

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Joseph Strasburg

Recent state legislative and congressional Democratic primaries throughout New York reinforced and re-revealed some basic campaign and electoral truths – some good for the affordable housing industry, some difficult.

The “topline” easy explanation is that incumbents won reelection, putting aside Westchester County Executive George Latimer’s win over incumbent Congressman Jamal Bowman, which was the most expensive congressional primary ever and which turned on hot-button international issues alongside local concerns. Whether reckless Democratic Socialists or more moderate traditional Democrats, state legislative incumbents kept their seats.

RSA – alongside industry partners and other interests focused on responsible governing – supported campaign activities in favor of moderate incumbents and challengers to radical incumbents. Results were mixed, though the races we supported played an important role in supporting those who won in different districts. Voter behavior and preferences, demographic trends, generational divides and policy priorities played roles in every race.

Polling done early in the campaigns included questions on affordable housing, development and also the fairness of the rent stabilization system. Results were telling, especially when considered with election day results now in hand.

Even in districts with voters who reelected Democratic Socialists, a majority of voters expressed frustration with rent laws that allow well-off New Yorkers with beach and country homes to also have rent stabilized leases. But these voters overwhelmingly supported the reelection of legislators who push for the most generous tenant centered laws without any means-testing and support, even encourage, “legal abuse” of rent laws.

Poll respondents in the rezoned Brooklyn-Queens waterfront neighborhoods of Williamsburg, Greenpoint and Long Island City – affluent professionals – voted for legislators who promote social housing and development of affordable housing despite also expressing strong *Not In My Backyard* opinions that their neighborhoods already have enough affordable housing.

Poll respondents – all likely voters – expressed concerns with their safety while commuting, believe there should be more police hired

and worry about safe playgrounds and parks but then voted for legislators who are anti-cop.

This is all because voters can hold conflicting, often contradictory, views at the same time. They believe rent laws are broken while also hoping they, or family members, benefit from them. They want more police on *their* trains and on subway platforms in *their* neighborhoods but are against police generally. They support the idea of more affordable housing and mixed income buildings but also think *their* neighborhoods have done enough.

The flip side of this coin benefits the common sense, economic reality positions of our industry. Communities of color throughout New York City, particularly neighborhoods that have known horrific legal discrimination and ongoing *de facto* segregation, chose state legislative candidates who support home ownership, support responsible policing and support the building of intergenerational wealth. These communities voted for candidates that prioritize *what works* and *what’s needed* over what they *feel*.

They prioritize good schools. They want the trash picked up and put the recycling out on the right day. These are multigenerational households that pay a mortgage and provide family childcare. These are the communities that rejected the radical Democratic Socialist candidates, instead choosing traditional Democrats with genuine neighborhood ties.

Looking ahead to 2025’s citywide Democratic Primary elections for Mayor and Comptroller and Public Advocate, and then the 2026 Gubernatorial election, the dynamics underscored in June 2024 elections provide a clear messaging roadmap for candidates looking to speak with mainstream Democrats who prioritize getting things done for New Yorkers instead of ideological victories and virtue signaling.

But before 2025 and 2026, we have competitive general elections this coming November for President, Congress, State Senate and State Assembly. Those races are being shaped by larger conversations involving voters of all parties – not just Democrats – and that will in turn shape Democratic discussions.

Whatever the campaign whatever the year, you can count on the owners of stabilized buildings, and real estate – always a foundational part of the economy – to participate for the good of affordable housing and for the good of the city and state. ■

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