



ELECTION COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK 2023-2024 DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

Written Testimony before United States Senate Rules Committee

Hearing on Administration of Upcoming Elections,

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Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony today. My name is Dustin Czarny, and I am an Elections Commissioner in Onondaga County and the Democratic Caucus Chair of the New York State Elections Commissioner Association. NYSECA represents the diverse sixty-two counties throughout New York State. I am proud of our bi-partisan Election Board system, and this is a model that should be followed nationwide. The Democratic and Republican Commissioners must work together to ensure the integrity of our election system. The built-in checks and balances help New York avoid partisan battles and meet the needs of the voters.

Despite the unique set of challenges that could cause turmoil in 2024 — one thing is certain: we can count on election officials to once again administer free, safe, and secure elections. Over the last eight years our electoral system have come under increased strain. We have seen a rise in foreign and domestic cyber security threats. We faced a pandemic during one of the largest turnout elections in generations. We have endured a rise in election denialism that has impugned not just our honor, but resulted in threats to our physical safety. We also face budget shortfalls as well with local resources under strain since the pandemic.

Our elections are safe and secure because they are administered by trained election officials at the state and county level who use sophisticated and continuously validated processes for counting ballots. Lead election officials are dedicated public servants committed to the highest level of transparency. We have chosen this line of work so we can help our fellow citizens take part in our democracy. We are not just faceless bureaucrats but friends and neighbors serving the community we love.

Both Republican and Democratic election observers are subject to all of the same rules and regulations and have equal access to the vote count process, and the public can also watch how it's done to make sure everything is fair. In New York this is mandated at every level of the election process. This holds true from the County and State Board commissioners, at every staffing level, and even down to the election

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inspectors that run our polling places. Every step of our process is designed to assure the public that no single person or party can ever manipulate any election.

Most importantly, election results are not finalized until election officials painstakingly count every ballot that is cast, check for duplicates, verify voter status, and give voters a chance to rectify mistakes that might otherwise disqualify their ballot. While the media may call it sooner, election officials will never certify an election until every legal ballot is counted. The increase use of mail ballots requires added controls and procedures that may extend the time needed to certify an election. However, the added time and investment is well worth it. The public deserves every opportunity to cast their ballot in the method they choose. The Boards of Elections should also get the time it needs to verify that every vote is accurately counted.

Elections have historically been followed by the peaceful transfer of power because these dedicated public servants from across the political spectrum have worked hard to ensure that all eligible voters are able to securely cast their ballots and that every legal vote is counted efficiently, accurately, and transparently. The rise of election deniers and the January 6th insurrection have made our job more difficult. We have had to devote resources to combat falsehoods in the media by those acting in bad faith. This has also made our offices and our people into targets for those who believe these lies. Additional security measures have had to be implemented in the wake of the 2020 election and continue to this day.

It's time we elevate these voices in our towns, counties, and states as trusted sources of information, instead of politicizing and disparaging election administrators. As we head into the 2024 election we must rededicate ourselves to uphold the single most basic tenant of our electoral system: that results are final and accepted by all parties. We must discourage bad faith election deniers and call upon our bi-partisan election officials to present the truth that our electoral system is strong and can be trusted. This will require not only words but an investment in local election offices so they can have the resources to combat.

It's also vital — now and over the long-term — that Congress makes a significant investment in our elections and provides adequate, regular, and stable funding for local and state election officials. We need money to continue to upgrade our security both at our main offices and at polling places. We need investment in staffing levels to not only deal with the Presidential election in 2024, but every year, the federal government has a responsibility to ensure free and fair elections throughout all of the states. Providing substantial and consistent funding from the federal government is the best way to ensure equal opportunity to the ballot box for all citizens.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to submit written testimony today. I hope that we can count on Congressional support in defending our democracy.

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