

NYC adding hours to early voting sites amid hours-long lines

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The embattled city Board of Elections will increase the hours for in-person voting at its 88 early voting sites beginning Friday after being swamped by a tidal wave of Big Apple residents who waited in lines **for hours to** exercise their right to vote during the coronavirus pandemic.

Even Mayor Bill de Blasio **waited for hours** at a polling site in Brooklyn's Park Slope Tuesday afternoon.

The board voted to add a total of nine hours of voting from Friday through Sunday — the final three days of early voting before Nov. 3's Election Day.

On Friday, two hours of voting will be added. The hours will be from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Four hours will be added on Saturday — with poll sites open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. instead of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

On Sunday, the hours will be expanded from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. instead of starting at 10 a.m.

The state Board of Elections bars waiting times of more than 30 minutes at early voting sites and requires local election officials to take action to reduce waiting times to comply with the rule.

“The NYC BOE did not have much of a back-up plan” to handle the crush of voters, said Doug Kellner, co-chairman of the state Board of Elections.

“The city did not provide sufficient capacity at these large polling sites and didn't deploy its personnel in a uniform and efficient manner,” he said.

During a BOE meeting on Tuesday, Executive Director Michael Ryan acknowledged that some of its 88 polling sites were unprepared for the massive turnout.

“We had sites where there was a line of voters three or four hours before the opening of sites,” Ryan said. “We are aware that there's unprecedented volume that needs to be addressed.”

As of Tuesday morning, 349,124 city residents had cast their ballots during early voting. Meanwhile, 1.15 million voters requested absentee ballots. About 2.76 million city residents voted in the 2016 presidential election.

Ryan said additional voting machines and other equipment were added at crowded poll sites and new “line managers” were assigned to handle the flow of voters.

He said changes are limited by the design of the sites, noting, “We don’t own the sites,” which include such large venues as Madison Square Garden and the Barclays Center.

Ryan also said any changes have to be done “safely” to comply with COVID-safety protocols.

Voters will be allowed to vote as long as they’re online before the polls close.