

News Release

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Groups Warn that New Voters May Not Find Names in Poll Books

Local Boards Urged to Take Steps to Ensure Voters Names at Poll Sites

Warning of possible confusion and longer lines for next week's Presidential election, two of the state's leading civic organizations called for steps to make sure that the names of recently registered voters appear on the lists used by poll workers. The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) and the League of Women Voters of New York State called for supplemental listings of voters to be printed and distributed in any counties that may not have entered new registrants' names in time for them to appear in the lists of voters at poll sites.

Missing names at poll sites could arise if local Boards of Elections were unable to process and enter the large number of new registrants into their databases, said NYPIRG and the League. Many of the registrants are new voters who may have signed up through online web sites and whose forms were mailed to the State Board of Elections, as permitted by Election Law § 5-210(3). The State Board then forwarded the forms to local Boards for their review and to be entered onto the voter rolls. Reports that many of these voters may not have made it into poll books first surfaced in Saturday's *New York Times*.

"Voters shouldn't be penalized because of inadequate staffing at a local Board," said Neal Rosenstein of NYPIRG. "Local Boards must now take whatever steps are necessary to make sure any voter who mailed their form in to the State Board before the deadline gets on the rolls," he added.

NYPIRG and the League reminded voters that if they don't find their name at the polls, they should first ask the poll workers to check that they are at the correct site and table. If the voter's name still can't be found, he or she should fill out a paper Affidavit Ballot and request a voter rights flyer that is required to be at each table. But the groups also noted that the Affidavit Ballot process is error-prone and can increase lines at the polls. They urged that Boards take immediate steps to ensure that all voters' names are at poll sites.

"If the normal poll site books don't contain all the names, local Boards should immediately make plans to print supplemental voter lists and get them to poll sites," said Aimee Allaud of the League. "These voters registered on time and now it's up to the local boards to make sure they can vote without barriers at the polls," she added.

The groups commended the New York City Board of Elections for deciding to print supplemental poll site books. They also called on Mayor Bloomberg and local governments across the state to provide the necessary funding for printing and distributing the books in time for Election Day.