

**TESTIMONY OF ALLEN KOEHLER TO  
THE NEW YORK CITY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
APRIL 13, 2020**

Chairman Goldstein, members of the commission, good evening. My name is Allen Koehler and I am a recent graduate of Wagner College right here on Staten Island. Majoring in International Affairs and being a part of the Government and Politics department, I've always been involved in the political scene since I've moved here from Ohio five years ago. I got involved my freshman year in the 2005 mayoral race and this continued in 2009. However, I was stunned to find out when I registered as a New York resident in 2009 as a blank voter that my vote means nothing in this Democratic town in regards to helping choose a candidate during the primary season.

I am not alone. Many of my peers do not identify with either of the major political parties. Why are more and more people like this today? It's because we have grown up in the vicious partisan environment that exists today. We grew up with the Bush/Gore presidential election as our first memorable election that was centered in partisan bickering and court hearings. Then the Bush/Kerry election followed and the hateful personal attacks were prevalent just because one was a Democrat and the other Republican. Our generation finally saw some light in the tunnel with President Obama in 2008 largely in part because of his message of independence and getting past the partisan politics. Now, I will leave the political pundits to argue over his current state, but the message is still clear: my generation is yearning to get past the political bickering between Republicans and Democrats and for our elected officials to get back to working for the people and not a party line.

This is where nonpartisan elections come into play. This city needs to move forward and catch up with a majority of the major cities around the country and adopt nonpartisan elections. More people identify independent than ever before and that was clear in the previous mayoral election when New Yorkers elected our city's first independent mayor. The Republican Party saw a decline in voters, the Democratic Party stagnated. Close to 900,000 New Yorkers are not registered with either the Republicans or Democrats and over 750,000 are like me and not registered with a political party. Twenty-five percent of them are, again, like me and under the age of 30. Nationwide, half of all voters under the age of 29 are independent.

I did not come to this commission this evening to convince anyone to change how they're registered or tell someone that they should not run under a specific line. I am here tonight to urge this commission to look at the numbers and to let my generation vote and not shut us out. We are tired of partisan bickering. We are tired of people saying, "Vote for me because I'm part of this party." We are going to vote for someone because of who they are and what they believe in, not for what party they are registered with. We deserve the right to help choose our leaders and to vote for the person, not the party. This city needs to move forward and adopt nonpartisan elections and stop shutting out voters who want to do what's best for the city, not for a political party.

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**Allen Koehler, 1037 Manhattan Avenue Apt. 212, Brooklyn, NY 11222 \* Cell: (513) 518-6657 / Email: allen@allenkoehler.com**