

## New Investigative Unit To Focus On Fraud, Waste At NYC Board Of Elections

Posted on Apr 24, Posted by [Administrator](#) Category [City](#)

The Department of Investigation says it is establishing a six-person unit to focus on "fraud, waste and corruption" at the city's Board of Elections.

The DOI, the city's 140-year-old agency dedicated to rooting out corruption, announced today that it got \$824,000 to start up the investigative unit and has begun filling positions.

Because the Board of Elections is staffed by city employees, the DOI has jurisdiction over the agency.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said in the announcement that the decision to create the unit followed the agency's [review of the November 2011 election](#) . That investigation was labor-intensive and pointed out the need for more consistent oversight of the BOE.

"The newly created unit will provide the capacity to investigate possible waste, fraud and corruption in an expanded way that was not possible before," she said in a statement.

Alex Camarda, the director of public policy at Citizens Union, a good government group, commended the DOI for establishing the unit.

"While there are hard working staff at the Board, we also know that many jobs are awarded based on patronage rather than merit," he said in a statement emailed to the Gotham Gazette. "A top-to-bottom review needs to be done to ensure the city only spends money on employees and positions that are necessary to carrying out an effectively run election. The DOI should start by getting a listing of every position within the Board and the responsibilities for each."

Citizens Union is the sister organization of Gotham Gazette.

Hearn said the DOI was "not casting aspersions on anyone."

"The NYC BOE plays a very important role, and many people do their jobs at the BOE well and honestly," she said in a statement emailed to the Gazette.

Michael Benjamin, a former state Assemblyman and co-deputy of the Bronx Board of Elections, said fraud, waste and corruption weren't a problem at the Board. Instead, he pointed to the need for funding of the BOE.

"We have a city comptroller's office who does audits. We have an [Independent Budget Office]. We have five district attorneys," he said. "There's enough oversight."

Instead, he said that funding "should be given to the Board of Elections to properly run elections."

In its review of the November 2011 election, the DOI found that the city could have saved \$2.4 million if the BOE had effectively managed the process, including by consolidating election districts.

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