



ASIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

99 HUDSON STREET, 12 FL • NEW YORK, NY 10013 • TEL 212.966.5932 • FAX 212.966.4303 • INFO@AALDEF.ORG

Statement of Brian Redondo
Voting Rights Public Education Coordinator
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
to the
New York City Council
regarding
Proposed Voting Systems

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City Hall
240 Broadway
New York, New York

Good morning. My name is Brian Redondo, and I am the Voting Rights Public Education Coordinator at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF). AALDEF is a 32-year old organization that protects and promotes the voting rights of Asian Americans through litigation, legal advocacy, and community education.

First, we would like to commend the Board of Elections for involving the public in the selection process of a new voting system. It is clear that the Board values input from New York's diverse communities, and we are pleased by the current direction towards improvement. We hope to see additional public meetings in other neighborhoods in order to solicit more comments from racial and language minority voters.

In every election, we consistently receive complaints that the Chinese and Korean ballot translations are too difficult to read because the font size is too small. We emphasize the importance of these concerns, and we urge the Board to adopt a voting system that uses large, readable print for all languages. All voters will benefit in this regard.

The small print is especially problematic for elderly Chinese and Korean American voters who rely heavily on translated ballots to cast their votes. They are the voters most likely to use the translations but are the least likely to be able to read the small print. While the Board provides magnifying sheets to aid voters, we have found in numerous elections that very often these magnifying sheets are not made available. Instead, the Board should employ a larger, readable font size.

Currently, ballots appear in four languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean. The inclusion of all four makes the ballot cumbersome and space limited, while the Asian language translations suffer as a result. If enlarging the translations on an already cramped ballot is impossible, then we recommend a shift to bilingual ballots. Three types of ballots could be produced: English-Spanish ballots, English-Chinese Ballots, and English-Korean ballots. Limiting the number of languages on a single ballot affords more surface area that could be used for larger English and non-English font sizes. Larger fonts will improve the readability of ballots

regardless of the language it is in. Such added simplification and clarity would aid all citizens in voting with ease.

We ask that the Board consider implementing these changes to improve the voting process. As it stands, the current ballot and proposed future ballots are hampered by tiny print. We urge the Board to resolve this problem in selecting the new voting machines. Bilingual ballots are paramount to making the vote accessible to language minorities but only if the ballots can actually be read. Thank you for your time.

Brian Redondo
Voting Rights Public Education Coordinator
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
99 Hudson Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10013
212-966-5932
bredondo@aaldef.org