

New Yorkers Struggled to Cast Primary Ballots Amid “Problems at the Polls”

By [DNAinfo](#)

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NEW YORK CITY — *Voters across the city trying to cast their ballot in the first meaningful state primary in years faced myriad problems at the polls.*

New Yorkers from the Upper West Side to The Bronx showed up [their longtime polling places](#) only to find they'd been moved. Others found that their names had dropped off the voter rolls. And still others faced various paperwork snafus.

Matthew Spiegelman said he's voted in the same location at P.S. 17 in Williamsburg since 2008 — but on Tuesday, poll workers couldn't find his address in their books, he said.

“[The worker] double checked my address and quickly said ‘it looks like you’ll have to vote via affidavit also, that’s been happening a lot today,’” he told DNAinfo. “I never had this issue before.”

Frank Delessio, 35, said he had to fill out an affidavit to vote at P.S. 56 on Gates Avenue in Clinton Hill because poll workers sent him to the wrong table.

“I was like, something’s not right because I’ve lived in this neighborhood for five years... I just looked at their paper myself and saw they had sent me to the even address table,” he said.

“I think some people thought I voted twice. I put my ballot through and they were going to void my affidavit.”



A man casts a ballot at St. Sebastian's school gym on primary day on April 19, 2016.

Elsewhere in the neighborhood, [an entire block of Lafayette Avenue was left off the voting rolls at P.S. 11, poll workers said.](#)

Some voters on Clinton and Washington avenues were also inexplicably left off the list.

Some residents who live on Clinton and Washington avenues were also left off the voter roll for no apparent reason, according to BOE employees.

"They should have been here, but we couldn't find them," said a poll worker who did not want to be identified. "They weren't in the book and they should have been."

The Board of Elections moved [several longtime voting sites](#) on the Upper West Side, but many voters were unaware of the change, they said.

"I was expecting to vote," said Sarah, 77, who'd been going to P.S. 9 on West 84th Street, one of the longtime neighborhood polling sites that the BOE moved, for 40 years. "It's sabotage."

Some Upper West Side voters found that they had been deemed "inactive" by the Board of Elections if they did not vote regularly for other elections between presidential races, such as those for mayor and state assembly representatives.

"Some people only come vote every four years so the Board of Elections assumes they're inactive," said Rosalyn Perez, a coordinator at the polling site at P.S. 163.

Outside the Park Slope public library, where [Mayor Bill de Blasio](#) voted Tuesday, registered Democrat Eugene Manning said he wasn't able to vote because his name wasn't on the voter rolls — even though he's voted there since 2008 and hasn't moved.

He was given an affidavit ballot to fill out but chose not to because he didn't trust that it

would be tallied properly. And he said he didn't plan to call the Board of Elections to complain because he didn't think it would change anything.

"It's hard to contact the Elections Board," he said. "I tried to when I moved but didn't get any action."

Affidavits are handed out if a person's address can't be found in the voter rolls, according to the city Board of Elections.

In Windsor Terrace, other voters said they found the list of names of those approved to vote ended at the letter "N."

[City Councilman Ben Kallos](#), who is also the chair of Committee on Governmental Operations, said persistent issues at the polls will continue until the entire system changes.

He's recommended an electronic poll book, but also said "patronage" at the Board of Elections will mean voters have issues during every election.

"It's not going to get better until we replace the patronage system at the Board of Elections with people who got their with what you know instead of who you know," he said.

"I'm focused on making sure elections actually work, which means showing up, finding your name in a poll book and voting."

Cheryl Russo in Bushwick voted for the last four years in the same location but had to fill out an affidavit ballot because workers couldn't find her listed, she said.

"A few weeks ago I checked online to make sure I was listed in the system, and I was," she said. "Today it's telling me I am not."

Other issues plagued voters on primary day, including a last-minute change in voting locations on the Upper West Side and, according to some voters who said their polling sites weren't open when they were supposed to be.

In the Bronx, 71-year-old Blanca, who declined to give her last name, said many voters were confused by the change of location.

"It was chaos," at the Parkchester Condominiums, she said, [where voting was moved to a different building in the large complex](#).

Voters throughout the sprawling complex weren't notified of their changed location, she said, sending residents to multiple locations before getting the chance to vote.

Alexia Esannason, who has lived in the complex for more than 30 years, said she went to three places on Tuesday trying to cast her ballot.

"This is important," she told DNAinfo, "and for them to keep moving it around every year, it's ridiculous."

A spokeswoman for the Board of Elections did not immediately return calls for comment.

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