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# Turnout Tops Predictions

## More voted than in any mayoral primary since '89

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Despite early reports of low turnout, more New Yorkers turned out to vote Tuesday than in any other mayoral primary since 1989, when more than 1 million voters were drawn to the polls by the contest between David Dinkins and Ed Koch.

Unofficial figures showed more than 708,000 Democrats and 62,000 Republicans voted. Yet the city Board of Elections pulled off the vote without the chaos that many had predicted.

Maybe complaints were few Tuesday because people were more charitable than usual. Or maybe it was because voters didn't have to wait as they had last November, when more than 2 million cast ballots for president.

"What New Yorkers hate most is waiting in line. That occurred in relatively few places," said Douglas Kellner, the Manhattan Democrat on the Board of Elections.

In another victory yesterday for the Board of Elections, an appellate panel in Brooklyn ruled in favor of it, overturning a Sept. 10 Queens Supreme Court decision.

The panel said Board of Elections poll inspectors should have the authority to decide which affidavit ballots to open and count. The mayoral candidates had wanted a judge to make those decisions.

The affidavit ballots — filed when a person's registration is in dispute — are part of the estimated 40,000 paper ballots the Board of Elections will begin counting Friday morning, at the same time election workers open and recanvass the voting machines.

The paper ballots could prove important in the closely fought battle for the No. 2 slot in the public advocate race. Four candidates are locked in a tight battle to face Betsy Gotbaum in a runoff.

The paper ballots could also come into play in a half-dozen council races that seem too close to call.

The count of paper ballots will, once again, test the mettle of the Board of Elections, because the agency's computer systems are down in Manhattan and the Bronx.

Those computers hold voter registration records that are critical in determining which affidavit ballots are valid. As a result, the agency is considering shipping ballots from Manhattan and the Bronx — along with the workers to count them — to offices in other boroughs.

The New York Public Interest Research Group, also displaced from its TriBeCa offices and operating out of emergency headquarters, logged fewer voter hotline complaints than usual on Tuesday.

"It's very heartening," said NYPIRG's Gene Russianoff of the turnout. "Under these terrible circumstances, tragedy, the lack of attention to the campaign, the distractions with the mayor, 700,000 Democrats turned out to vote. It's a triumph for democracy."

Manhattan elections officials had scrambled for days to find new polling places to replace those in the World Trade Center area, where 17 voting machines and several poll sites were under rubble.

Other sites had to be moved from schools that had taken in extra students because of the crisis.

At one Greenwich Village site, a tent was erected to replace a polling site in a school building.

The result of the last-minute changes, according to Kellner, was more than the usual number of machine breakdowns in Manhattan. But New Yorkers stoically trudged to the polls, then quietly voted.

"I think people had lower expectations because of the emergency nature of putting it together," Kellner said.

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