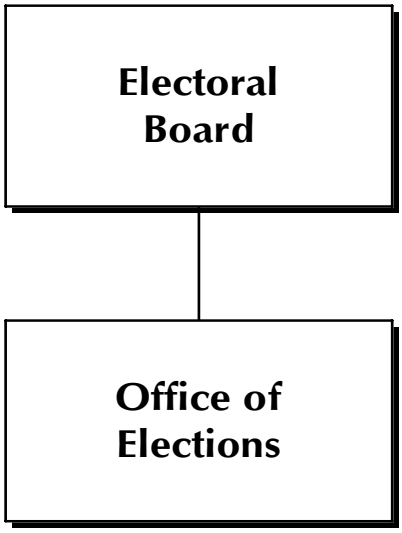
Office of Elections



Mission

To provide each resident of Fairfax County with the opportunity to exercise his or her right to vote in an efficient and equitable manner in accordance with the Constitutions of the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Code of Virginia.

Focus

The success of the democratic process requires fair and open elections, which accurately reflect the will of the electorate. It is the responsibility of this agency to provide all Fairfax County residents with the means to have a voice in their government by offering:

- The opportunity to register to vote;
- The opportunity to vote in a convenient, accessible location;
- The opportunity to vote by using secure, accurate and user-friendly equipment that is equally accessible to all voters, including those with disabilities;
- A means for absentee voting for those voters unable to go to the polls on Election Day;
- Knowledgeable and helpful staff and poll workers;

THINKING STRATEGICALLY

Strategic issues for the agency include:

- Providing a comprehensive program of voter registration, outreach, and education;
- Maintaining secure and accurate records to ensure a resident's legal right to vote;
- Intensifying recruiting efforts focusing on volunteers fluent in multiple languages to assist staff and to serve as election officers and assistant registrars;
- Utilizing a variety of electronic media for contacting and training election officers;
- Providing secure, accurate, and user-friendly equipment accessible to all voters;
- Maintaining convenient and accessible polling places and absentee voting sites; and
- Replacing outdated paper-based records with electronic technology, where permitted by law.

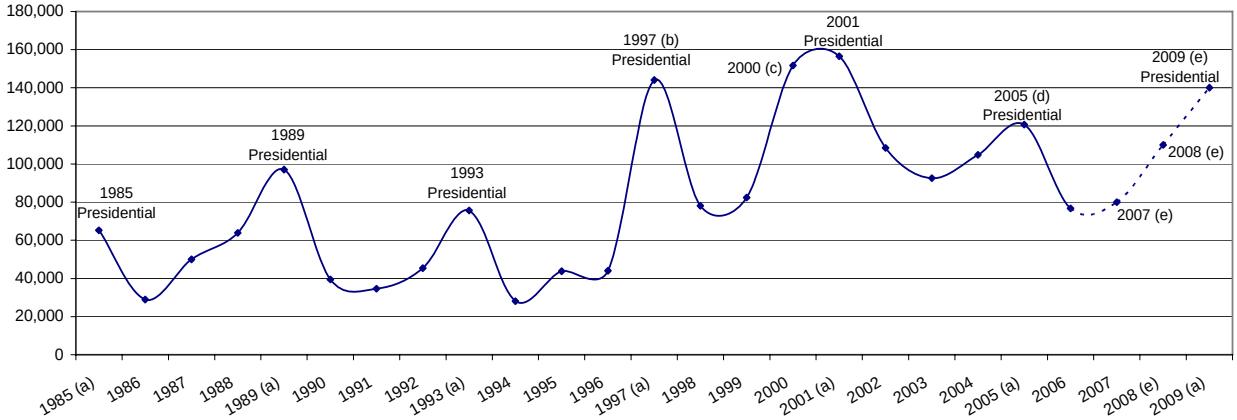
- Accurate and timely reporting of election results; and
- A responsible use of available funding and resources.

The election administration function of the Office of Elections manages the logistics for conducting and certifying elections by preparing election equipment, overseeing polling places, recruiting and training election officers, preparing ballots, providing information to the public, and posting unofficial election results on the agency's Web site on election night. It also receives, audits, and provides public access to the candidates' campaign contribution and expenditure reports.

The voter registration function of the Office of Elections determines eligibility of voters, develops policies and procedures in accordance with federal and state laws, maintains the voter registration records and the street file database, offers a comprehensive program of year-round voter registration, processes absentee ballot applications, certifies candidates' nominating petitions and processes local candidate qualification forms, maintains the Web site for public information, and provides public information and access to electronic lists of registered voters.

In FY 2008, the agency will conduct: (1) a November general election to elect nine members of the Virginia Senate, 17 members of the House of Delegates, 10 members of the Board of Supervisors, 12 members of the School Board, the Commonwealth's Attorney, the Sheriff, the Clerk of the Circuit Court, and three directors of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District; (2) a February primary election for the nomination of candidates for office of President of the United States; (3) three town elections in May to elect mayors and town council members in the Towns of Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna; (4) a June primary election, if called by one or more political parties, to select nominees for Congressional offices; and (5) any special election(s) which may be required. The number of voter registration applications and absentee ballot requests is a direct function of population growth and voter interest in these elections, which in turn causes cyclical fluctuations in agency workload.

VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS PROCESSED BY FISCAL YEAR IN FAIRFAX COUNTY



(a) Presidential Election occurred in this fiscal year.

(b) National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) adopted.

(c) Application totals increased due to four month study when all DMV forms came directly to the agency.

(d) Application totals decreased due to DMV's new "Print On Demand" (POD) applications.

(e) Projected numbers are shown with a dotted line.

FY 2008 presents three issues that could significantly increase the agency's workload:

(1) **Implementation and functionality of the new Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS):** The Federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) mandated a new electronic voter registration system by January 1, 2006. VERIS replaces the Virginia Voter Registration System (VVRS), which maintained the official voter registration records for all jurisdictions in Virginia, but did not meet some HAVA requirements, requiring development of a new system. Initial user acceptance testing of VERIS identified numerous deficiencies and implementation was delayed until February 2007. Despite attempts to modify the system to prevent a significant increase in transaction processing time, VERIS requires greater staff resources to operate than the previous voter registration system due to inherent process extensions required to comply with federal legislation and limitations inherent in the system's design.

(2) **Legal Requirements Related to Voting Equipment:** In April 2007, legislation was passed by the Virginia General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor prohibiting future purchases of direct recording electronic voting machines (DREs) and providing for the phase out of DREs as the machines currently in operation wear out. The new law also prohibits any form of wireless communication to or from voting or counting devices while polls are open on Election Day. As the County's current voting system consists of DREs that utilize wireless communication, these new requirements could have significant financial ramifications for Fairfax County. The full impact of this legislation has yet to be determined, but it could potentially necessitate a total replacement of the current voting system in the near future. The agency is working closely with state officials to identify the possible impacts. In addition, a host of federal legislative mandates continue to be possible, including requiring voting machines to produce a contemporaneous voter verifiable paper receipt, which could create significant financial obligations that the agency would not be able to accommodate within existing resources. The agency continues to closely monitor pending legislation to assess any local impact.

(3) **Presidential Primaries:** In February 2008, both major political parties will likely hold primary elections to select candidates for the office of President of the United States. Great public interest will bring a high level of activity before the election as well as a large turnout at the polls, creating additional staff requirements in both the office and at the polls.

Utilizing new, fully-tested technology is a key factor in providing superior service to County voters. In FY 2005 and FY 2006, the agency leased an electronic look-up device for each precinct, which enabled election officers to quickly assist voters in determining their assigned precinct without monopolizing County phone lines. The look-up device was the first step toward implementation of and electronic pollbook. The e-pollbook has a tremendous potential to increase accuracy, accelerate the check-in process at polling places, and assist voters who are at the wrong location. With the implementation of VERIS, the agency expects to introduce barcode technology into a number of processes, including the tracking of absentee ballots and returned voter confirmation cards. Bar-coding should greatly reduce processing time associated with these functions. The agency will be assessing other operational areas to determine where additional efficiencies may be identified.

Security, equity, identity, and privacy issues continue to be a priority with the implementation of new registration and voting technology. The agency is working closely with the State Board of Elections, the Virginia Information Technologies Agency, the County's Department of Information Technology, and vendors to ensure that these issues are being properly addressed. The growing County population and its diversity also present new challenges and concerns. The biggest challenge, however, will be to implement new mandates and manage change, while keeping costs down.

Office of Elections

Budget and Staff Resources

Agency Summary		
Category	**FY 2007 Actual**	**FY 2008 Adopted Budget Plan**
Authorized Positions/Staff Years		
Regular	21/ 21	21/ 21
Exempt	3/ 3	3/ 3
Expenditures:		
Personnel Services	$1,709,188	$2,277,191
Operating Expenses	422,014	886,837
Capital Equipment	712,331	0
Total Expenditures	**$2,843,533**	**$3,164,028**
Income:		
Publication Sales	$591	$1,000
State Shared General Registrar Expenses	109,617	107,724
Total Income	**$110,208**	**$108,724**
Net Cost to the County	**$2,733,325**	**$3,055,304**

SUMMARY OF ALL AGENCY LOBS (FY 2008 Adopted Budget Data)

Number	*LOB Title*	*Net LOB Cost*	*Number of Positions*	*LOB SYE*
15-01	Election Administration	$1,730,071	8	8.0
15-02	Voter Registration	$1,325,233	16	16.0
TOTAL		**$3,055,304**	**24**	**24.0**

LOBS SUMMARY

15-01: Election Administration

Fund/Agency: 001/15	Office of Elections
LOB #: 15-01	**Election Administration**
Personnel Services	$1,310,069
Operating Expenses	$435,315
Recovered Costs	$0
Capital Equipment	$0
Total LOB Cost:	$1,745,384
Federal Revenue	$0
State Revenue	$10,313
User Fee Revenue	$5,000
Other Revenue	$0
Total Revenue:	$15,313
Net LOB Cost:	$1,730,071
Positions/SYE involved in the delivery of this LOB	8 / 8.0

▶ LOB Summary

The Elections division of the Office of Elections is responsible for the logistics of conducting elections including providing the voting equipment, ballots, materials, polling places, officers of election and training to conduct all federal, state, town and local elections in Fairfax County. This division is also responsible for receiving, cataloging and reviewing candidate's Statement of Organization and Campaign Contribution and Expenditure reports.

Due to the cyclical nature of departmental responsibilities, the division operates with a small full time staff, relying on a veritable army of limited term employees to assist will all aspects of election preparation from packing supplies and setting up the voting machines to contacting and training officers of election. Limited term employees staff the absentee voting satellites and assist with processing and mailing absentee ballots. The division recruits and trains over 2,200 citizens to operate the polling places on Election Day.

Since any change affecting voting is subject to preclearance by the United States Department of Justice under the Voting Rights Act, Elections division staff works closely with the Voter Registration division and County Attorney's Office to ensure compliance with all federal, state and local laws. The Elections division also coordinates efforts with many other County agencies during the course of the year to fulfill election requirements. These agencies include: Circuit Court, DIT, GIS, Public Affairs, Libraries, Police, Print Shop, Mail Services, Purchasing, Department of Management and Budget, Finance, Facilities Management, Parks and Public Schools.

Voting equipment: The County currently uses a Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting system. As mandated by the Code of Virginia, the Electoral Board must provide one voting machine for every 750 voters (or portion thereof) in a precinct. A recent change to Virginia law prohibits the future acquisition of additional DRE units, requiring instead that any new unit be an optical scan

device. The Office of Elections has been examining new equipment from several vendors who are currently state certified. Additional voting units will be necessary to provide adequate voting opportunities during the 2008 Presidential election. Funding is now the primary barrier to any voting equipment acquisition. This factor will drive the decision on whether to make a uniform transfer from DRE units to optical scan or to make a more gradual transition.

Voting Machine Ballots and Smartcards: The design of voting machine ballots is prescribed by the State Board of Elections and is coordinated with other jurisdictions using similar machines. Ballots are developed in-house rather than being contracted to a vendor. Programming the ballot activation devices (smartcards) and testing over 1,200 machines is a process that takes several weeks. Thirty days following the election, the machines are available for maintenance and storage.

Paper Ballots and Absentee Voting: Paper ballots for absentee voting must be approved and printed in a manner prescribed by the State Board of Elections. The Electoral Board must have the ballots available for mail and in-person voting 45 days before a general election and 30 days prior to a primary or special election. Optical-scan equipment is used to read and tally these ballots in the Central Absentee Precinct on Election Day. These machines also require the same rigorous maintenance, programming and testing as the DRE units. Paper ballots must also be printed for use in the precincts for provisional voters and in emergency situations.

All paper ballots must be strictly secured and accounted for before, during and after each election. Each election also requires different numbers and types of ballots. For example, in November 2007, this agency will need 64 different ballot styles to conduct elections for the multiple legislative districts within the County.

As a service to voters, the Office of Elections maintains seven absentee voting satellites at various locations around the County for three weeks prior to each November election. These satellites also require secure facilities, voting machines, ballots, forms, phone lines, signage, supplies, staffing, and staff training.

Materials: The Electoral Board must design, produce and/or secure a multitude of forms, signs, instructions and supplies to conduct each election – everything from legal documents such as the Statement of Results and Abstracts of Election to items such as signs, rulers and pens. Although the State Board of Elections prescribes the format for many of the legal forms, staff has customized these forms to merge with the precinct and candidate databases for greater efficiency.

Precincts and Polling Places: The Electoral Board makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for changes in precinct boundaries and polling places based on election districts, population growth, and suitability of facilities and communities of interest. Several upcoming changes are predicated on population growth and loss of availability. All potential polling locations are evaluated by staff for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. They are further evaluated for traffic patterns, ease of access for precinct voters, identifiably, etc. Once a suitable site is located, careful negotiations are made with proprietors and other property users to ensure compliance with all requirements for polling facilities. Since 1990 the number of precincts has increase from 170 to 225.

Officers of Election: Over 2,200 citizens are required to staff the 225 polling places and count absentee ballots on Election Day. In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to find reliable, competent citizens to fill these positions. In an effort to reduce "no-shows," the election officer

coordinators have developed electronic communication methods to streamline the information flow to and from potential election officials. As new processes are implemented and the conduct of elections becomes more "high-tech," the Electoral Board will be seeking younger, computer-literate citizens to serve as officers of election. However, demand for this limited volunteer pool is very competitive and the division has very little reward structure to offer for a very demanding set of tasks.

Election Officer Training: Training 450 Chief and Assistant Chief Officers and over 900 new officers in the short period of time allowed before Election Day presents an enormous challenge for the staff. The division will continue to explore innovative methods for providing adequate training for all officers. Experience elsewhere points to training deficiencies as a legal vulnerability in the event of real or perceived errors at the polls.

Campaign Finance Reports: State code requires the Agency to "receive, catalog and review" campaign contribution and expenditure reports. The Agency also has the authority to impose and collect penalties for violations of campaign reporting requirements. The division has recently incorporated labor-saving processes to expedite the posting of campaign filings to the web for review by the public and press.

▶ Method of Service Provision

Normal services are provided in the Office of Elections in the Government Center. Regular division hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. (The Voter Registration division is open from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. weekdays.) The Code of Virginia mandates that the office be open for absentee voting a minimum of 8 hours the two Saturdays before a general election and one Saturday before each primary or special election. The office is required to be open until 5:00 p.m. on days when candidate filings and reports are due.

As a service to voters, office hours for absentee voting are extended to 7:30 p.m. for three weeks before each November election. Seven absentee satellite offices, located in the governmental centers, are also staffed for three weeks before the November election. Satellite hours are 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. weekdays and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Office and satellite voting hours are extended for presidential elections to manage the high volume of voters.

On Election Days the Office of Elections is open at 5:00 a.m. and remains open until all absentee ballots are counted and all precincts have reported in, often after midnight. The Electoral Board provides 225 polling places staffed with over 2,200 officers of election at over 200 locations for each November general election. Polling places are located in public schools, libraries, churches, community centers and other public buildings.

Training for new officers of election and all Chief and Assistant Chief officers is mandated by Code for each election. The Electoral Board staff conducts both day and evening classes at various times and locations before each election. This includes special sessions for new officers, satellite officers, rovers, chief and assistant chief officers and central absentee officers.

Voting machines are stored, tested and maintained at the county warehouse facility in Springfield. Electoral Board staff services the 1,220 voting machines over a 2-3 week period each summer. Machines are tested and set-up approximately 6 weeks before each November election over a period

of 2-3 weeks. Preparation for primary and special elections requires approximately 1 week, depending upon the number of machines needed for the election.

► Mandate Information

This LOB is mandated as noted on page 6 of the 2007 Federal and State Mandates Report. The percentage of this LOB's resources utilized to satisfy the mandate is 100 percent.

15-02: Voter Registration

Fund/Agency: 001/15	*Office of Elections*
LOB #: 15-02	*Voter Registration*
Personnel Services	$967,122
Operating Expenses	$451,522
Recovered Costs	$0
Capital Equipment	$0
Total LOB Cost:	$1,418,644
Federal Revenue	$0
State Revenue	$93,411
User Fee Revenue	$0
Other Revenue	$0
Total Revenue:	$93,411
Net LOB Cost:	$1,325,233
Positions/SYE involved in the delivery of this LOB	16 / 16.0

► LOB Summary

The goal of the Voter Registration division of the Office of Elections is to provide registration opportunities for all eligible citizens who desire to vote, and to assure their franchise through the maintenance of complete and accurate records. This role has continued to grow in volume and complexity; due to the population growth of the County, the ever-growing work requirements derived from new legislative demands, and the requirements of new hardware and software systems. Since 1990 the number of registered voters has grown from 415,000 to over 626,000.

In order to fulfill it's mission, the Voter Registration Division of the Office of Elections has established working relationships with numerous County agencies; i.e., County Attorney, Public Schools, County Libraries, Print Shop, Facilities Management, Circuit Court, Department of Information Technology, Department of Taxation and Geographic Information Systems, to name a few. Additionally, the work involves direct contact with elected public officials and candidates vying for office.

Office of Elections

Since the implementation of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 in 1996, the work of the division is much less cyclical than it was historically. Virginia, unlike many states, has a November general election every year. Fairfax County has at least two and usually three elections each year and sometimes as many as five or six, with no definitive method of projecting the number within the standard budget cycle.

Voter activity is dependent on many factors including the profile of the election (high-profile elections, such as a presidential election, clearly increase voter activity), the competitiveness of the races on the ballot, and "get out the vote" efforts. The recent implementation of a new statewide centralized voter registration database has created additional workload due to increased data processing steps per transaction and unresolved system issues.

The enactment of the Help America Vote Act of 2003 (HAVA) has added to the burden generated by NVRA. This Act required the implementation by the state of a new central computer registration system, the Virginia Elections Registration Information System (VERIS) which interacts with other database systems; i.e., Vital Statistics, State Police, Department of Motor Vehicles. Because of these links, VERIS requires more time and resources to do the same amount of work. As a rule of thumb, it takes an experienced employee twice the time to process a transaction in the new system as it required in the previous one. And at this time, the system's reliability is problematic, which imposes an additional burden due to lost time due to system outages, workarounds and necessary updates. The implementation of the National Voter Registration Act has spread the work over the year, but has not completely eliminated the cyclical nature of the work. In calendar year 2008, we can expect a much greater level of activity due to the nature of the elections.

Processing of the voter registration application is a multi-stepped operation which results in a voter information card which is mailed to the voter at the home address. The incomplete applications, that require additional research, represent approximately 25 percent of the total.

Besides processing applications, staff must process: 1) voter inquiries made in-person, by telephone and e-mail. An extremely high volume occurs in the month or two month period prior to every November election, 2) name and address change requests; 3) applications which must be forwarded to other localities; 4) cancellations; 5) transfers; 6) deletes and reinstatements; 7) petition verification for candidates; 8) street and map changes; 9) re-precincting needs; and 10) filing. Staff must also support such voting activities as: in-person and satellite voting coverage, verification of precinct rosters, pre and post-election processing of voting records. Other major on-going responsibilities require a great deal of additional part-time support are: 1) processing returned address confirmations; 2) sending out redistricting notifications; and 3) certifying absentee ballot applications. In addition, the Registrar's office is responsible for managing the election night returns of results and materials from all of the County's precincts.

How these factors affect the amount of work varies from year-to-year. In February, 2008, the division will have the first dual Presidential Primary election to occur in the Commonwealth of Virginia for many years and the possibility of a second statewide primary in June. These will greatly impact the activity of the Office of Elections.

Fairfax County processes the largest volume of work in the Commonwealth, yet has among the lowest staffing levels, when comparing the ratio of registered voters served by each staff member. Seasonal employees have been used to fill in the gaps. However, there has been a greater need for highly-skilled workers in these positions, due to: 1) the more complex requirements of the Office of

Elections, 2) an increase demand on the office staff working directly with the public, and 3) an increased work load due to the introduction of VERIS.

► Method of Service Provision

The Office of Elections has expanded hours to afford the most flexibility to the citizens of Fairfax County. The department is open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Code of Virginia requires that the office remain open the two Saturdays preceding a general election and the last Saturday before a primary or special election. Additionally, staff must be provided when requested by the two major political parties, if they choose to nominate by "firehouse primary", convention or canvass.

► Mandate Information

This LOB is mandated as noted on page 6 of the 2007 Federal and State Mandate Report. The percentage of this LOB's resources utilized to satisfy the mandate is 100 percent.

AGENCY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Objectives

- To provide the legally mandated one voting machine for each 750 registered voters in each precinct with a minimum of three voting machines per precinct and a countywide average of 2.19 voting machines per precinct.

- To provide, at a minimum, three election officers at each polling place, with a countywide average of 11.84 election officers at each polling place based on the number of registered voters in the precinct and anticipated voter turnout.

- To maintain no less than 98 percent, the number of error-free data entry transactions initially completed for all voter registration documents processed, including all registrations, transfers, and address/name changes.

Indicator	Prior Year Actuals		Current Estimate	Future Estimate	LOB Reference Number
	FY 2006 Actual	FY 2007 Estimate/Actual	FY 2008	FY 2009	
Output:					
Registered voters	611,183	630,000 / 626,983	645,700	677,346	15-01
Poll voters	258,165	331,500 / 318,410	258,280	418,000	15-01
Absentee voters	19,306	15,000 / 30,255	18,000	90,000	15-01
Precincts	224	225 / 225	227	228	15-01
Voting machines	1,168	1,180 / 1,131	1,190	1,170	15-01
Absentee satellites	7	7 / 7	7	8	15-01
Election officers	1,783	2,100 / 1,963	2,000	2,700	15-01
Registrations, transfers, and address/name changes processed	100,881	99,600 / 81,121	104,250	141,260	15-02

Office of Elections

Indicator	Prior Year Actuals FY 2006 Actual	Prior Year Actuals FY 2007 Estimate/Actual	Current Estimate FY 2008	Future Estimate FY 2009	LOB Reference Number
Efficiency:					
Cost of machines/precinct	$1,413	$1,415 / $1,022	$1,311	$1,371	15-01
Cost of officers/precinct	$871	$1,004 / $1,022	$1,031	$1,334	15-01
Cost per poll voter	$1.98	$1.65 / $1.61	$2.24	$1.48	15-01
Cost per registration, transfer or address/name change processed (1) (2)	$4.58	$6.41 / $5.47	$5.41	$5.68	15-02
Service Quality:					
Percent of polling places that are handicapped accessible	99.5%	100.0% / 100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	15-01
Percent of polling places that are in compliance (machines)	100.0%	100.0% / 100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	15-01
Percent of polling places that are in compliance (size)	100.0%	100.0% / 100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	15-01
Percent voter turnout	45.4%	55.0% / 55.6%	42.8%	75.0%	15-01
Error rate	1.7%	1.4% / 2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	15-02
Outcome:					
Registered voters/precinct	2,728	2,800 / 2,787	2,844	2,971	15-01
Machines/precinct	5.21	5.24 / 5.03	5.24	2.19	15-01
Officers/precinct	7.96	9.33 / 8.72	8.81	11.84	15-01
Percent of registrations, transfers, and address/name changes completed without error	98.3%	98.6% / 98.0%	98.0%	98.0%	15-02

Note: Calculations are based on statistics for the November general elections.

(1) The compensation for Chief and Assistant Chief Election Officers was raised in FY 2008 which increased the overall average cost for election offices.

(2) In FY 2007 the new state information system, VERIS, was implemented, which mandated interfaces that measurably increased processing times. VERIS also accounts for data in a different method than the earlier system; thus the total transactions count and error rates do not translate exactly from system to system. FY 2008 and FY 2009 estimated costs per transaction (registration, transfer or address/name change processed) are projected to be at these higher processing rates. While exact error rates are currently not measurable, the estimated rate of 98 percent is a reliable projection. New methodologies are being developed which will allow the agency to once again accurately measure the error rate involving these transactions.