

# CITIZENSHIP SETTLED

## Hempstead board accepts Touré's proof

BY VÍCTOR MANUEL RAMOS  
victor.ramos@newsday.com

The Hempstead school board voted 3-0 to accept that documents provided by member Maribel Touré had met the requirement to prove she's a citizen following objections received about her candidacy and questions raised about her citizenship.

Clerk Patricia Wright read a resolution saying "the board of education overrules" those objections.

Board president Lamont Johnson, Ricky Cooke and JoAnn Simmons voted to accept the resolution. Shelley Brazley was absent and Touré was not polled on the vote.

Aside from the information Touré submitted for public review earlier in the day — a copy of her passport, a voter registration certification — she "also produced for inspection her naturalization certificate," Wright said.

Her response to two separate complaints from residents associated with a political rival was filed yesterday morning with the Hempstead school district, her attorney said, as Touré sought to comply with a 5 p.m. deadline to show evidence of citizenship to the district.



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Touré said after the vote that this was just "a little pebble" on the road to higher goals for the district.

Johnson said he is "very satisfied" with the outcome, but "protocol had to be followed" to respond to the residents' complaints. "She's a citizen. She works hard and the people voted for her," he said.

Touré, who was born in Mexico and was elected to the school board after two contentious races against longtime board member Betty Cross, took the opportunity to speak out — flanked by a diverse group of relatives, her attorney and advocates — against what she said is prejudice.

"Bigotry and ignorance have no place in our modern society and cannot be accepted in our school district," said Touré, 53. "I will not be a victim of a dangerous form of bigotry that is aimed to drive a wedge between neighbors" in a village and school district composed mostly of black and Hispanic residents.

Touré, speaking at a news conference in Hempstead, said not only is she a naturalized U.S. citizen who immigrated in 1989 and became a citizen in 1996, but she's also proud of the freedom of speech her status affords her and that she is using it to push for change in Hempstead.



A page from Touré's passport.  
■ Video: [newsday.com/nassau](http://newsday.com/nassau)

LAW OFFICES OF FREDERICK K. BREWINGTON

Frederick K. Brewington, her lawyer and a civil rights advocate, presented a packet of documents in response to the two petitions filed by Cross campaign manager Cornell Bozier and Cross supporter Gypsy Jefferson.

Brewington said he first wanted "to make sure that the record is clear" that Touré is a citizen qualified to hold elected office. He also condemned the inquiries into her citizenship status as a ploy "to take away the taint of a stolen election" by Cross supporters. And he called for the school district to ask that the office of Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman monitor the vote in which Touré will be running

## EDITORIAL

An ugly chapter  
in Hempstead A34

for re-election on May 19.

Touré was elected in a revote in October that was ordered by the state education commissioner after problems with absentee ballots brought into question Cross' victory in May. Since then, some critics have questioned Touré's citizenship and at times voiced displeasure with her Spanish accent when she speaks at board meetings.

"Miss Touré has been subjected to a level of prejudice and bigotry that unfortunately is plaguing the Hempstead school district and serving to separate people and neighbors from one another," Brewington said.

Jefferson, one of the complainants, said Touré showing original documents to the school district's attorney is not enough for her. "I'm not happy with it and I'm pursuing it further," she said.

Bozier, who was not at last night's meeting, said earlier in the day he wanted Touré to provide her citizenship certificate to quell all questions. "Why is she being so evasive?" he asked. "Show her certificate of citizenship and let's call it a day." He could not be reached last night for comment.

Jefferson said she is not a racist because she is biracial.