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FOR THE RECORD

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.

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<sup>1</sup> English Proficiency and the Eligible Voter Pool, NYC Dept. of City Planning  
[http://www.wheresthepaper.org/BOE\\_EngProficiency.pdf](http://www.wheresthepaper.org/BOE_EngProficiency.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> a. Palm Beach Parallel Test Findings: votes lost on Spanish ballots, pages 24-27  
[http://www.wheresthepaper.org/Limited\\_Parallel\\_Testing\\_Findings.pdf](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>

**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 county 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  
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.



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.



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Oral testimony on Intro 651a-2007  
City Council Governmental Operations Committee  
Simcha Felder, Chair  
December 18, 2007

## FOR THE RECORD

Last week I suggested that the City Council not pass this bill as quickly as the previous campaign finance bill was passed in June. I expressed concern that there could be elements of the bill that were not as they seemed. Since then, I have discovered that there is at least one glaring problem with the current bill.

The section dealing with eminent domain was written with the idea that people whose "business" with the city consists of having their property seized through the city's use of eminent domain should not have insult added to injury by having their names placed in the "doing business" database. Unfortunately, because this bill is being rushed through, the language could just as easily be interpreted to grant a waiver from the database for those who receive the seized land.

Chances are that won't happen, but if this bill is passed the law will make it possible. The real question is, what other potential time bombs are hidden in the recesses of this complex legislation? We don't know, but if the bill passes as it is currently written, we will certainly find out the hard way.

One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results. Six months ago, this Council passed a campaign finance bill far too quickly, and it turned out to be full of problems. Now the Council is poised to do the same thing over again. What will we be dealing with six months from now?

I urge this committee to stop the insanity. Do not vote on this bill until we have a full opportunity to figure out exactly what's in it. If you must vote on this bill now, I urge you to vote "no."



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.       |
|--|--|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Bronx</b>                                       |  |                    |                                  |              |             |
| 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          |
| <b>Brooklyn</b>                                    |  |                    |                                  |              |             |
| 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.       |
|--|--|------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Manhattan</b>                                   |  |            |                     |             |             |
| 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<br>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         |
| <b>Queens</b>                                      |  |            |                     |             |             |
| Jackson Heights Voter Registration Drive           | Latin American Cultural Center<br>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          |
| <b>Staten Island</b>                               |  |            |                     |             |             |
| 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          |
| <b>Total</b>                                       |  |            |                     | <b>3048</b> | <b>1600</b> |

\* n/a. No answer

Dec-07

## Voter Awareness Month Events 2006

| Event   | Organization   | Date         | Borough       | Type                | Reg. | Dist. | Att. |
|---|--|--------------|---------------|---------------------|------|-------|------|
| <b>Youth</b>  |  |              |               |                     |      |       |      |
| Voter Registration Drive  | CUNY Citywide  | 9/14 - 10/13 | NYC           | Registration        | 3086 | N/A   | ---  |
| Wagner College Voter Registration & Constitution Day  | Wagner College<br>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<br>Voter Assistance Commission | 10/4         | Staten Island | Awareness Education | ---  | 50    | 13   |
| Youth Civic Engagement Symposium  | Jeremy's Heroes<br>Voter Assistance Commission                       | 10/5         | Manhattan     | Awareness Education | ---  | 75    | 60   |
| Youth Civic Engagement Symposium  | Dep. of Youth & Community Development<br>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  |
| <b>Women</b>  |  |              |               |                     |      |       |      |
| 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<br>Voter Assistance Commission   | 9/20                     | Manhattan        | Awareness<br>Education                 | ---  | 1800  | 35   |
| Building Leadership ... Women's Career Forum in<br>Politics & Civic Engagement | Barnard College, Columbia University<br>Dep. of Youth & Community Development<br>Commission on Women's Issues<br>Voter Assistance Commission | 9/28                     | Manhattan        | Awareness<br>Education                 | 5    | 200   | 35   |
| Building Leadership ... Women's Career Forum in<br>Politics                    | Wagner College<br>Dep. of Youth & Community Development<br>Commission on Women's Issues<br>Voter Assistance Commission                       | 10/4                     | Staten<br>Island | Awareness<br>Education                 | ---  | 75    | 50   |
| <b>Senior</b>  |  |                          |                  |  |      |       |      |
| Voter Registration Drive   | The Family Council of the East Haven<br>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<br>The Aging in New York Fund   | 10/11                    | Brooklyn         | Registration                           | N/A  | 500   | ---  |
| <b>Immigrants</b>  |  |                          |                  |  |      |       |      |
| KALCA Gubernatorial Event  | Korean American League for Civic Action<br>(KALCA)   | 9/14                     | Manhattan        | Awareness<br>Education                 | 127  | 450   | 250  |
| Citizenship Day Festival   | The New York Immigration Coalition<br>NYC Voter Assistance Commission  | 9/17                     | Manhattan        | Awareness                              | ---  | 30    | 100  |
| Voter Registration Drive   | Hispanic Federation  | Mondays<br>&<br>Tuesdays | Bronx            | Registration                           | 3500 | 15000 | ---  |
| Citizenship Celebration Day of the Russian-<br>American Community of New York  | Civic & Voter Education Initiative (CVEI)<br>NYC Voter Assistance Commission   | 9/20                     | Brooklyn         | Awareness<br>Education<br>Registration | 41   | 400   | 300  |
| Voter Registration Drive   | Latin American Cultural Center<br>Voter Assistance Commission  | 9/20                     | Queens           | Registration                           | 35   | 200   | ---  |
| Voter Awareness Day  | College of Mount Saint Vincent – Institute<br>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. |
|--|---|--------|-----------|-------------------------|------|-------|------|
| <b>New Citizens</b>                                    |   |        |           |                         |      |       |      |
| Citizenship Day  | Medgar Evers College/CUNY<br>Dep. Of Youth & Community Development<br>Voter Assistance Commission<br>Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs<br>Office of the Governor's Citizenship Unit<br>Dep. Of Housing Preservation & Development | 9/15   | Brooklyn  | Citizenship Application | 20   | 150   | 40   |
| Citizenship Day  | Dep. Of Youth & Community Development<br>Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs<br>The City University of New York<br>Latin American Cultural Center<br>Voter Assistance Commission  | 9/27   | Queens    | Citizenship Application | 25   | 100   | 50   |
| Naturalization & Swearing-in Ceremony for New Citizens | US Department of Homeland Security<br>The City University of New York<br>Voter Assistance Commission  | 9/29   | Queens    | Naturalization Ceremony | 584  | 1500  | 1500 |
| Naturalization & Swearing-in Ceremony for New Citizens | US Department of Homeland Security<br>The City University of New York<br>Voter Assistance Commission  | 10/13  | Brooklyn  | Naturalization Ceremony | 501  | 1300  | 1300 |
| <b>Veterans</b>  |   |        |           |                         |      |       |      |
| 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<br>Post 1772   | 10/7-8 | Queens    | Registration            | N/A  | N/A   | ---  |
| <b>People with Disabilities</b>                        |   |        |           |                         |      |       |      |
| Voting Information Forum for People with Disabilities  | Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities<br>Disabilities Network of New York City<br>Voter Assistance Commission   | 9/22   | Manhattan | Awareness Education     | 2    | 50    | 20   |
| Voter Information Forum for Students with Disabilities | The City University of New York<br>Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities<br>Voter Assistance Commission   | 10/5   | Manhattan | Awareness Education     | ---  | 100   | 75   |

| Event   | Organization  | Date  | Borough   | Type                | Reg.         | Dist.        | Att.         |
|---|---|-------|-----------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>People with Criminal Convictions</b>                             |   |       |           |                     |              |              |              |
| 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           |
| <b>Other</b>  |   |       |           |                     |              |              |              |
| 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          | ---          |
|   |   |       |           |                     | <b>Total</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|   |   |       |           |                     | 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<br>CUNY TV Spanish Subtitled Version<br>CUNY TV Chinese Subtitled Version<br>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          |

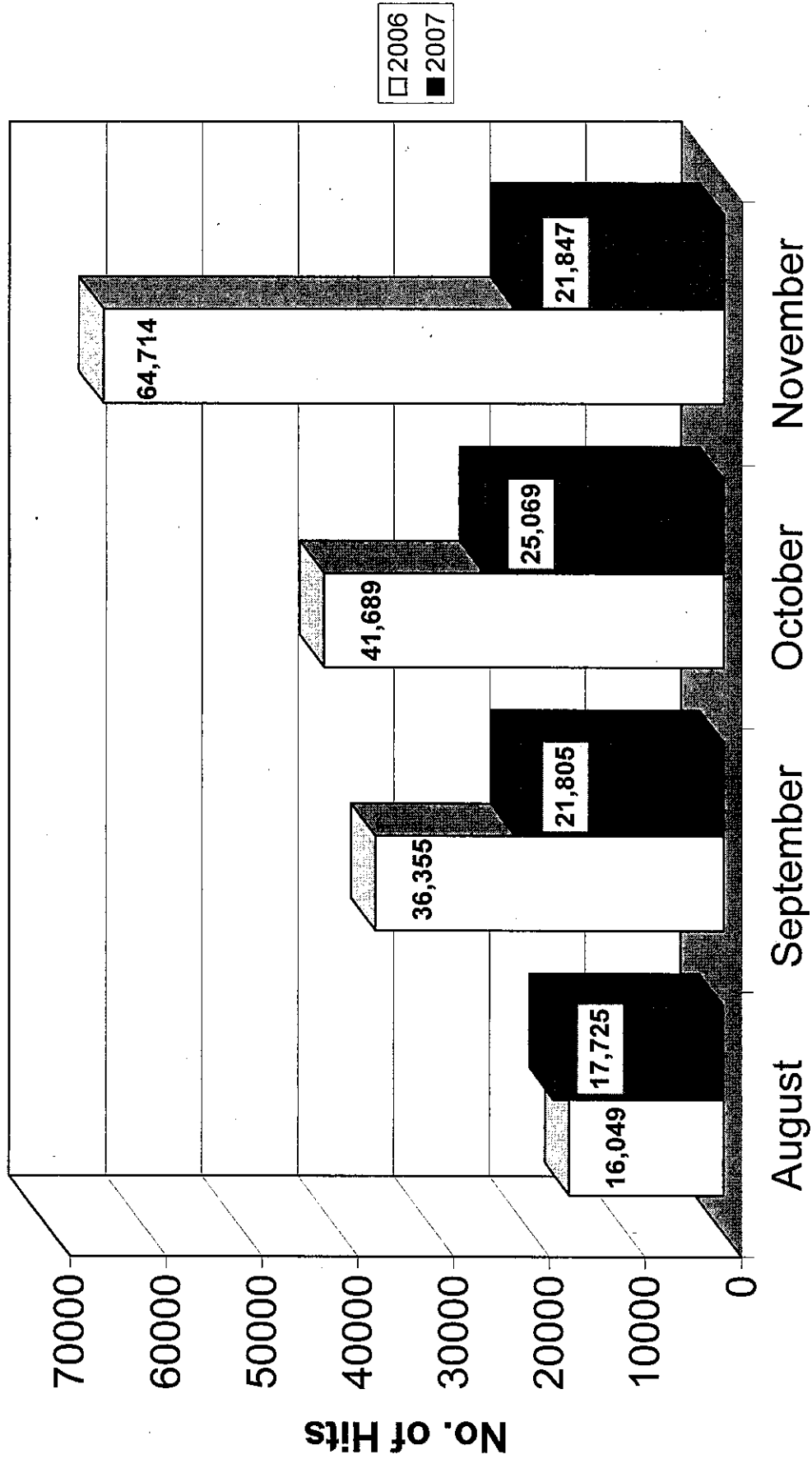
### **Voter Awareness Month Public Service Announcement**

|                           |                                   |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 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**

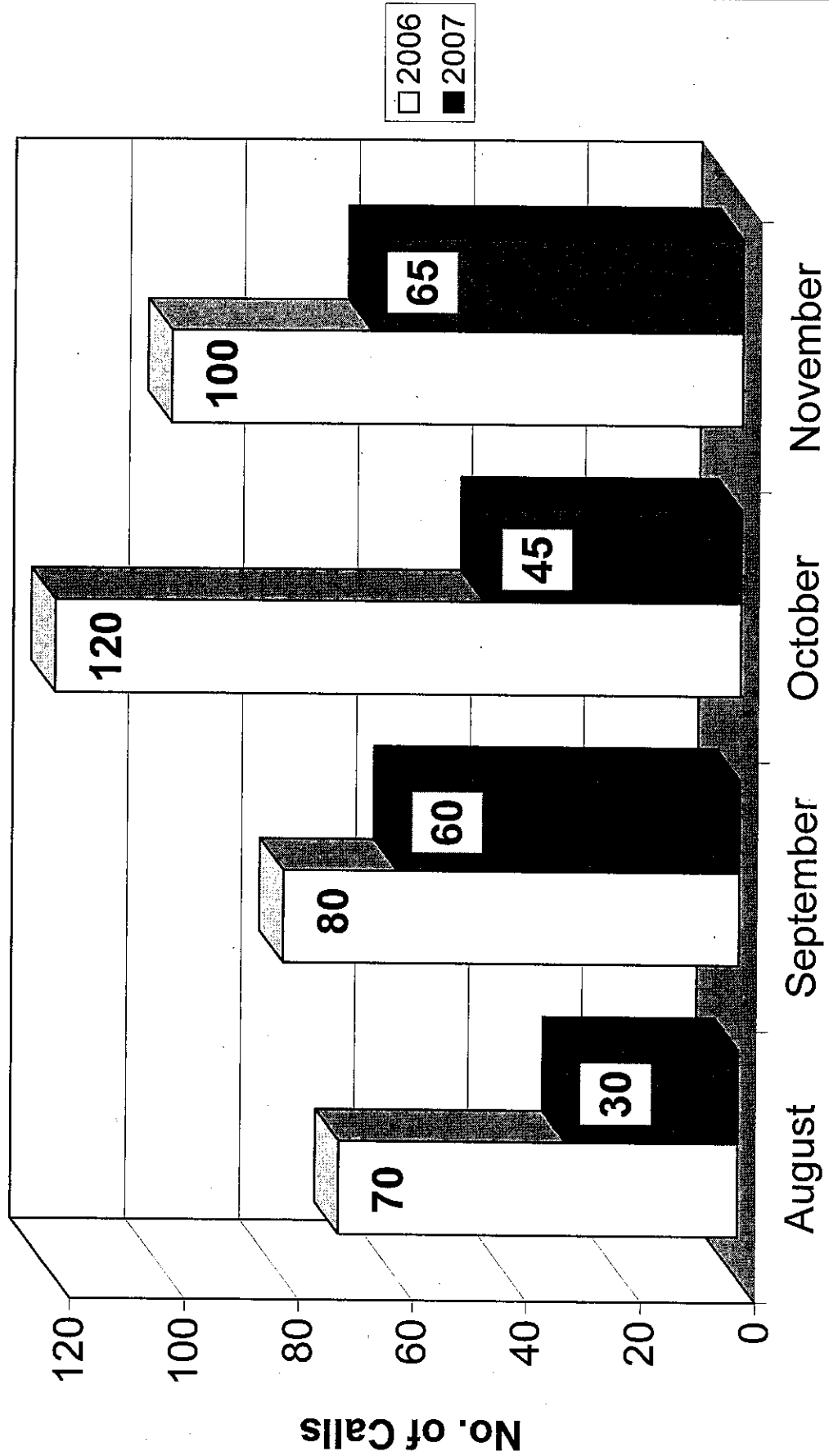
|            |                             |                    |
|------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| November 6 | Voter Assistance Commission | City Limits Weekly |
|------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|

# Hits on VAC Website

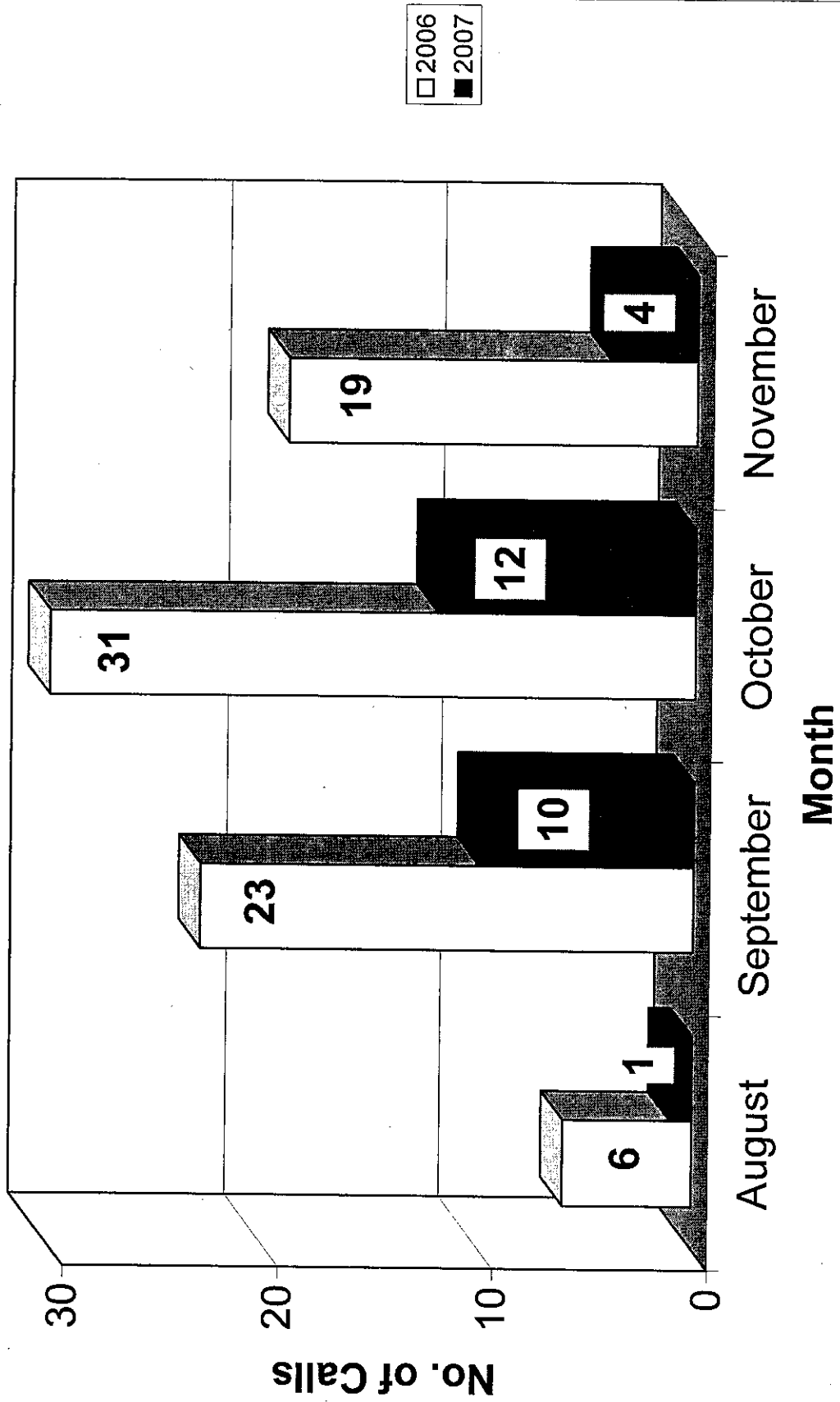




# Calls into VAC



# Calls into 311



## *Participation of VAC Commissioners and Representatives 2007*

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

## Participation of VAC Commissioners 2006

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

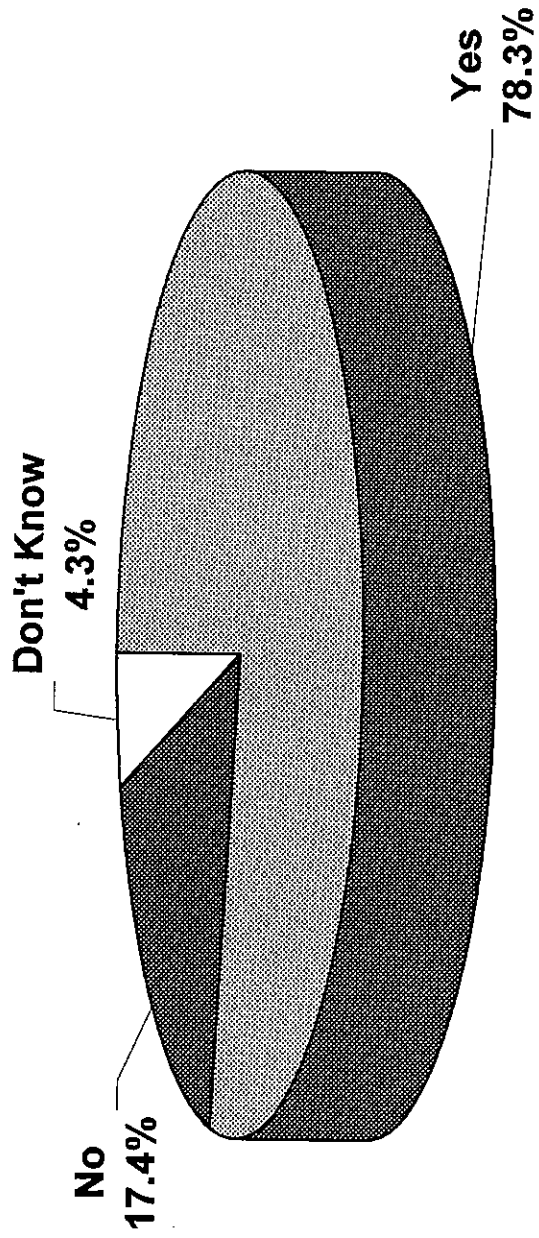
Please provide us with input on the following questions.

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? \_\_\_\_\_

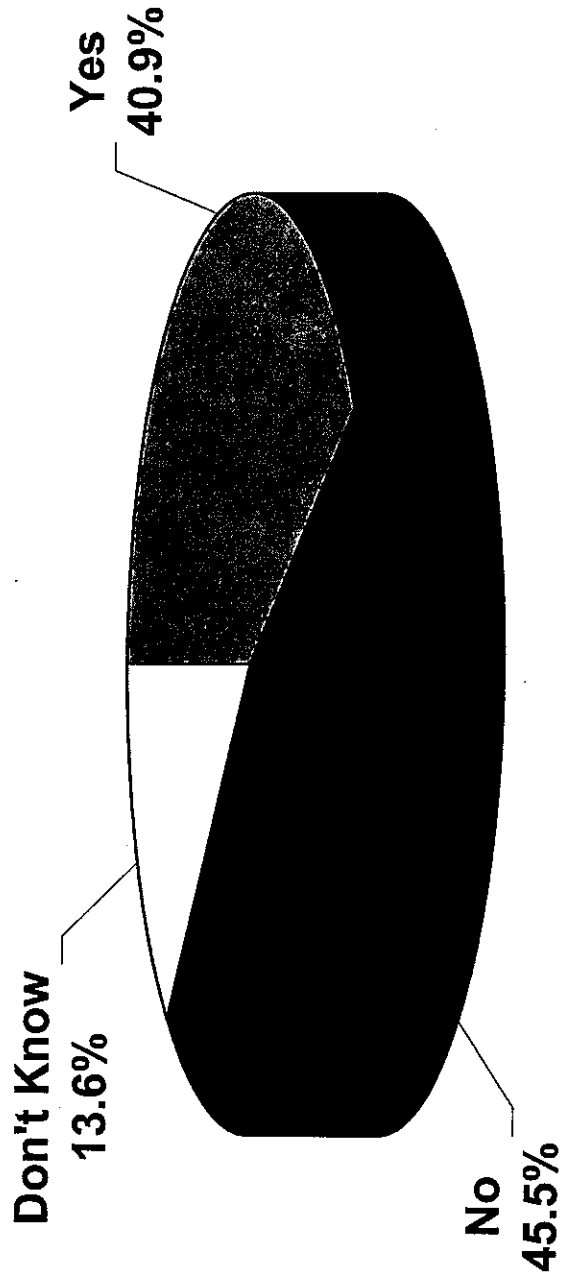
### Comments/Suggestions

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, 1<sup>st</sup> Fl., 365 5th Ave. on Thursday, December 7, starting 5:00 pm. We look forward seeing you again at the meeting.

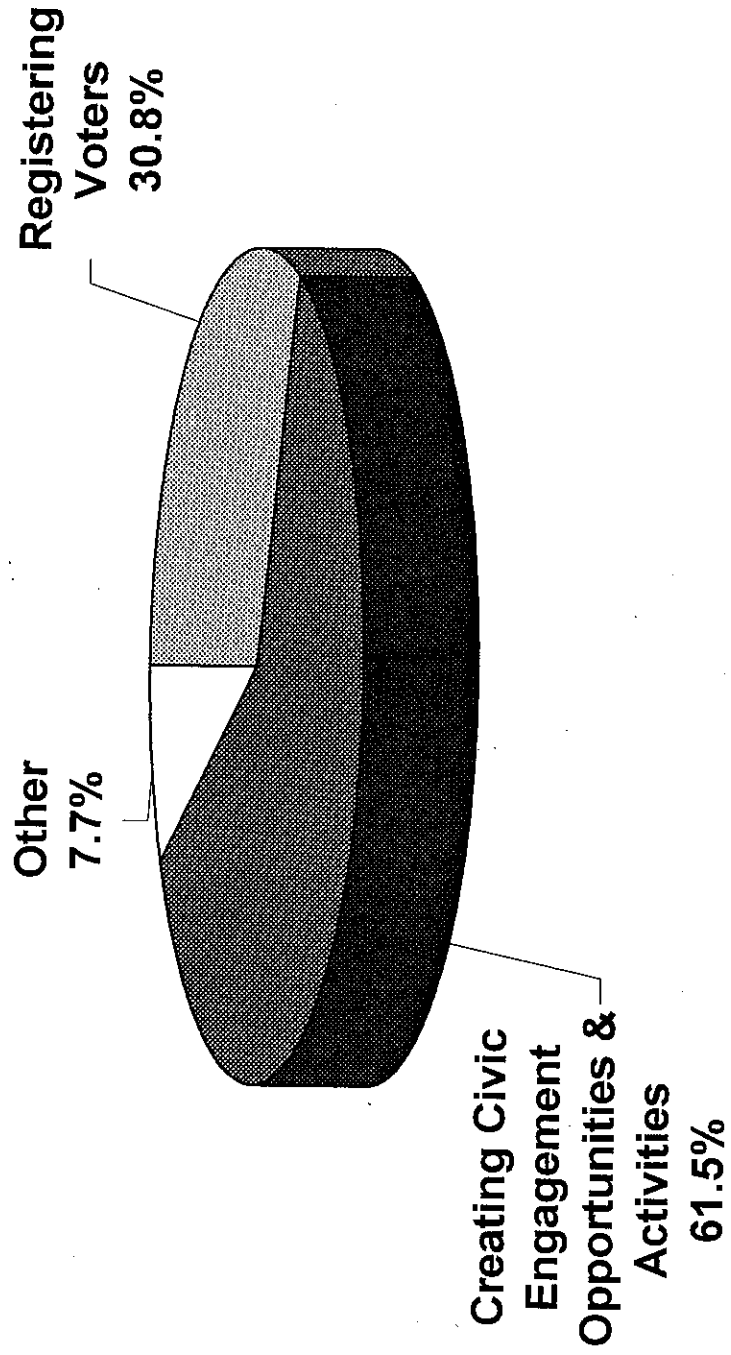
**Q: This year, Voter Awareness Month was held from September 14 to October 13. Was this timing appropriate?**



**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?





# 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](http://www.nyc.gov/voter)



The City of New York



New York City Voter  
Assistance Commission



**The New York Times**

Community Affairs Department



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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.

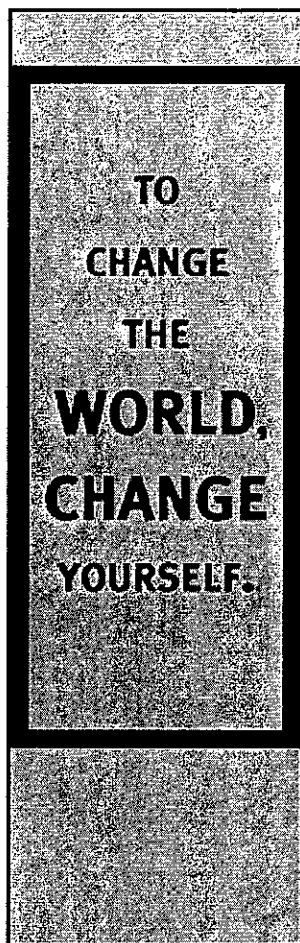
In fact, the agency was dormant for so long that the City Council passed the Pro-Voter Law in 2000 to ensure greater voter access to registration forms via city agencies. After a 2003 Council investigation determined that there was little compliance, the law was expanded in 2004.

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



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](mailto:editor@citylimits.org).

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# September Voter Awareness Month Calendar

The Mayor, the City Council Speaker, the NYC Voter Assistance Commission (VAC), CLINY and The New York Times Community Affairs Department will launch the first ever Voter Awareness Month, a non-partisan, citywide initiative to increase civic awareness and voter participation in New York City. Voter Awareness Month will run from September 14th through October 13th, which is the last day to register for the 2006 General Election on November 7th. For more information call 311 or visit the VAC website at [www.nyc.gov/voter](http://www.nyc.gov/voter)

## Thursday, September 14

**Voter Awareness Month 2006 Kick-Off Press Conference**  
**KALICA** gubernatorial event  
 Korean American League for Civic Action (KALICA)  
 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm  
 MARU, 11 West 32nd St. 3rd Fl, Manhattan  
 Gubernatorial candidates are invited to state their positions and to address Asian-Pacific American issues with Q & A session.

## Friday, September 15

**Citizenship Day**  
 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
 Madge Evers College Auditorium, 1650 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn  
 Free naturalization application assistance to qualified permanent residents, including free photos for application.

## Sunday, September 17

**Voter Registration Drive**  
 The League of Women Voters of the City of New York  
 10:00 am - 4:30 pm  
 44th St. to 59th St. on 5th Ave, Brooklyn  
**Citizenship Day Festival**  
 The New York Immigration Coalition  
 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
 Battery Park (between) Manhattan  
**Voter Registration Drive**  
 The League of Women Voters of the City of New York  
 10:00 am - 4:30 pm  
 Hicks St. & 4th Ave. on Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn

## Monday, September 18

**Wagner College Voter Registration & Constitution Day**  
 12:30 pm - 2:30 pm  
 Wagner College, One Campus Road, Staten Island

**Voter Registration Drive**  
 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, Bronx

**NYC Tax and Licensure Commission**  
**Voter Registration Drive**  
 9:00 am - 4:00 pm  
 NYC Tax and Licensure Commission, Long Island City Office  
 32-02 Queens Blvd., Long Island City

**Hispanic Federation Voter Registration Drive**  
 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
 Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St., #281, Bronx  
**Bronx Community College Voter Registration Drive**  
 10:00 am - 4:00 pm  
 Bronx Community College, University Avenue & West 181st St.  
 Roscoe Brown Student Center lobby and Meister Hall lobby

## Tuesday, September 19

**Voter Registration Drive**  
 Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs  
 11:00 am - 2:00 pm  
 Bronx VA Medical Center, 130 W. Kingsbridge Road, Bronx  
**NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Meeting**  
 1:30 pm  
 NYC Board of Elections Commissioner's Hearing Room,  
 42 Broadway 8th Fl., Manhattan  
**Weekly meeting on NYC election process. Open to the public.**

**Hispanic Federation Voter Registration Drive**  
 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
 Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St., #281, Bronx  
**Voter Registration Drive**  
 Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs  
 11:00 am - 2:00 pm  
 Brooklyn VA Medical Center, 800 Poy Peace, Brooklyn

**Bronx Community College Voter Registration Drive**  
 10:00 am - 4:00 pm  
 Bronx Community College, University Avenue & West 181st St.  
 Roscoe Brown Student Center lobby and Meister Hall lobby  
**Voter Registration Drive**  
 Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs  
 11:00 am - 2:00 pm  
 Manhattan VA Medical Center, 423 E. 23rd St., Manhattan

## Wednesday, September 20

**Russian-American Citizen Celebration Day**  
 11:30 am - 1:00 pm  
 Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst  
 7802 Bay Parkway, Brooklyn

**Running Elections in America's Largest City**  
 Women's City Club of New York  
 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm  
 American Symphony Orchestra League  
 33 West 80th St., Manhattan  
 Guest speaker: John Perez, Executive Director  
 NYC Board of Elections

**Voter Registration Drive**  
 Latin American Cultural Center  
 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm  
 Main St. Library entrance, 41-17 Main St., Flushing  
**Panel Discussion: The Constitution in Extraordinary Times - How Circumstances Affect Constitutional Interpretation**  
 12:00 pm  
 Bronx Community College, Schervelder Auditorium  
 University Avenue & West 181st St.

**Bronx Community College Voter Registration Drive**  
 10:00 am - 4:00 pm  
 Bronx Community College, University Avenue & West 181st St.  
 Roscoe Brown Student Center lobby and Meister Hall lobby

## Thursday, September 21

**Justice Symposium - Voting Rights in Criminal Convictions: Part I**  
 10:00 am - 2:00 pm  
 John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Multi Purpose Room  
 445 West 59th St. 2nd Fl., Manhattan  
**Constitutional Performance**  
 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm  
 Bronx Community College Gold Memorial Auditorium  
 University Avenue & West 181st St. Bronx

**Bronx Community College Voter Registration Drive**  
 10:00 am - 4:00 pm  
 Bronx Community College, University Avenue & West 181st St.  
 Roscoe Brown Student Center lobby and Meister Hall lobby

## Friday, September 22

**Voter Information Forum for People with Disabilities**  
 10:00 am - 1:00 pm  
 Visions at Seis Manor Ground Floor Auditorium  
 135 West 23rd St., Manhattan

## Monday, September 25

**Hispanic Federation Voter Registration Drive**  
 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
 Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St., #281, Bronx  
**Voter Registration Drive**  
 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm  
 The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing & Rehab Center  
 2323 Eastchester Road, Bronx

## Tuesday, September 26

**Self-help Community Service Voter Registration Drive**  
 9:30 am - 4:30 pm  
 Self-help Community Services, 419 Church Ave.  
 between E. 5th & E. 4th, Brooklyn

**NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Meeting**  
 1:30 pm  
 NYC Board of Elections Commissioners' Hearing Room  
 42 Broadway, 8th Fl., Manhattan  
**Hispanic Federation Voter Registration Drive**  
 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
 Lincoln Hospital, 234 E. 149th St., #281, Bronx

## Wednesday, September 27

**Citizenship Day**  
 NYC Department of Youth & Community Development  
 Latin American Cultural Center  
 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm  
 Salvation Army, 86-07 25th Ave., Jackson Heights  
**Voter Awareness Day**  
 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm, 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm  
 College of Mount Saint Vincent - Institute for Immigrant Concerns  
 1233 Second Ave., Manhattan

## Thursday, September 28

**Building Leadership - Women's Career Forum in Politics and Civic Engagement**  
 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
 Bernard College/Columbia University Aitchul Atrium  
 117th and Broadway, Manhattan

## Friday, September 29

**Naturalization and Swearing-In Ceremony for New Citizens**  
 U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
 City University of New York  
 6:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
 Laguardia Community College, 31-10 Thomson Ave.  
 Long Island City

## Saturday, September 30

**Voter Registration and Information Drive**  
 Boy Scout Troop 815  
 10:30 am - 3:00 pm  
 Fulton Mall, Brooklyn  
**Voter Registration and Information Drive**  
 Boy Scout Troop 815  
 10:30 am - 3:00 pm  
 Atlantic Center Hall, Brooklyn



# October Voter Awareness Month Calendar

The Mayor, the City Council Speaker, the NYC Voter Assistance Commission (VAC), CUNY and The New York Times Community Affairs Department have launched the first ever Voter Awareness Month, a non-partisan, citywide initiative to increase civic awareness and voter participation in New York City. Voter Awareness Month runs from September 14th through October 13th, which is the last day to register for the 2006 General Election on November 7th. For more information call 311 or visit the VAC website at [www.nyc.gov/voter](http://www.nyc.gov/voter)

## Sunday, October 1st

- Voter Registration and Information Drive**  
Carmelstone Baptist Church  
10 am - 2 pm  
Madison Avenue, Brooklyn
- Voter Registration and Information Drive**  
Boy Scout Troop 815  
10:30 am - 3 pm  
Atlantic Center Mall, Brooklyn
- Voter Registration and Information Drive**  
Boy Scout Troop 815  
10:30 am - 3 pm  
Fulton Mall, Brooklyn

## Monday, October 2nd

- Voter Registration Drive**  
Hispanic Federation  
10 am - 3 pm  
Lincoln Hospital  
234 East 149th St., #2B1, Bronx
- Voter Registration Drive**  
The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing & Rehab Center  
1 pm - 4 pm  
2323 Eastchester Road, Bronx

## Tuesday, October 3rd

- Voter Registration Awareness Week**  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY  
11 am - 3 pm  
445 West 59th St., Manhattan

## Voter Registration Drive

- Monroe College  
11 am - 1 pm, 4 pm - 6 pm  
2501 Jerome Avenue  
Main Building, Bronx
- NVC Board of Elections Commissioners' Meeting**  
1:30 pm  
42 Broadway, 6th floor, Manhattan
- Voter Registration Drive**  
Hispanic Federation  
10 am - 3:00 pm  
Lincoln Hospital  
234 East 149th St., #2B1, Bronx

## Wednesday, October 4th

- Youth Civic Engagement Symposium**  
Department of Youth and Community Development  
Wagner College, Medgar Evers College and NYC Voter Assistance Commission  
4 pm  
Wagner College  
One Campus Road, Staten Island
- Voter Registration Awareness Week**  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY  
11 am - 3 pm  
445 West 59th St., Manhattan
- Building Leadership... Women's Career Forum in Politics**  
Wagner College, Department of Youth and Community Development and NYC Voter Assistance Commission  
5 pm - 7:30 pm  
One Campus Road, Staten Island

## Thursday, October 5th

- Senior Benefit and Entertainment Fair**  
The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)  
10 am - 3 pm  
Riverbank State Park, Athletic Building and Cultural Center  
679 Ryeasdale Drive at 145th St., Manhattan
- Voter Information Forum for Students with Disabilities**  
CUNY, Mayor's Office of for People with Disabilities, and NYC Voter Assistance Commission  
12 pm - 2 pm  
Baruch College, 1 Bernard Baruch Way  
(25th St. and Lexington Ave.), Manhattan

## Voter Registration Awareness Week

- John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY  
11 am - 3 pm  
445 West 59th St., Manhattan

## Saturday, October 7th

- Voter Registration Drive**  
American Martyr Catholic War Veterans Post 1772  
6 pm  
79-43 Bell Blvd., Queens
- Voter Registration Drive**  
Chinese American Voters Association  
1:30 pm - 4:30 pm  
41-06 Main Street, Queens

## Sunday, October 8th

- Voter Registration Drive**  
American Martyr Catholic War Veterans Post 1772  
8:30 am - 1:30 pm  
79-43 Bell Blvd., Queens

## Monday, October 9th

- Voter Registration Drive**  
Hispanic Federation  
10 am - 3 pm  
Lincoln Hospital, 234 East 149th St., #2B1, Bronx
- Voter Registration Drive**  
The Family Council of the East Haven Nursing & Rehab Center  
1 pm - 4 pm  
2323 Eastchester Road, Bronx

## Tuesday, October 10th

- Youth Civic Engagement Symposium**  
NYC Department of Youth and Community Development and NYC Voter Assistance Commission  
4 pm - 5:30 pm  
Federation Employment and Guidance Service/Bronx School of Law & Government  
244 East 163rd St., Bronx
- NVC Board of Elections Commissioners' Meeting**  
1:30 pm  
42 Broadway, 6th floor, Manhattan

## Voter Registration Drive

- Hispanic Federation  
10 am - 3 pm  
Lincoln Hospital  
234 East 149th St., #2B1, Bronx

## Wednesday, October 11th

- Justice Symposium: Voting Rights in Criminal Convictions Part 11**  
Medgar Evers College/CUNY and NYC Voter Assistance Commission  
6 pm
- Voter Registration Drive**  
11 am - 4 pm  
1650 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn

## Senior Stroll 2006

- Department for the Aging and the Aging in New York Fund  
9 am - 12 noon  
KeySpan Park next to Coney Island Board Walk, Brooklyn

## Thursday, October 12th

- Voting Booth Seminar**  
DeVry Institute of Technology  
9 am - 4 pm  
30-20 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, Queens
- Why Vote?**  
Baruch College/CUNY  
12:30 pm - 2:30 pm  
55 Lexington Avenue, Manhattan
- NYC Voter Assistance Commission Commissioners Meeting**  
1 pm  
NYC Board of Elections  
42 Broadway, 6th floor, Manhattan

## Friday, October 13th

- Naturalization and Swearing-in Ceremony for New Citizens**  
NYC College of Technology/CUNY  
9 am  
300 Jay St., Brooklyn



## **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](http://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  
Brooklyn

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.

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



# 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 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 quali-  
fied 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.

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 informa-  
tion. On-site voter registration will be also avail-  
able.

October

# October

Thursday 5th

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.

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  
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.

Bronx

Wednesday 11th

Justice Symposium ... Voting Rights in Criminal Convictions: Part II  
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.

Brooklyn

Thursday 12th

Voting Booth Seminar  
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.

Queens

Why Vote?  
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.

Manhattan

# 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](http://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](http://www.nyc.gov/voter)

(212) 788-8384

NYC Board of Elections: [www.vote.nyc.ny.us](http://www.vote.nyc.ny.us)

(212) VOTE-NYC

NYS Board of Elections: [www.elections.state.ny.us](http://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  
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Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities  
NYC Department of Youth and Community Development  
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Korean American League for Civic Action (KALCA)  
Hispanic Federation  
Chinese American Voters Association  
Local Russian Émigré Organizations (LOREO)  
The New York Immigration Coalition  
Office of the Governor's Citizenship Unit  
CUNY Citizenship and Immigration Project  
NYC Campaign Finance Board  
Latin American Cultural Center

# **A program of the NYC Voter Assistance Commission**

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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

**BRENNAN  
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FOR JUSTICE**

Brennan Center for Justice  
*at New York University School of Law*

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**Testimony of**

**Margaret Chen**

**Research Associate,<sup>1</sup> Democracy Program  
Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law**

**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

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> Nearly 30 percent of

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<sup>2</sup> Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law and 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](http://www.brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/download_file__34665.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>5</sup> 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*



## BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE

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

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.”<sup>7</sup> 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,<sup>8</sup> to ensure that all eligible New Yorkers have the opportunity to vote.

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Ohio 8 (2005), available at

[http://www.sentencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/fd\\_studiesvotingbehavior.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/fd_studiesvotingbehavior.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>7</sup> See [http://www.nyc.gov/html/vac/html/register/register\\_to\\_vote.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/vac/html/register/register_to_vote.shtml).

<sup>8</sup> 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](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](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](http://www.brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/download_file_36193.pdf).



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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](http://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.



### Gene Borsh

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#### Project participants:

American Forum of World Congress of Russian Jewry (AFWCRJ), American Association of Holocaust Survivors from former USSR, American Association of Invalid & Veterans of WWII from former USSR, American Association for Central Asian and Caucasian Countries (AACACC), American Association of Russian Speaking Attorneys (AARSA), American Jewish Committee (AJC), American Brotherhood for the Russian Disabled (ABFUD), American Arc, Inc., The Association of Bukharian Jewish Youth of USA "ACHDUT", Brighton Ballet Theater, Brighton Beach District Business Association, Bukharian Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada, Coalition of Bukharian Jews, Congregation Meor Hachaim of Luna Park, Davidzon Radio, Inc, Danu Spot, Inc, Educational Center for Russian Jewry, Friends of Refugees of Eastern Europe (F.R.E.E.), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA), Jewish Community Center at Starrett City, Jewish Community Center of Briarwood, Kings Bay YM-YWHA, Marks JCH of Bensonhurst, Metropolitan Russian-American Parents Association, New York Association of Holocaust Survivors from Former Soviet Union, NY Chapter of American Association of Jews from former USSR (NYCAAJFU), Odessa Community of New York, Inc, ORT Operations USA, Russian American Council of Staten Island (RACSI), Russian Institute for New American (RIINA), Russian-American Arts Foundation (RAAF), Russian American Voter Education League (RAVEL), Russian American Civic Association (RAMCA), Russian American Officers Association (RAOA), Russian American Medical Professionals' Association (RAMPA), Russian-American Jews for Israel (RAJI), Self Help Association of Russian-American Elderly (S.H.A.R.E.), September 11 Family Group, Shorefront YM-YWHA, Shostakovich School of Music, Art and Dance, The United Association of Jews from East European Jewry, United Bukharian Jewish Congregation and others.



December 18, 2007

### TESTIMONY

Gene Borsh

Director

Civic and Voter Education Initiative for Russian American New Yorkers

At Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

333 Seventh Ave, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10001

#### Hearings by the Committee on Governmental Operations and the Committee on Civil Rights on December 18, 2007

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

Over the past several years, we have been urging the New York City Board of Elections to take steps to ensure that all Russian-American New Yorkers can fully participate in the electoral process, regardless of their fluency in English. We have been joined in our request by local elected officials in Southern Brooklyn.

The election law at the federal and state level reflects the importance of enhancing the participation of all citizens in the election process. Unfortunately, our previous efforts have been met with the same response from the BOE: “We follow the Federal Voting Rights Act,” we have been told time and again.

According to the most recent survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau at the end of 2006, there were 198,969 Russian-American households in New York. The survey showed that “Russian is New York’s # 3 foreign language.” Of those surveyed, 76,212 households claim to speak English very well, while 122,757 experience some degree of difficulty. The language barrier is a major challenge for the elderly members of our community, slowing their integration into American society. However, a vast majority of retiree organizations remain very active in civic and political life. In fact, Russian-American retirees are twice as likely to vote as younger Russian Americans.

The Federal Voting Rights Act mandates that certain counties around the country provide ballots in Spanish, various Southeast Asian languages such as Chinese or Korean and/or various Native American languages. This requirement represents the Federal minimum that local boards of elections must do with respect to meeting the needs of language minority groups. It does not preclude a more expansive approach to address concerns in communities with a large number of other minority groups.

We urge the NYC Board of Elections to immediately move to accommodate voters who speak additional languages by:  
Please see the other side of this page

- 1) Having the official ballot translated into additional languages, certainly including Russian.
- 2) Translating all official web-based information and documents that are currently translated into the "covered" languages into additional languages spoken by large numbers of New Yorkers, notably Russian. This would include:
  - General information
  - F.A.Q.
  - Registration forms and instructions
  - Where to Vote, (poll site locator)
  - Absentee Ballot information
- 3) Soliciting applications for interpreters in languages spoken by large numbers of New Yorkers, in addition to the Federal Voting Rights Act covered languages.
- 4) Having phone staff available at the Board, who can communicate in additional languages spoken by large numbers of New Yorkers, beyond those covered by the Federal Voting Rights Act.
- 5) Translating all official notices that are printed and either published in newspapers or mailed to voters, the *publication of candidates, election date and poll sites* that are currently translated into the "covered" languages into additional languages spoken by large numbers of New Yorkers. These should then be published and mailed to voters in communities that have large numbers of these additional languages.
- 6) Translating official notices within the polling site into additional languages spoken by large numbers of New Yorkers, i.e. Russian.
- 7) Ensuring that in anticipation of the installation of new machines that all New Yorkers, regardless whether they are fluent in English, can benefit from the education requirements of H.A.V.A.

On behalf of 46 Russian-American grass-roots organizations united in Civic and Voter Education Initiative of the Russian-American New Yorkers, we submit this request to Committee members and hope that they will address this important issue on a priority basis, in time for the upcoming Presidential and Congressional election campaigns.

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## CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION INITIATIVE (CVEI) FOR THE RUSSIAN-AMERICANS IN NEW YORK

Civic and Voter Education Initiative (CVEI) the ambitious community project is an umbrella for the 46 grass-roots organizations that unite over 700,000 Russian-Americans New York Citywide. The goals and objectives of CVEI are:

- *To educate* the Russian-American citizens and those who are in the process of naturalization about the importance of active participation in election campaigns and political involvement in order to empower their voices as well as the unified voice of community.
- *To reach* a significant increase in numbers of Russian-American registered voters.
- *To provide* register voters with information about parties' platforms, elected officials activities, candidates, issues, as well as educate new citizens in the electoral process, voter registration, and importance of civic participation and many other things that will eventually bring several hundred thousands of Russian-American New Yorkers into the city's main stream of civic and political life.
- By using the ties established by project organizers and community activists, *to help* members of the Russian-American community in New York to acquire experience and skills in public leadership, strengthen community life and civic consciousness.
- *To assist* their interaction with other public and government organizations and associations in order to resolve common problems.

During the year 2007 CVEI Organizing Committee and community leaders in collaboration with New York City Voter Assisting Commission (VAC) organized and conducted the following activities aiming to achieve our goals:

### ***CVEI Held:***

- 3 Advocacy Missions to Albany, 26 Public Forums, Town Hall Meetings, Public Hearing and other public events with representatives of Governmental organizations, Local Authorities of Offices of Elected Officials as well as 13 Workshop Seminars on the following topics: Naturalization, Voter Registration, and Election Day Education; Community Resource Identification and Access; Community Leadership and Coalition Building; The Internet as a Tool for Civic participation, etc. Organized and conducted 123 Voter Registration Drives during which CVEI organizers registered more 9,700 Russian-American citizens of New York and distributed more than 40,000 Voter Registration Forms

### ***CVEI Provided:***

- More than 290 responses for technical assistance requests in order to provide practical support to members of organization-partners of CVEI in New York City.  
*Such as: in-person assistance session, on-site visits, seminars, workshops, training sessions, public event planning, strategies of fundraising, step-by-step process of grant writing, etc.*

### ***CVEI organizers have edited, printed and are going to distribute:***

- 60,000 *We Vote Voter's Manual* – The publication for the Russian-American New Yorkers. Each booklet contains information about voting rules and regulations, voting registration form in Russian language, as well as all updated information on the upcoming primary and general elections.
- 2,000 *I am Your Candidate* – a bi-lingual booklet aimed at those community leaders who are interested in running for the public office
- More than 6,000 **"Road to Success"** handbooks for community leaders.
- More than 200,000 flyers, posters, etc about CVEI and HIAS/LOREO activities, plans and services.

### ***WWW.WEVOTE.US Received:***

- More than 24,000 visits (a visit represents one unique viewer/search engine).
- Over 13,000 hits (a hit is a single request made to a web server for an object on the website).

### ***CVEI Activities in Mass-Media (in both English and Russian languages):***

- Television shows, interviews, roundtable discussions, etc: 42
- Radio shows, interviews, reportages, etc: 61
- Newspapers and magazine article published: 123



# NYers GET LOST IN TRANSLATION

## English woes for 1 out of 4

By DAVID K. LI

Almost one in four New Yorkers admit they can't speak English well, almost three times the national average, according to U.S. Census data analyzed by The Post yesterday.

About 5.7 million of the 7.3 million city residents age 5 and older claimed to know the English language "very well."

This compares to more than 1.6 million residents who know English "less than very well," according to the U.S. Census' 2005 American Community Survey.

New York City's command of English stood in stark contrast to national figures. Only 8.6 percent of America's 268.1 million residents over 5 struggle with English; Census data showed.

"If New York is a place of opportunity, then when you don't know the language, that's opportunity lost," said David Chen, executive director of the Chinese-American Planning Council of New York.

Spanish is the No. 1 foreign language spoken in New York, with 1.8 million speakers here, according to Census figures.

Among those, 946,770 reported they speak English "very well," while 862,108 said they spoke it "less than very well," the data showed.

Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion looked more optimistically at the 53 percent of Big Apple Spanish speakers who had also mastered English, as opposed to the 47 percent still struggling.

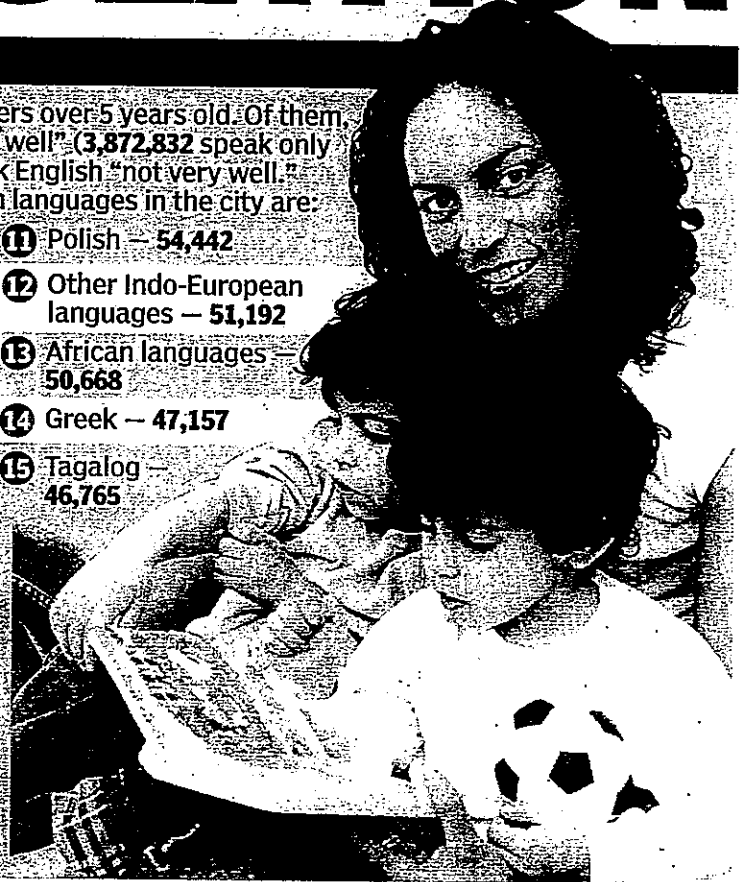
Carrion reminded constituents

### Speaking in tongues

There are 7,366,686 New Yorkers over 5 years old. Of them, 5,697,319 speak English "very well" (3,872,832 speak only English) while 1,669,367 speak English "not very well." The most popular non-English languages in the city are:

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| ① Spanish — 1,808,878 speakers | ⑪ Polish — 54,442                        |
| ② Chinese — 359,839            | ⑫ Other Indo-European languages — 51,192 |
| ③ Russian — 198,969            | ⑬ African languages — 50,668             |
| ④ Italian — 103,109            | ⑭ Greek — 47,157                         |
| ⑤ French — 92,539              | ⑮ Tagalog — 46,765                       |
| ⑥ Indic — 92,257               |  |
| ⑦ French Creole — 88,420       |  |
| ⑧ Yiddish — 77,392             |  |
| ⑨ Korean — 75,175              |  |
| ⑩ Arabic — 56,257              |  |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey



they could score big by learning both languages.

"It's great that more than 50 percent of the [New York's Spanish-speaking] population is bilingual," he said.

"As people integrate into this society, the hope is that they would master English and not lose their native tongue.

"There is no doubt that it's beneficial in so many ways, and it can only make New York competitive in a global market place."

Chinese was New York's second-most popular foreign language with 359,839 speakers.

There were 128,171 Chinese speakers who claimed to speak English very well, while 231,668

said they had problems with the language.

Chen said he believes the number of New York Chinese speakers was undercounted — and is made up almost completely of recent immigrants who likely have no English skills at all.

The Chinese-American social worker said hardworking immigrants often can't get away from their jobs to improve their language skills, hurting their chances of economic advancement.

"I truly believe immigrants want to learn English," Chen said.

"It's a question of resources and convenience. When it's a choice of learning [English] or

going to work, they're going to pick going to work."

Russian is New York's No. 3 foreign language, with 198,969 speakers. Of those, 76,212 say they speak English very well, while 122,757 have problems.

Italian is the Big Apple's fourth-most popular tongue, with 103,109 speakers.

European French is spoken by 92,539 New Yorkers, followed by Indic (92,257), Creole French (88,420), Yiddish (77,392), Korean (75,175) and Arabic (56,257).

david.li@nypost.com

**Kids hit language barrier / P. 28**