

APPENDIX



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STEVEN M. FULOP
MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY

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My name is Steven Fulop and I currently serve as the Mayor of Jersey City and am currently a candidate for Governor for the state of NJ.

Thank you Assembly Members for the opportunity to testify with regards to ballot design and what constitutes a fair ballot here in New Jersey. It is a topic of great importance to me as someone that intends to be on the ballot next year and I know it is a topic of great importance for many candidates down ballot that are running for the office of the state assembly themselves, against some of you, as well as the office of county commissioner statewide.

I want to highlight that in the Spring 2024, after testimony, Judge Quraishi clearly defined what constitutes a fair ballot and the verdict was unanimously upheld by an appellate court which tells you again the merits of the argument on how democracy has been undermined by the ballot construct in NJ.

In his ruling, Judge Quraishi indicated the importance of a separate and equal draw for each candidate for each office.

I want to repeat that for emphasis - A separate and equal draw for each candidate for each office within the block ballot construct that all other states use.

It's for this reason that there is great skepticism over the intent of this committee. If the goal was to codify the ruling of Quraishi, then a committee wouldn't be necessary but if there is intent to circumvent it then clearly this is the process that one would pursue.

I want to put on record though, it is not enough to use the term block ballot design but at the same time undermine the intent of the separate and equal draw for EACH candidate.

That includes special marks, preferences of ballot position within office block ballot, or bracketing of candidates that gives one candidate a visual advantage over another.

I want to focus my time on bracketing because that clearly is a deviation from the intent of Judge Quraishi's ruling of each candidate having an individual ballot draw. Since each assembly member already has the right to associate via a slogan a bracket only serves to visually skew the ballot design.

The idea of bracketing clearly discriminates against candidates that don't want, or can't, bracket with another candidate. Bracketing places those single candidates at a visual disadvantage similar to the line and does not uphold each candidate with an individual draw.

Rather than spending your time on creating an advantage that would surely end up in court again and also be a political liability for each of you that support it, I would implore to spend your time not only on the ballot design process but also how is the ballot endorsement achieved and the reform that is necessary there.



Good Evening,

Thank you to all of you on the committee for giving me an opportunity, as well as giving all members of the community, the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences in and on elections in New Jersey.

I am the president of the National Organization for Women in NJ and a former candidate for assembly and state senate in New Jersey's 21st district.

I have attached a ballot from the 2024 primary election for Essex County as an example of what is not what I would recommend as good ballot design.

The reason why it is not a good design is:

1. It still has names of organizations next to candidates' names on it; and,
2. It is designed so that all of the same county-awarded candidates are next to each other - even though they are in blocks and ostensibly not on a county line, as you can see, constructively, it is still a county line.

As set forth in detail in the court's decision that abolished the county line, the aim is for fairer ballots that do not disenfranchise the folks of our state or the candidates. Essex County failed to do that and I hope this committee will not make the same mistakes.

I should add, that I have run for office on and off the county line in the past and there is no question that having the party line constructively acted to put a finger on the scale of the election.

Having titles or bad ballot design, as we see here, works against everyone having a fair chance at being elected, and undoubtedly disproportionately affects women and people of color who may not agree with the party line as necessarily being the best for the constituents of this state.

So I ask this committee tonight - - Could we not be better and do better with more freedom for independent thinking that is discouraged by having to comport to a county boss who may actually not have all the best answers for the people of our state? Maybe we can do so much better than we already are doing. I have essentially lived my entire life in New Jersey and love it. As great as it is, it can be so much better with a more democratic process in choosing our elected officials. Thank you,

Jill LaZare

President NOW-NJ

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