



Irregularities and Poor Security In NY Primary

New York City, New York (June 23, 2026) – SMART Elections discovered [two separate](#) New York City polling sites in Sunday’s Early Voting that had [more ballots than voters](#) who checked in. The effort is part of #CountTheVote, a nationwide election verification program.

Contentious Races

It's Election Day in New York. [Races](#) between mainstream Democratic candidates and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) candidates are creating high pressure areas across the county, including in New York’s Congressional ninth and thirteenth districts, where irregularities were observed.

Chain of Custody Raises Security Concerns

Additionally observers documented ballots being transported by only one police officer instead of two, and in one instance, the solo officer had a record of violent and unethical behavior.

New York law allows for ballots to be transported by a single individual, but best practices recommend that ballots are always in the custody of at least two people. It would also benefit the Board of Elections and the NYPD to ensure that anyone transporting ballots is in good standing in the department, according to Lulu Friesdat, Co-founder and Executive Director of SMART Elections, “The New York legislature would do well to take prompt action on this,” she says.

Officer [Lateef Stinson](#), who was transporting ballots solo in an unmarked car in Brooklyn, on Sunday, has been the subject of multiple lawsuits and even suspended without pay for department violations. Stinson was found in one lawsuit to have

“summarily stopped, searched, grabbed, assaulted, battered, and detained [the plaintiff] ... in an aggressive and excessive manner.”

No Explanation

SMART Elections contacted the Brooklyn Board of Elections Chief Clerk, Salvatore Barrera, asking for an explanation for the discrepancies and requesting photos of the seals on the ballot bags. Mr. Barrera said, “We will not be providing photos of the ballot bags,” He did not address the election discrepancies. SMART Elections called the New York City Board of Elections but was unable to get a response.

Irregularities in Competitive Districts

Having more ballots than voters is never good. Each voter is supposed to cast one and only one ballot. Experts we consulted said there are reasons extra ballots could end up being cast. For example, if a voter was assigned affidavit status (not eligible to cast a regular ballot) but accidentally given a regular ballot this could lead to an extra ballot on the scanner. Other explanations could include the poll book crashing and deleting a voter’s check-in information, or a jammed ballot being replaced with a second ballot, but getting cast anyway.

It is odd that both the poll sites where irregularities were found are districts with competitive races. It raises the possibility that ballots are being cast without voters, or that some type of adjustment is being made to the numbers.

“More Than A Little Suspicious”

On reviewing the information, Douglas W. Jones, Emeritus Associate Professor of Computer Science at the University of Iowa said, “The Smart Elections report on Early Voting in the New York primary offers alternative innocent explanations for finding more ballots than voters signed into a polling place. Those innocent explanations would be expected to be randomly distributed among precincts and congressional districts. The fact that both districts with too many ballots were in contested districts argues against random failures. I would need to look at more numbers to make a stronger statement, but the facts reported make me more than a little suspicious.”

Fake Audits

If the results are not correct, it’s supposed to be detected in the three percent post-election audit that follows each New York election. However an observer in the #CountTheVote program [witnessed](#) the Brooklyn Board of Elections submit false

data in a hand-count audit in November of 2025. If the audit is not being done correctly, then it offers no protection from possible changes to the election results.

Seals That Leave Room For Foul Play

#CountTheVote's work in the field determined that the seal system in New York City that is supposed to protect machines and ballots from tampering is weak. Ballot boxes turn up at the audit with no seals, and it is not considered unusual. It is assumed that the seals are broken in transport in the police van. As far as SMART Elections can tell, there is never any type of inquiry when seals are broken.

The sticky seals that cover the area where the flash drives (with the election results on them) are particularly useless. As soon as they are put on, they begin to change to show a pattern that says "VOID." So there is no way of knowing if the seal has actually been broken by being taken off and put back. Poll workers take these seals on and off regularly, in the course of election day activities, and it is not documented.

Entrusting ballots to a single individual expands the security hazards already in play due to lax seal policies. Seals can be slipped off with small tools, like tweezers and then replaced after ballots have been switched out. Seals with identical numbers can be ordered with relative ease, so that the seal on the ballot bag could be broken, ballots switched out and then a seal with the exact same number could be placed on the ballot bag. Or the ballot bags themselves could simply be switched out with identical bags with votes cast for different candidates.

Many Other Vulnerabilities

This report does not cover all of the myriad vulnerabilities that exist in the election system. One insider we spoke with on condition of anonymity said that the ES&S DS200 voting machines (the model used in New York City) are programmed to delete the date and time information on the logs to help preserve voter privacy. This source said that if the date and time are being re-programmed on the results tape, other information could be re-programmed as well.

Not Isolated Incidents

#CountTheVote located problems in previous New York elections. In 2021 a polling location was found with [698 more ballots than voters](#) who checked in. In 2024 a polling location was discovered to have 16 more ballots than voters. That incident led to a [lawsuit](#) that also documented cash payments paid under the table to poll workers and illegal electioneering.

Warmer Reception

One noticeable improvement is that coordinators and poll workers have become more receptive to poll watchers, compared to when #CountTheVote launched in 2021. Poll watchers are an important part of public oversight and it is progress that they are being treated with greater respect and that more information is being shared. The New York City Board of Elections itself remains generally uncooperative, and even hostile, to public oversight.

#CountTheVote

#CountTheVote will be monitoring primaries throughout the country as well as close elections in the midterms. It is the most comprehensive, nonpartisan, data-based, election verification program in U.S. history. The goal is to give volunteers an opportunity to actively participate in monitoring and protecting their local elections, in order to increase confidence in election results, identify trouble spots and reduce the chance that U.S. elections will be plunged into chaos, or even violence, following an election. SMARTelections.us to learn more.

About SMART Elections

SMART Elections is a nonpartisan organization transforming U.S. elections by expanding public oversight, improving security and advocating for fair and accessible voting.

Media Contact:

Lulu Friesdat | Lulu@SMARTelections.us

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