court. *Judges are elected to 10-year terms.*

JUDICIAL SYMPOSIUMS

In October, VAC and its partners will host five nonpartisan symposiums on the judicial positions that serve us in all five boroughs to inform New Yorkers about the 2007 elections.

MANHATTAN: **October 16th**

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
T-Building, Room 630T
899 10th Avenue

BROOKLYN: **October 18th**

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
New York City College of Technology
Atrium Amphitheater AG30
300 Jay Street

BRONX: **October 23rd**

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Hostos Community College
Savoy Building Savoy
Multipurpose Room
120 Walton Avenue

STATEN ISLAND: **October 25th**

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Wagner College
Spiro Hall
One Campus Road

QUEENS:

October 30th
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
LaGuardia Community College
"E" Building, Room 242
31-10 Thomson Avenue

2006 Voter Awareness Month

Celebrate Democracy and Exercise the Right to Vote



Calendar of events from September 14th to October 13th
For more information call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/voter



The City of New York



New York City Voter
Assistance Commission



The City
University
of
New York

The New York Times

Community Affairs Department



A Message from the Chair

Dear Fellow New Yorker:

We are pleased to present the calendar of events and activities for the first Voter Awareness Month.

Voter Awareness Month is a collaboration between the New York City Voter Assistance Commission (VAC), The City University of New York (CUNY), The New York Times, and many community and civic groups throughout New York City. Voter Awareness Month is created to make you aware of your right to vote, the importance of your vote to our city and its future, and how all of us, as New Yorkers, can become more involved in the electoral process.

During Voter Awareness Month, there will be registration drives, public forums, and other events intended to raise your awareness of voting and its meaning. We hope you will participate in these activities, register to vote, and of course, vote on Election Day, November 7.

For more information and updates on any of these events, please call 311 or visit our website at www.nyc.gov/voter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeffrey F. Kraus, Chairman

New York City Voter Assistance Commission

September

Thursday 14th

2006 Voter Awareness Month Kick-Off
Press Conference and Voter Registration Drive
Manhattan

KALCA Gubernatorial Event
Korean American League for Civic Action
(KALCA)

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

MARU, 11 West 32nd St. 3rd Fl.

Join a town-hall style meeting. Gubernatorial candidates are invited to state their positions and to address Asian-Pacific American issues with a Q&A session.

Friday 15th

Citizenship Day
Brooklyn

NYC Department of Youth & Community Development, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Office of the Governor's Citizenship Unit, NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development, Medgar Evers College/CUNY, and NYC Voter Assistance Commission

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Medgar Evers College Auditorium,
1650 Bedford Ave.

Free naturalization application assistance to qualified permanent residents including free photos for application.

Sunday 17th

Voter Registration Drive
The League of Women Voters of the
City of New York

10:00 am – 4:00 pm

44th St. to 59th St. on 5th Ave.

While enjoying street fairs, register to vote, update your voter registration, and pick up voter registration forms for your friends and family.

September

Citizenship Day Festival Manhattan
The New York Immigration Coalition and NYC
Voter Assistance Commission
12:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Battery Park (tentative)
Celebrate citizenship day with bands, speakers,
food, etc. On-site voter registration will be avail-
able.

Voter Registration Drive Brooklyn
The League of Women Voters of the
City of New York
10:00 am – 4:00 pm
On Atlantic Ave. between Hicks St. & 4th Ave.
While enjoying street fairs, register to vote, update
your voter registration, and pick up voter registra-
tion forms for your friends and family.

Monday 18th

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Hispanic Federation
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St. #2B1
Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration
forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

**Wagner College Voter Registration &
Constitution Day** Staten Island
Wagner College and NYC Voter Assistance
Commission
12:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Wagner College, One Campus Road
Constitution reading and voter registration.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing &
Rehab Center
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing &
Rehab Center, 2323 Eastchester Road
All members of the community are welcome. On-
site voter registration assistance will be available.

September

Tuesday 19th

Voter Registration Drive Queens
NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission
9:00 am – 4:00 pm
NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission Long Island
City Office, 32-02 Queens Blvd., Long Island City
Come to register to vote, update your voter registra-
tion, and/or receive voter information.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Bronx Community College/CUNY
10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Bronx Community College, University Avenue &
West 181st St.
Roscoe Brown Student Center lobby and Meister
Hall lobby
The Student Government Assoc., NYPIRG, Office
of the President, BCC-PSC and other volunteers will
be available at the tables to register new voters
and distribute voting information.

Voter Registration Drive in
Manhattan Manhattan
Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs and NYC
Voter Assistance Commission
11:00 am – 2:00 pm
Manhattan NY Harbor Healthcare,
423 E. 23rd St.
Register to vote and pick up voter registration forms
for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration Drive in the Bronx Bronx
Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs and NYC
Voter Assistance Commission
11:00 am – 2:00 pm
Bronx VA Medical Center, 130 W. Kingsbridge Road
Register to vote and pick up voter registration forms
for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration Drive in the Brooklyn
Brooklyn
Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs and NYC
Voter Assistance Commission
11:00 am – 2:00 pm
Brooklyn NY Harbor Healthcare, 800 Poly Place
Register to vote and pick up voter registration forms
for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration Drive
Bronx
Hispanic Federation
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St. #2B1
Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration
forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

NYC Board of Elections
Commissioners' Meeting
Manhattan
NYC Board of Elections
1:30 pm
NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Hearing
Room, 42 Broadway 6th Fl.
Weekly meeting on NYC election process. Open
to the public.

Voter Registration Drive
Bronx
Bronx Community College/CUNY
10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Bronx Community College, University Avenue &
West 181st St.
Roscoe Brown Student Center lobby and Meister
Hall lobby
The Student Government Assoc., NYPIRG, Office
of the President, BCC-PSC and other volunteers will
be available at the tables to register new voters
and distribute voting information.

September

September

Wednesday 20th

Citizen Celebration Day of the Russian-American
Community of New York Brooklyn
Civic and Voter Education Initiative (CVEI) and
NYC Voter Assistance Commission

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst,
7802 Bay Parkway

Discussion about the importance of active participa-
tion, a voter registration drive, and distribution of
voting information.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Bronx Community College/CUNY

10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Bronx Community College, University Avenue &
West 181st St.

Roscoe Brown Student Center lobby and Meister
Hall lobby

The Student Government Assoc., NYPIRG, Office
of the President, BCC-PSC and other volunteers will
be available at the tables to register new voters
and distribute voting information.

Running Elections in America's
Largest City Manhattan
Women's City Club of New York and NYC Voter
Assistance Commission

12:30 pm – 2:00 pm

American Symphony Orchestra League, 33 West
60th St.

Guest speaker: John Ravitz, Executive Director,
NYC Board of Elections.

September

**Panel Discussion: The Constitution in
Extraordinary Times - How Circumstances affect
Constitutional Interpretation** **Bronx**
Bronx Community College/CUNY

12:00 pm

Bronx Community College Schwendler Auditorium,
University Avenue & West 181st St.

Discussion will include contested readings of the
Constitution in the post-9/11 world and the War
on Terror.

Voter Registration Drive **Queens**
**Latin American Cultural Center and NYC Voter
Assistance Commission**

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Main St. Library entrance, 41-17 Main St.,
Flushing

Come out to register to vote, update voter registra-
tion information, and pick up voter registration
forms for your family members and friends.

Thursday 21st

Constitution Performance **Bronx**
Bronx Community College/CUNY

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Bronx Community College Gold Memorial
Auditorium, University Avenue & West 181st St.

Enjoy live music inspired by the Constitution per-
formed by Dr. Benjamin Yarmolinsky.

**Justice Symposium ... Voting Rights in Criminal
Convictions: Part I** **Manhattan**
**John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY,
Medgar Evers College/CUNY, and NYC Voter
Assistance Commission**

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Multi Purpose
Room, 445 West 59th St. 2nd Fl.

Presentation and panel discussion on voting rights
for people with criminal convictions. Panelists
include representatives of Brennan Center for Justice
at NYU School of Law and the Dubois-Bunche
Center at Medgar Evers College.

September

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Bronx Community College/CUNY
10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Bronx Community College, University Avenue &
West 181st St.
Roscoe Brown Student Center lobby and Meister
Hall lobby
The Student Government Assoc., NYPIRG, Office
of the President, BCC-PSC and other volunteers will
be available at the tables to register new voters
and distribute voting information.

Friday 22nd

**Voter Information Forum for People with
Disabilities** Manhattan
**Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities,
Disabilities Network of New York City, and NYC
Voter Assistance Commission**
10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Visions at Selis Manor Ground Floor Auditorium,
135 West 23rd St.
Guest speaker: John Ravitz, Executive Director,
NYC Board of Elections. Demonstration of new
ballot marking machine, voter registration, and dis-
tribution of voter information

Monday 25th

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Hispanic Federation
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St. #2B1
Register to vote and/or to pick up voter registration
forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
**The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing &
Rehab Center**
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing &
Rehab Center, 2323 Eastchester Road
All members of the community are welcome. On-
site voter registration assistance will be available.

Tuesday 26th

Self-help Community Services Voter
Registration Drive Brooklyn
Self-help Community Services
9:30 am – 4:30 pm
Self-help Community Services, 419 Church Ave.
between E. 5th & E 4th St.
Register to vote and/or receive voter registration
materials.

NYC Board of Elections Commissioners'
Meeting Manhattan
NYC Board of Elections
1:30 pm
NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Hearing
Room, 42 Broadway 6th Fl.
Weekly meeting on NYC election process. Open
to the public.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Hispanic Federation
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St. #2B1
Register to vote and/or to pick up voter registration
forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Wednesday 27th

Voter Awareness Day Manhattan
College of Mount Saint Vincent – Institute for
Immigrant Concerns
12:30 pm – 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm
College of Mount Saint Vincent – Institute for
Immigrant Concerns, 1233 Second Ave.
Civic and voting education. Citizenship applica-
tions also available.

September

September

Citizenship Day Queens
NYC Department of Youth & Community
Development, Mayor's Office of Immigrant
Affairs, The City University of New York,
Latin American Cultural Center, and NYC Voter
Assistance Commission
5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Salvation Army, 86-07 35th Ave., Jackson Heights
Free naturalization application assistance to qual-
ified permanent residents including free photos for
application.

Thursday 28th

Building Leadership ... Women's Career Forum
in Politics and Civic Engagement Manhattan
Barnard College/Columbia University, NYC
Department of Youth & Community Development,
Commission on Women's Issues, and NYC Voter
Assistance Commission
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Barnard College/Columbia University Altschul
Atrium, 117th St. and Broadway
Panel discussion on leadership opportunities in poli-
tics.

Friday 29th

Naturalization and Swearing-in Ceremony for
New Citizens Queens
U.S. Department of Homeland Security, The City
University of New York, and NYC Voter
Assistance Commission
9:00 am – 3:00 pm
LaGuardia Community College,
31-10 Thomson Ave., Long Island City
Citizenship swearing-in ceremony, voter registration
drive, and multi-language voter information.

Voter Registration Drive Manhattan
Baruch College/CUNY
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Baruch College, 25th St. between
Lexington & 3rd Ave.
Voter registration table by the Undergraduate
Student Government and the Office of Student Life.

Saturday 30th

Voter Registration and Information Drive Brooklyn

Boy Scout Troop 815

10:30 am – 3:00 pm

Fulton Mall

Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration and Information

Drive

Brooklyn

Boy Scout Troop 815

10:30 am – 3:00 pm

Atlantic Center Mall

Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Sunday 1st

Voter Registration Drive

Brooklyn

Cornerstone Baptist Church

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Cornerstone Baptist Church, 562-574

Madison Ave.

Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration and Information Drive

Boy Scout Troop 815

Brooklyn

10:30 am – 3:00 pm

Fulton Mall

Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration and Information Drive Brooklyn

Boy Scout Troop 815

10:30 am – 3:00 pm

Atlantic Center Mall

Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

October

October

Monday 2nd

Voter Registration Drive Bronx

Hispanic Federation

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St. #2B1

Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration Drive Brooklyn

Medgar Evers College/CUNY

10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Medgar Evers College, 1650 Bedford Ave.

Voter registration drive will be held on both sides of Bedford Ave. and Carroll St.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx

The Family Council of the East Haven

Nursing & Rehab Center

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing & Rehab Center, 2323 Eastchester Road

All members of the community are welcome. On-site voter registration assistance will be available.

Tuesday 3rd

Voter Registration Awareness

Week

Manhattan

John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY

11:00 am – 3:00 pm

John Jay College of Criminal Justice North Hall lobby, 445 West 59th St.

Visit John Jay to receive voter registration information. On-site voter registration will be also available.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx

Monroe College

11:00 am – 1:00 pm, 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Monroe College Main Building, 2501 Jerome Ave.

Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

October

NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Meeting Manhattan
NYC Board of Elections
1:30 pm
NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Hearing Room, 42 Broadway 6th Fl.
Weekly meeting on NYC election process. Open to the public.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Hispanic Federation
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St. #2B1
Register to vote and/or pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Wednesday 4th

Youth Civic Engagement Symposium Staten Island
Department of Youth & Community Development and NYC Voter Assistance Commission
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm
Wagner College, One Campus Road
Interactive lesson on voting and civic engagement.

Voter Registration Awareness Week Manhattan
John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY
11:00 am – 3:00 pm
John Jay College of Criminal Justice North Hall lobby, 445 West 59th St.
Visit John Jay to receive voter registration information. On-site voter registration will be also available.

October

Building Leadership ... Women's Career Forum
in Politics Staten Island
Wagner College, NYC Department of Youth &
Community Development, Commission on
Women's Issues, and NYC Voter Assistance
Commission
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
Wagner College, One Campus Road
Enjoy a panel discussion on leadership opportuni-
ties in politics and civic engagement.

Thursday 5th

Senior Benefit & Entitlement Fair Manhattan
The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)
10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Riverbank State Park, Athletic Building & Cultural
Center, 679 Riverside Drive at 145th St.
Join 1200 seniors from all five boroughs in NYC
and learn about senior programs and services!
Information and assistance on voter registration,
absentee ballot, and permanent absentee ballot
are available.

Voter Information Forum for Students with
Disabilities Brooklyn
The City University of New York, Mayor's Office
for People with Disabilities, and NYC Voter
Assistance Commission
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm
Baruch College, Room No. 14-285,
1 Bernard Baruch Way (25th St. and
Lexington Ave.)
Guest speaker: Valerie Vazquez-Rivera, NYC
Board of Elections. Demonstration of new ballot
marking machine, voter registration, and distribu-
tion of voter information.

October

Voter Registration Awareness Week Manhattan
John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY
11:00 am – 3:00 pm
John Jay College of Criminal Justice North Hall
lobby, 445 West 59th St.
Visit John Jay to receive voter registration information. On-site voter registration will be also available.

Saturday 7th

Voter Registration Drive Queens
**American Martyrs Catholic War Veterans
Post 1772**
6:00 pm
American Martyrs Church, 79-43 Bell Blvd.,
Bayside
Register to vote and/or pick-up voter registration forms for your family and friends.

Voter Registration Drive Queens
Chinese American Voters Association
1:30 pm – 4:30 pm
In front of Amerasia Bank, 41-06 Main St.,
Flushing
Register to vote and/or ask questions about voting.

Sunday 8th

Voter Registration Drive Queens
**American Martyrs Catholic War Veterans
Post 1772**
8:30 am - 1:30 pm
American Martyrs Church, 79-43 Bell Blvd.,
Bayside
Register to vote and/or pick-up voter registration forms for your family and friends.

October

Monday 9th

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Hispanic Federation
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St. #2B1
Register to vote and/or to pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing & Rehab Center
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing & Rehab Center, 2323 Eastchester Road
All members of the community are welcome. On-site voter registration assistance will be available.

Tuesday 10th

Youth Civic Engagement Symposium Bronx
NYC Department of Youth and Community Development and NYC Voter Assistance Commission
4:00 – 5:30
Federation Employment and Guidance Service/
Bronx School of Law & Government, 244 E. 163rd St.
Interactive lesson on voting and civic engagement.

NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Meeting Manhattan
NYC Board of Elections
1:30 pm
NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Hearing Room, 42 Broadway 6th Fl.
Weekly meeting on NYC election process. Open to the public.

October

Voter Registration Drive Bronx
Hispanic Federation
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St. #2B1
Register to vote and/or to pick up voter registration forms for your family, friends, and neighbors.

Wednesday 11th

Justice Symposium ... Voting Rights in Criminal Convictions: Part II Brooklyn
Medgar Evers College/CUNY, and NYC Voter Assistance Commission
10:00 am– 1:00 pm
Medgar Evers College Presidential Conference Room, 1650 Bedford Ave.
Presentation and panel discussion on voting rights for people with criminal convictions. Panelists include representatives of Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law and the Dubois-Bunche Centers at Medgar Evers College.

Thursday 12th

Voting Booth Seminar Queens
DeVry Institute of Technology
9:00 am – 4:00 pm
DeVry Institute of Technology, 30-20 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City
First time voters learn how to use a voting system.

Why Vote? Manhattan
Baruch College/CUNY
12:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Baruch College Vertical Campus, 55 Lexington Ave.
Discussion with a state legislator on the importance of becoming politically active and minority representation for the promotion of equality.

October

NYC Voter Assistance Commission
Commissioners' Meeting Manhattan
NYC Voter Assistance Commission (VAC)
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Hearing
Rooms, 42 Broadway 6th Fl.
Bi-monthly VAC meeting on NYC Voter Issues.
Open to public.

Friday 13th

Naturalization and Swearing-in Ceremony for
New Citizens Brooklyn
The City University of New York and NYC Voter
Assistance Commission
9:00 am – 3:00 pm
New York City College of Technology, 300 Jay St.
Citizenship swearing-in ceremony and voter regis-
tration drive.

For additional events taking place during Voter Awareness Month, please call
311 or visit our website at www.nyc.gov/voter.

NYC Voting Information

General Election: Tuesday, November 7th

Polls are open from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm

Resources

NYC Voter Assistance Commission: www.nyc.gov/voter

(212) 788-8384

NYC Board of Elections: www.vote.nyc.ny.us

(212) VOTE-NYC

NYS Board of Elections: www.elections.state.ny.us

(518) 474-6220

NYC Board of Elections

Five Borough Local Offices

Manhattan Office: 200 Varick St., 10th Fl., New York, NY 10014

Brooklyn Office: 345 Adams St., 4th Fl., Brooklyn, NY 11201

Queens Office: 126-06 Queens Blvd., Kew Gardens, NY 11415

Bronx Office: 1780 Grand Concourse, 5th Fl., Bronx, NY 10457

Staten Island Office: 1 Edgewater Plaza, 4th Fl., Staten Island, NY 10305

Voting Information

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to:

Office of the Mayor
New York City Council
The City University of New York
The New York Times
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
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Barnard College, Columbia University
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Chinese American Voters Association
Local Russian Émigré Organizations (LOREO)
The New York Immigration Coalition
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CUNY Citizenship and Immigration Project
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A program of the NYC Voter Assistance Commission

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Dr. Jeffrey F. Kraus

Executive Director

Onida Coward Mayers

Development & Communications Coordinator

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Office Manager

Bibi N. Yusuf

100 Gold St. 2nd Floor, New York , NY 10038

www.nyc.gov/voter Tel: (212) 788-8384 Fax: (212) 788-2527



Weather: Cloudy & cool, 51/37

SPORTS ★ FINAL

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

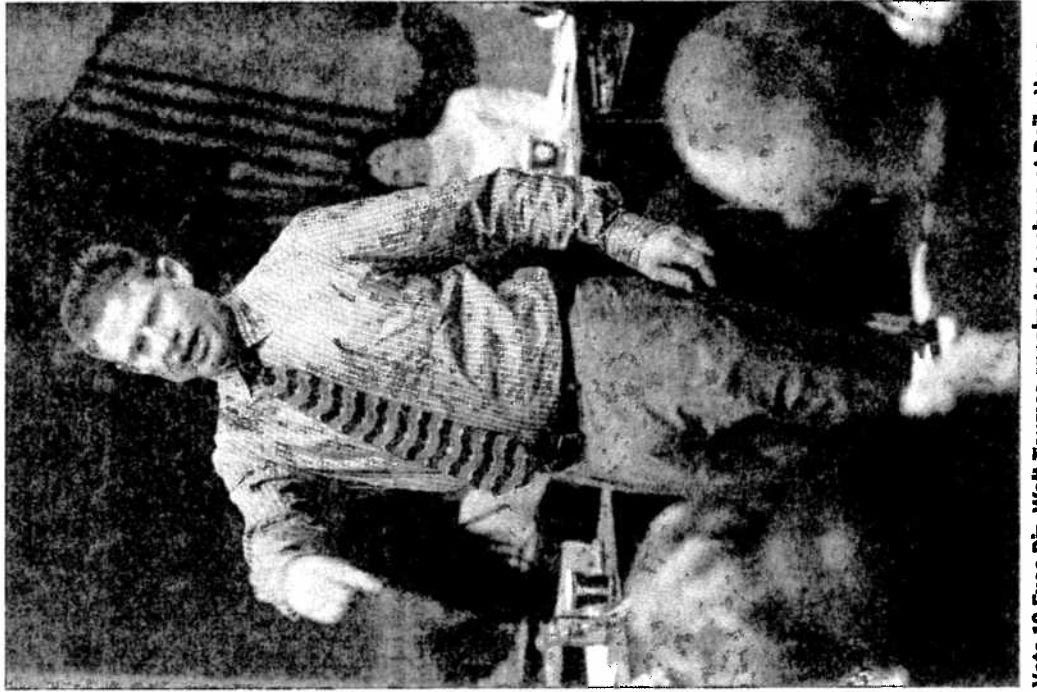
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NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

NYDailyNews.com

Vote pro elects to teach teachers



Vote 18 Exec Dir. Walt Townes speaks to teachers at Daily News-sponsored workshop on how to cover election issues in class yesterday at Museum of City of New York. Photo by Craig Wurga/Daily News

Brooklyn Judge Speaks to College Students

Online Today: State Courts Voter's Guide

DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN

"How much power does a judge really have?" one young voter asked at a recent panel discussion coordinated by the New York City Voter Assistance Commission and held at NYC College of Technology.

"I never really thought of my job in terms of power," said Brooklyn Justice Marsha Steinhardt, immediate past president of a statewide association of New York judges. "I'm there to interpret the law and decide cases as best I can. My function is to make legal rulings on evidentiary issues."

When the moderator, columnist Errol Louis, argued that "Judges have a lot of discretion," Steinhardt was quick to disagree.

"These decisions are based on precedents, flight risks — it's power tempered with reason," she said.

The Judicial Campaign Ethics Center's executive director, Laura Smith, pointed out that judges may differ.

"A judge who is fair will feel that they are constrained by the rules and precedents out there," Smith said. "It's very important that you get a judge who's honest and fair and trying to do the right thing."

The student audience was surprised to learn that judicial terms of office are 10 to 14 years long, rather than two to four years. Justice Steinhardt explained that if judges were forced to campaign more often, it would be more difficult for them to remain impartial on the bench.

"The fairness of judges on the bench is the most important thing we have in our democracy," she said.

The panel, titled "Understanding the Judicial Positions that Serve Us," was organized to increase voter participation and raise awareness of judicial roles.

Several students asked where to find more information about judicial candidates and candidates for other offices. Steinhardt said that launching



Pictured here, from left to right: Omid Coward Mayers, executive director, NYC Voter Assistance Commission; Errol Louis (moderator), columnist, NY Daily News; Amy Loprest, executive director, NYC Campaign Finance Board; Justice Marsha L. Steinhardt, Kings County Supreme Court; Laura Smith, executive director, Judicial Campaign Ethics Center, and Dr. Jeffrey F. Kraus, chair, NYC Voter Assistance Commission.

and newspaper reports are important voter resources (*The Daily Eagle* promoted judicial candidates before last month's Democratic primary.)

Beginning today, the state Office of Court Administration has published a nonpartisan voter guide for the Nov. 6 general election at www.nycourts.gov/vote. For judicial candidates who have chosen to participate, the guide contains biographical information and a short personal statement. The guide includes candidates for judgeships in the state Supreme, county, family and surro-

courts, city courts and the civil courts of the city of New York.

Some members of the student audience complained that candidates do not appeal to young voters. But Bernardo Castillo, 20, questioned whether a campaign focused on young voters demonstrates familiarity with important community issues.

A few of the 30 to 35 people who attended the two-hour discussion Thursday night said they wish it had been better advertised. Several people said their professors had discour-

aged them from attending the event to go. Another, who works for a bail bondsman, saw a campus flier for the program.

Although it is too late to register for the Nov. 6 general elections, it is not too late to register for the presidential primary election. Voter registration drives will be held this week at the Brooklyn federal courthouse, 225 Cadman Plaza East, on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings, Oct. 24-26, and next week on Tuesday, Oct. 30.

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City Limits WEEKLY

Week of: November 6, 2006

Number: 560

**ARE YOU BEING ASSISTED?:
VAC REACHING MATURITY**

The Voter Assistance Commission has shown signs of life this election season. > *By Jillian Jonas*

On Election Day eve, many New Yorkers seem unaware that there's a city agency charged with educating voters, targeting disenfranchised communities, and facilitating the voting process, separate from the Board of Elections.

However, the independent and non-partisan Voter Assistance Commission (VAC) has not been completely silent of late. In fact, for the first time in years, VAC took an active roll to fulfill, at least in part, its mission as mandated by the city charter.

Voter Awareness Month, which ran from mid-September to mid-October, was "the first-ever five-borough coordinated campaign to promote voter education, awareness and participation" according to the press release issued by Mayor Bloomberg's office. Some 60 events were held.

Onida Coward Mayers, VAC's executive director, said Voter Awareness Month was "a flagship program for us...we hope it's a new beginning for the agency."

A new beginning may be just the ticket for an agency that has been more or less moribund since the mid-1990's. Virtually gutted by the Giuliani administration, VAC subsisted on only an office manager and a meager budget, leadership-less for the eight years from 1996 until Mayers, the founding director of Brooklyn Community Access Television, was hired in 2004. VAC currently has three full-time staff members.

In fact, the agency was dormant for so long that the City Council passed the Pro-Voter Law in 2000 to ensure greater voter access to registration forms via city agencies. After a 2003 Council investigation determined that there was little compliance, the law was expanded in 2004.

Established in 1989 after voters approved citywide charter reform a year earlier, VAC initially had nine staff members and a \$750,000 budget. The VAC staff, and most importantly, the coordinator/executive director, work on the daily operations of the Commission to fulfill its charter mandate.

Nine of its 16 commissioners are appointed either by the Mayor or the City Council; seven are ex-officio members. The Commissioners sit on a board that meets bimonthly and must hold annually one public hearing. They are unpaid.

According to Ron Hayduk, the VAC chief during the Dinkins administration, VAC became "a political football" subject to the whims of politicians, "unlike the Campaign Finance Board, which comes from the same section of the charter."

"They were meant to be sister agencies with similar mandates: to ensure the electoral system ... is effective, participatory and inclusive," Hayduk said. "I am heartened to know the budget was partially restored to allow for a coordinator

**TO
CHANGE
THE
WORLD,
CHANGE
YOURSELF.**

and a full time staff person ... [this is a] huge improvement over the defunding of VAC from 1996 to Mayers's hiring."

The fiscal 2007 budget of \$172,398 – which is augmented by printing and tech support from the Department of Citywide Administrative Services – represents a marked increase over recent years, according to Counselor to the Mayor Anthony Crowell. In fiscal 2002, the budget was only \$40,044, and remained nearly that in 2003 and 2004. It rose to \$121,860 in fiscal 2005, and \$124,398 in 2006, Crowell said.

At its most active, VAC's staff created a system whereby all city agencies distributed voter registration forms which VAC ultimately tracked, as directed by charter. This ability offered a gauge to see which agencies were complying with the law, which were not, and where they needed to target underserved communities.

The special coding system is no longer in place, according to John Ravitz, executive director of the city's Board of Elections, who sits on VAC's board as an ex-officio member.

Another vital function of VAC, according to Hayduk, is to "monitor" the Board of Elections and the electoral system to help "improve" its functioning. But Mayers said her organization had "really shifted our attention...to outreach and awareness."

Hayduk, now a professor of political science specializing in voting at BMCC, also believes VAC should play a significant role to ensure the city's compliance with major new federal voting rules such as 2002's Help America Vote Act. "We hope VAC will assist us to spread the word," said Ravitz.

"There's huge potential to work through not just government agencies, but affiliate ones like Con Edison," said Hayduk. Mayers agreed, saying, "We're working with city agencies to make up for our lack of resources." She pointed to the "major" role that CUNY played in Voter Awareness Month and hopes to involve it again next year. In 2005, VAC collaborated on a Video Voter Guide with NYCTV.

While VAC may be on the slow road to recovery, there will always be inherent conflicts preventing VAC from accomplishing its mission, explained Hayduk. "That need means resources and staff ... [and] support as an independent agency, out of the mayor's office, not subject to the interference of the mayor or City Council."

This story has been updated.

- Jillian Jonas

Got comments, tips, questions or corrections for City Limits editors? Contact editor@citylimits.org.

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CITY OF NEW YORK
VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

TESTIMONY OF
JANE KALMUS, VICE-CHAIR,
NYC VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
December 18, 2007

The City Council and The Voter Assistance Commission
Community Connection

The Voter Assistance Commission-VAC is developing a strategy to promote increase voter registration and participation in the 2008 Election.

The program will partner VAC with each Council Member utilizing their district offices as the distribution center for information on how to register and voter.

All VAC printed materials on this topic will be made available to each district office staff member.

A message from council speaker Christine Quinn on announcing the nonpartisan citywide initiative will enable VAC to arrange for a full page in the Daily News.

Web sites of each council Member will all carry the same message on how to register and where to vote.

VAC will contact seniors centers and neighborhood houses across the city to arrange for "citizens conversations" with Council Members and other local Elected Officials.

If the City Council and VAC are in agreement the program can be implemented early in 2008.





CITY OF NEW YORK
VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

**TESTIMONY OF
DR. JEFFREY F. KRAUS, CHAIRMAN,
NYC VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**BEFORE JOINT HEARING OF THE NEW YORK CITY
COUNCIL COMMITTEES ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
AND CIVIL RIGHTS ON
THE VOTER ASSISTANCE COMMISSION AND ITS
EFFORTS TO INCREASE VOTER REGISTRATION ACROSS
NEW YORK'S CITY'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

December 18, 2007

Good morning, Chairpersons Felder and Seabrook, and members of the Government Operations and Civil Rights Committees of the New York City Council.

I am Jeffrey Kraus, Chairperson of the New York City Voter Assistance Commission. I am joined this morning by Vice Chair Jane Kalmus, who has been a member of the Commission since its inception and Onida Coward Mayers, who is our Executive Director. We are here to inform you about the Commission's activities and to answer your questions.

According to the New York City Charter, the role of the Voter Assistance Commission is to encourage and facilitate voter registration and voting by all eligible citizens residing in New York City. The Voter Assistance Commission is strictly non-partisan, and does not promote any candidate for elected office, political party, or political agenda.

The Voter Assistance Commission's mission is to increase participation in the democratic process. Towards that end, the

Commission works with Mayoral agencies, other governmental entities, private groups and individuals, and community-based organizations to promote voter registration and voter participation.

Our key program in this area has been Voter Awareness Month, where the Agency works with an array of groups around the City in mounting events to heighten voter awareness. The 2006 series of events was launched on September 14, 2006 with a Mayoral Press Conference, held at the Schomburg Center for Research Into Black Culture. Chairman Felder participated in that event, which featured Myrlie Evers-Williams, the wife of the slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, and Dr. Carolyn Goodman and David Goodman, the mother and brother of murdered civil rights activist Andrew Goodman. That year, we worked with more than 20 civic organizations to hold more than 60 events including voter registration drives, public forums and other events across the city, including symposia on the voting rights of convicted felons who have completed their sentences. There was also a series of public service announcements which aired on WNBC, Fox 5, News 12, CUNY TV, and New York 1. The New York Times also joined with VAC in publishing the Voter Awareness Month Calendar of Events in the newspaper.

This year's recently concluded Voter Awareness Month featured 52 events conducted at locations throughout the city, including five symposia on Judicial Selection, which featured presentations by sitting judges, the Unified Court System's Judicial Campaign Ethics Center, the Campaign Finance Board and which were moderated by a New York Daily News reporter or columnist, as the Daily News is our media partner for the 2007 and 2008 Voter Awareness efforts.

In 2005, a number of you participated in the Video Voter Guide project, which gave all candidates for municipal office the opportunity to make a presentation that was then presented on CUNY TV in the weeks prior to the primary and general election. The viewer and candidate response to this effort was favorable, and we are looking forward to mounting a similar program in 2009.

For next year, we are planning a series of voter awareness efforts to correspond to the Presidential Primary, September primary, and the

General Election. We expect interest to be particularly high given the very competitive Presidential election. We will be working with the Daily News, specifically their Newspaper in Education Program, CUNY, and many other organizations to make 2008 a year when New Yorkers will participate in the electoral process. We welcome your interest and support of our activities.

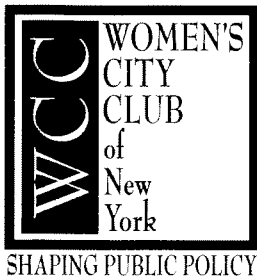
We also monitor voting. Through our website and phone calls to our office, we receive inquiries and comments from voters about the experiences they have voting. We refer complaints to the Board of Elections and follow up on these contacts. We also are required by the City Charter to hold an Annual Public Hearing where voters offer testimony to the Commission on their experience on election day. Since 2003, the Board of Elections has offered a formal response to the issues raised at our hearing, and we expect that will occur again this spring.

The Commission publishes a Guide to Local Elected Officials, which is available in hard copy and on our website. We have also worked with community groups to secure voter registration forms and help those groups disseminate information to their members.

We are proud that, prior to the enactment of the Local Law, the Commission worked with the Board of Elections and the Department of Education to insure that each graduating senior received a voter registration form along with their diploma. We also worked with the Department of Education to develop a lesson plan on voting that was taught in our City's high schools. We look forward to deepening our relationship with the Department of Education as one of the Commission's goals has been to increase participation among groups that historically have been less likely to vote. Young people are one of the groups we have targeted. Other groups that we are working with include new Americans, the disabled, and the homeless.

We do all this with a staff of three. I commend them, and I would suggest to you that the City is getting a tremendous return on its investment in our agency. I also want to thank my colleagues on the Commission, many of whom appear at these Voter Awareness events and at other activities on behalf of the Commission.

I thank you for this chance to offer you a brief update on the Commission's work, and I look forward to your questions.



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December 18, 2007

**Testimony of the Women's City Club of New York
Before the New York City Council Oversight Hearing -
The Voter Assistance Commission and its Efforts to
Increase Voter Registration across New York City's Diverse Communities**

**Committee on Governmental Operations, Hon. Simcha Felder, Chair
Committee on Civil Rights, Hon. Larry B. Seabrook, Chair**

Presented by Barbara Zucker, Vice President for Public Policy

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Voter Assistance Commission. My name is Barbara Zucker, and I am Vice President for Public Policy of the Women's City Club of New York.

The Women's City Club of New York is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that was founded in 1915 – an important time in our history as our nation worked to secure women's suffrage. Despite our name, we are not a "club" but, rather, a group of 500 active volunteers who shape public policy through education, advocacy and citizen participation. Over the years, our efforts have responded and contributed to contemporary needs. Today our advocacy addresses issues of affordable housing, poverty reduction, gender equality, quality public education, infrastructure, universal access to affordable health care and most relevant to today's testimony, election and voter reforms to ensure accountability and transparency. More detailed information about our activities can be found on our website: www.wccny.org.

We supported the creation of a voter assistance commission in the charter drawn up by the City Charter Revision Commission in 1988, and we continue to believe that New York City needs an independent nonpartisan agency to encourage and facilitate voter registration and voter participation.

Following the 2004 appointment of Executive Director, Onida Coward Mayers, the Voter Assistance Commission was revitalized after a long period of inactivity. It has instituted new programs and publications, partnered with other city agencies and community organizations, and identified groups of residents who are underrepresented on the voter rolls -- activities required by the charter. Under the leadership of the Executive Director, the VAC also designed an innovative program - Voter Awareness Month – that coordinates educational projects in all five boroughs, many of which take place at colleges and public schools.

The Women's City Club recommends that the Voter Assistance Commission be included in the FY 09 budget. We also support VAC efforts to continue with plans to increase the number of registrants eligible to vote in the presidential primary; to educate voters on the Electoral College and publish a voter guide similar to that required for municipal elections; and to expand its work with various immigrant communities beyond the three languages required by the federal Voting Rights Act.

We are pleased that both of your committees recognize the importance of public input in the city's budget process, and thank you for the opportunity to express our views on the value of VAC programs.

FOIA b7 - D
2/10/08

Teresa Hommel
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10 St. Marks Place, New York NY 10003
tahommel@earthlink.net
212-228-3803

**Statement submitted to the
Governmental Operations Committee and Committee on Civil Rights
of the New York City Council**

**Hearing on
Oversight of the New York City Voter Assistance Commission
December 18, 2007**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record of this hearing. I will touch briefly on two subjects.

1. DREs Can Target Voters with Non-English Language for Blanked Out or Switched Votes

New York City has not publicly indicated its preference for our future new voting equipment. We don't know if our Commissioners will select

- Voter-marked paper ballots, precinct-based optical scanners, and accessible ballot marking devices, called "PBOS", or
- Direct Recording Electronic voting systems, called "DREs" or "touchscreens."

New York City is a city of minorities.¹ In the future, if our voters use voter-marked paper ballots printed in multiple languages, this is good. It means that voters will be able to check and validate their ballots, but all marked ballots will look the same. It means that our optical scanners will not know the voters' language when counting their votes.

But if our voters use DREs in the future, and select their ballot to be displayed in a non-English language, this is dangerous. It enables profiling for blanked out or switched votes based on language and presumed ethnicity.

There is conclusive evidence that DREs are capable of such profiling, and that they are already handling ballots differently based on the language selected for the touchscreen display.²

I urge the Governmental Operations Committee and Committee on Civil Rights to make sure that the Voter Assistance Commission is informed on this issue, and that all our governmental officials including Mayor Bloomberg are informed.

Further, I urge the members of these committees to take all possible actions, as individuals concerned with our democracy as well as in your role as Council Members, to prevent the future use of DRE voting equipment in NYC.

2. Voter Confidence versus Indifference

A strong democracy requires informed, engaged citizens. At this time most of our young citizens are not informed or engaged because of deficiencies in our education and media.

Voter assistance in our time requires us to educate citizens to understand our government, the role of citizens in a democracy, and the significance of elections. Our education system must be required to teach civics at every level.

But who is going to reach and teach our citizens who have already completed some or all of their education but have not learned what they need to know?

I urge Governmental Operations Committee and Committee on Civil Rights to work with the Voter Assistance Commission to broaden their approach to voter assistance beyond registration and voting.

- a. VAC could lobby for "Civics and American Government" to be taught in the schools from kindergarten through high school.
- b. VAC could encourage schools to bring students to poll sites to see what election day looks like.
- c. VAC could help develop funding for the League of Women Voters of New York City to do "train the teacher" classes so that this longstanding civic organization can help prepare our school teachers to learn to teach "Civics and American Government."
- d. VAC could work with the United Federation of Teachers to find methods and materials for teachers to use to prepare students to be active, informed citizens, which leads to voting.
- e. VAC could encourage every voter to also volunteer to work at the polls. (I consider working as an Election Inspector to be a volunteer job because the pay does not come near to compensating for the time and value of this work.)

Thank you.

¹ English Proficiency and the Eligible Voter Pool, NYC Dept. of City Planning
http://www.wheresthepaper.org/BOE_EngProficiency.pdf

² a. Palm Beach Parallel Test Findings: votes lost on Spanish ballots, pages 24-27
http://www.wheresthepaper.org/Limited_Parallel_Testing_Findings.pdf

b. "Wrong Time for an E-vote Glitch" - Minority ballots handled differently
<http://www.wheresthepaper.org/WrongTimeForAnEvoteGlitch.htm>