

## Board Of Elections Votes to Delay Ballot Approval Due To Pending Disqualification Challenge

**The Board of Elections has postponed a crucial vote on the 2024 general election ballot, opting to await legal guidance regarding a candidate's disqualification appeal before making a final decision**

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A planned vote to approve the general election ballot was pushed to next week by the Board of Elections, as they wait to receive legal advice on a pending challenge by a candidate who was disqualified by the Elections System.?

Board members convened shortly after 4 p.m. Wednesday to review and approve the 2024 general election district ballot. Immediately after roll call was taken, board member Lilliana Bellardo De O'Neal pointed out that with Ida Smith's disqualification challenge still awaiting a ruling by the board, it would make little practical sense to approve ballots at this stage.?

Her interjection prompted board members to enter into executive session to discuss the issue.

While board members were in executive session figuring out a way forward, however, members of the public who had joined the meeting were having a discussion of their own. Some accused Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes of deliberately misinforming the board, cherry-picking from the available evidence and material in order to disqualify Ms. Smith from appearing on the ballot as a congressional delegate candidate. Someone called for Ms. Fawkes to be fired. Others claimed that board members misinterpreted key portions of the law, including the legal difference between the definitions of “resident” and “inhabitant”.

After approximately 45 minutes, they returned from Executive Session to vote on a new motion, this one raised by member Florine Audain-Hassell, to hold approval of the general election ballots until Wednesday September 4, in order to receive legal advice on Ms. Smith’s challenge. The motion was approved by all but one of the board members present; Ms. Belardo De O’Neal abstained.

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