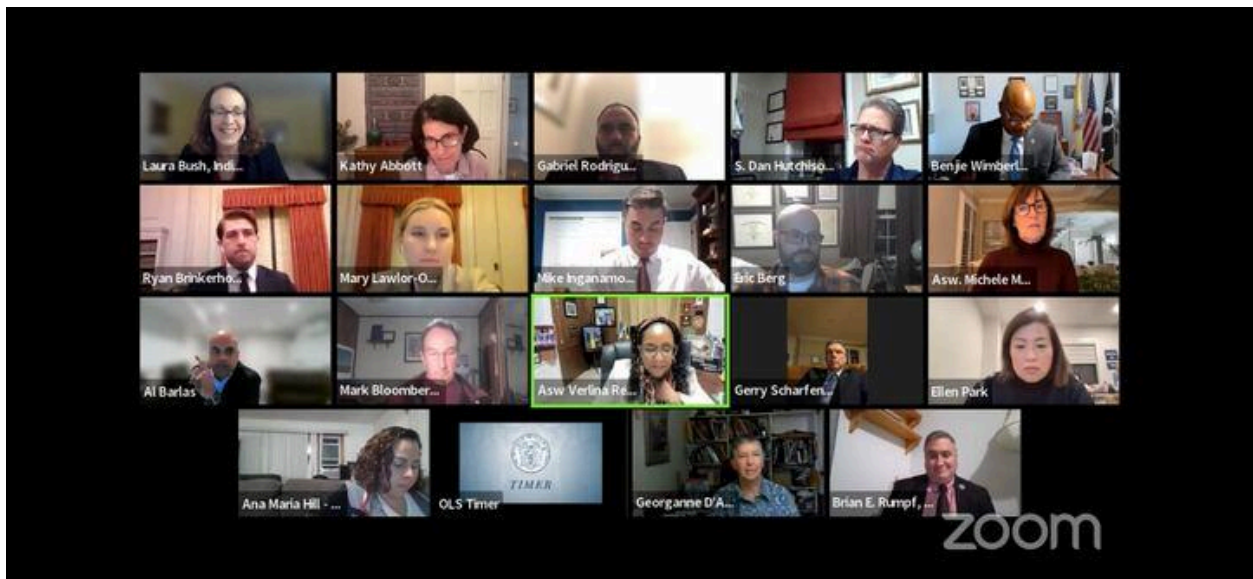


## Indivisible Lambertville/New Hope Stands Up for NJ Ballot Design Reform

Indivisible Lambertville/New Hope was in the House - that is the New Jersey Statehouse - thanks to Laura Bush, who testified on behalf of the organization before the New Jersey Assembly Committee on Ballot Design. Laura joined newly-elected Senator Andy Kim and others to make the case for adopting the office block design for ballots in primary and general elections. Currently, New Jersey is the only state that uses the 'county line' format that unfairly gives preference to the first candidate appearing in the line. For more information, read the testimony Laura delivered on December 2 below and the article from NJ Spotlight News [here](#).



### Testimony Before the NJ Assembly Committee on Ballot Design

December 2, 2024

Honorable Assemblymen and Assemblywomen:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight. My name is Laura Bush and I am here today on behalf of Indivisible Lambertville-New Hope, a grassroots organization that supports democracy.

Voting and elections are the core of representative democracy. Unfortunately, the county-line design of New Jersey ballots gives primacy to parties over voters, which is highly undemocratic.

Several elements are required to ensure fair ballot design. Two of the most important are (1) office-block layouts; and (2) a randomized order of candidates, rotated by voting precinct.

### *Office Block Layouts*

Most states already use an office block-format on ballots. It's time for New Jersey to adopt this best practice, for both primary and general elections.

An office-block layout is particularly important for primaries. The reason is simple: The purpose of a primary is to let the voters, not the party, determine who will represent their party in the general election.

On a ballot structured by party line, a candidate endorsed by the party has an unfair advantage—which has been quantified at 38 percentage points.

### *Impact of the County Line Ballot on New Jersey Politics*

By allowing a narrow group of party insiders to control who is elected, the county line ballot structure has a negative impact on New Jersey politics. Candidates who are not awarded “the line” drop out, and potential candidates without insider connections choose not to run at all, leading to fewer choices for voters. This is the opposite of a democratic process.

The result is that candidates and elected officials are beholden to the party instead of voters. This leads to a lack of transparency, backroom deals, patronage, and corruption.

### *Randomized Order of Candidates, Rotated from One Voting District to the Next*

It is also critical that the order of candidates on ballots be randomized and rotated. As human beings, we have a cognitive bias toward things that appear first on a list. To counter that cognitive bias, the order of names on ballots must be randomized. Then the order of candidates must be rotated for each voting precinct, such that candidates appear at the top of the ballot before an equal number of voters in any given election.

### *Building Back Trust*

The ballot is a document that belongs to voters, not political parties. Voters in New Jersey demand the fairest ballot available — an office-block ballot with rotating order.

Thank you.