



Testimony to NYC Charter Commission on Government Reform
Staten Island Public Input Session

***If Charter Commission Seeks Major Changes to Voting Process, It Should
Propose Top 4 and Open Primary Using Ranked Choice Voting***

June 23, 2025

Good evening. Reinvent Albany advocates for transparent, accountable New York government and fact-based public policy.

Today we are testifying in favor of major changes to the NYC voting process that take full advantage of ranked choice voting (RCV) and recognize the [clear trend](#) towards NYC voters registering [unaffiliated](#) with a political party. (A trend that will accelerate if New York's long-delayed Automatic Voter Registration is finally implemented.)

Specifically, we support moving NYC elections to even years and a Top 4 general election and open primary using ranked choice voting.

Reinvent Albany strongly supports RCV and its basic goal of reducing vote splitting and spoilers, increasing voter choice, and ensuring the selection of candidates with broad bases of support. Tomorrow, June 24th, is primary day and so far ranked choice voting in NYC is working as intended in the Democratic Party Primary Election for mayor: a broad field of candidates are cross-endorsing each other and creating informal alliances – a positive dynamic encouraged by many of the candidates being endorsed by the same minor party.

Much as we are happy to have it, New York City's adoption of ranked choice voting in 2019 was more a triumph of political compromise and negotiation than election logic (though there was obvious financial logic to ending costly, low-turnout runoff elections). Of the dozens of local governments across the United States using RCV, New York City is the only one to use it solely in the primary and then switch to first-past-the-post voting in the general election. The overwhelming share of local governments using RCV have a single election.

Adoption of an Open Primary and Top 4 Election Using Ranked Choice Voting

We have previously testified in favor of a number of different ways to improve the NYC election process, including semi-open primaries, which we still support as an incremental improvement, especially if it includes a "sore loser" provision. However, our clear favorite is an open primary whose top four vote-getters advance to the general election.

We note that over the last five general elections, NYC has averaged just under 10 candidates for mayor on the general election ballot – thus Top 4 would, on average, cut the number of candidates on the general election ballot in half.

Because all four candidates on the general election ballot are emerging from an open primary using ranked choice voting, it's highly likely all would have a substantial body of public support and be able to engage in substantive public debate. The City's leading election law authorities confirm that New York City may move to Top 4 without any changes in state law; similarly, it would be legal for the City to cancel primaries in any contest where four or fewer candidates file.

NYC Averages Just Under 10 Candidates on the General Election Ballot for Mayor

Number of candidates for mayor per year

2021 = 9

2017 = 7

2013 = 15

2009 = 9

2005 = 8

NYC's Current Voting System Highly Likely to Result in Democratic Party Primary Losers Appearing on General Election Ballot

The NYC Charter allows candidates to appear on the General Election ballot for mayor if they get the signatures of 3,750 registered voters or 450 signatures for City Council (Chapter 46, Section 1057-b.) New York City does not have a "sore loser" provision prohibiting candidates who lose a major party primary from appearing on the General Election ballot via nominating petition.

Because of this, it is highly likely that a deep-pocketed candidate who loses the Democratic Party primary will reappear on their own line in the General Election. The current system allows anyone with the resources to get their candidate on the General Election ballot without going through a primary, which is a recipe for mischief.

Thank you for your consideration.