

December 5, 2024

Adrienne Adams, Speaker of the New York City Council
Amanda Farías, Majority Leader, Democratic Conference of the New York City Council
Keith Powers, Chair, Committee on Rules, Privileges, and Elections
Farah Louis, Co-chair, Brooklyn Delegation of the New York City Council
Chi Ossé, Co-chair, Brooklyn Delegation of the New York City Council

Re: Nomination of Frank Seddio as Elections Commissioner

We write to express our concern about the nomination of Frank Seddio, former chair of the Brooklyn Democratic Party, for Commissioner of Elections. Appointing a former party boss to the New York City Board of Elections without proper vetting and scrutiny, in the face of criticism over patronage and partisanship at the Board, would be a disservice to New York voters.

The New York City Board of Elections has long been a source of frustration for voters, Council Members, and advocates for years. A vacancy on the Board provides this Council with an opportunity to ensure New York City has qualified, independent, and voter-centric election officials.

Although state law gives county parties the ability to nominate new commissioners to their respective seats on the BOE, the City Council can reject such nominations and even force a commissioner it approves of. Last year, the Council [rejected](#) a BOE nomination from the Staten Island Democratic Party, a decision affirmed by a New York Supreme Court, which [found](#) the Council “has the authority not to appoint the nominee” and may deny further nominations.

City and State lawmakers have repeatedly claimed they're focused on reforming the NYC BOE and creating a more professional Board and ensuring well-qualified permanent and temporary staff. This year, both houses of the Legislature passed a [bill](#) limiting conflicts of interests among board of elections employees. In the previous term, the State Senate passed a [bill](#) prohibiting election commissioners from being county party chairs. We have been encouraged that recently 15 New York City Board of Elections staff members achieved Certified Election Administrator status after 2 years of coursework.

Appointing a former party boss to the New York City BOE would be a step backwards in these reform efforts.

The Council should only approve nominees with experience and fitness to administer elections, who commit publicly to reforms, and recognize their obligation to serve all the voters of New York City, not only those of the party that is nominating them. The same is true of all core leadership positions within the NYC BOE, including the key position of General Counsel, especially as the increasing complexity of the implementation of election laws passed by the state legislature in recent years.

Our groups believe election commissioners must have the relevant qualifications to lead an election administration agency, and be appointed based on their merits rather than their affiliation to a party, a candidate, or an elected official. To avoid conflicts of interest, there should be limitations on who can be appointed to the Board of Elections. We ask that the Council provide the necessary oversight and ensure that the NYC BOE continues its progress toward increased professionalism, transparency, and accountability and the important work of centering voters.

Sincerely,

Brooklyn Voters Alliance

Citizens Union

Common Cause/NY

Indivisible Nation BK

Lambda Independent Democrats

New Kings Democrats

Reinvent Albany

South Central Brooklyn United for Progress