

Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund
Brennan Center For Justice
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Citizens Union
Common Cause/NY
Demos
New York City League of Women Voters
New York Public Interest Research Group
Women's City Club of New York

Juan Carlos Polanco
President
New York City Board of Elections
32 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

February 8, 2011

Dear Mr. Polanco,

We are writing to urge that the Board of Elections continue the practice of printing and distributing postage-paid mail voter registration applications. We understand that the Board has used some forms printed by the state and that the staff is considering a recommendation that the Board discontinue the postage-paid forms but that Commissioners of the Board have not yet considered the matter.

Such an important decision should certainly be a matter for public consideration and debate by you and your fellow commissioners. As individuals and organizations that have long been involved in the voter registration process we have found that the ability to provide postage-paid voter registration applications undoubtedly improves the return rate for forms, especially by low-income and minority registrants. Given the large number of forms that voters mail in on or shortly before the registration deadline, the ability for an applicant to fill out and mail the form without searching, buying and or affixing postage greatly enhances the chance that their form will be delivered by the post office in time for voting in the next election.

Should the Board decide to discontinue postage paid forms, our organizations have serious concerns over the likely discriminatory effect on prospective minority voters. We urge that the Board take this into consideration if you decide to reconsider this policy.

We hope the Board will continue the printing and distribution of postage-paid forms as a matter of good civic policy. The postage-paid policy is a small expense to ensure broad and equal access to the franchise. Our organizations would be happy to join the Board in calling for adequate city/state resources in order to continue the Board's longstanding, postage-prepaid policy. We look forward to continuing to work with the Board to help ensure this practice continues in the future.

Regards,

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cc: Board Commissioners
Hon. Michael Bloomberg
Hon. Christine Quinn
Hon. Gale Brewer
Hon. Thomas O'Mara
Hon. Joan Millman
Anthony Crowell
Chuck Meara