

The Board of Elections in the City of New York (BOE) has worked diligently over the years to improve voter experience, taking steps to address logistical barriers such as long wait times at polling stations. In a metropolis with millions of voters, this requires a multi-faceted approach. Recently, one initiative that has gained attention for its success was the first-ever “Battle of the Boroughs” contest.

Studies have shown that offering small incentives, such as stickers, can increase voter turnout by making the experience more fun and engaging. For the final weekend of early voting, the BOE replaced its traditional “I Voted” sticker with borough-specific designs, each reflecting the unique character and pride of the five boroughs. These stickers displayed iconic images and landmarks of each borough, allowing voters to showcase their local pride by wearing a sticker that represented the borough in which they live and voted.

These limited-edition stickers were featured in a “Battle of the Boroughs” video. Leveraging the power of social media the video fueled a friendly competition between the five boroughs, encouraging more New Yorkers to vote early. The video quickly went viral, sparking a citywide buzz, as New Yorkers showed off their borough-specific stickers with pride. Media outlets across the city took notice, and the social media buzz garnered citywide press, further amplifying the campaign’s reach and impact.

The “Battle of the Boroughs” contest not only encouraged civic engagement but was part of a broader strategy to alleviate congestion at polling stations by incentivizing early voting. By encouraging voters to head to the polls before Election Day, the Board successfully spread-out participation across the voting period, helping to reduce long lines and improve the overall voting experience. The impact of this initiative was evident in the numbers: On the final day of early voting, a record-breaking 149,319 New Yorkers cast their ballots, marking the highest turnout for early voting in the city’s history. In total, 59% of active registrants voted in the 2024 general election, with 23% of them taking advantage of early voting.

This surge in early voting participation demonstrated how small, creative efforts can significantly increase voter turnout. Improving voter turnout is not solely about policy changes or logistical improvements. Sometimes, it’s the small, creative initiatives that have the most profound impact.

The Board of Elections in the City of New York manages the voting process for one of the largest electorates in the United States, encompassing the five distinct boroughs of the city: the Bronx, Brooklyn (Kings County), Manhattan (New York County), Queens, and Staten Island (Richmond County). Each of these boroughs is also a county within the state of New York. With approximately 5.4 million registered voters, the BOE operates over 1,200 polling sites across the city on election day, remaining open for a 15-hour window, from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Early voting was introduced in 2019. The early voting period lasts for 9 days, providing 96 hours of in-person voting across 155 sites located throughout the city’s five boroughs.



Borough-Themed "Votes Early" Stickers



Board of Elections
City of New York