

VOTENOTES

Fairfax County Election Officer News

Fall 2008



FAIRFAX COUNTY PREPARES FOR HISTORIC ELECTION ON NOVEMBER 4, 2008

On November 4, 2008 Fairfax County voters will go to the polls to vote for electors for President/Vice President, a member of the U.S. Senate, members of the U.S. House of Representatives and a County Parks Bond Issue. It has been 80 years and 20 presidential elections since no sitting President or incumbent Vice-President was running for the highest elected office in the land. As demonstrated by the turnout during the February 12, 2008 Presidential Primaries, interest is at an all time high. With its 13 electoral votes, Virginia will be the object of increased attention. Much of that attention will be directed at Fairfax County, the largest jurisdiction in the Commonwealth.

It is also expected that turnout will be at its highest levels since the County began keeping historical voting records. The highest recorded County turnout for a presidential election was the 1992 Presidential election, Clinton vs. Bush, with 85% of registered voters casting their votes. Since 1992, Fairfax County, to date, has increased its voter registration rolls by over 200,000 voters (from 457,000 to over 657,000 registered voters.) This number will increase up until the pollbooks close on October 6.

Beginning with the November 2008 election, Fairfax County will begin using an optical scan voting system at the polls in addition to the handicapped-accessible touch screen voting machines. At the Fairfax County Electoral Board's request, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved the purchase of these machines in order that long lines at the polls for this election would be alleviated. Due to state legislation, the County is prohibited from purchasing additional touch screen machines. The optical scan machines allow many more voters to be processed in the same amount of time compared to the touch-screen voting machines.

The VOTENOTES editor sat down recently with the newly appointed General Registrar, Rokey W. Suleman, II, to discuss his transition as the new General Registrar for Fairfax County and to ask him his thoughts on the upcoming election.

Q. What similarities and differences have you found between Fairfax and the previous county where you were the Deputy General Registrar?

A. Well, Virginia has a much easier election to administer in some aspects and more complicated in others. Ballots are MUCH simpler here in Virginia. For the Virginia Primary in June we had three ballot styles for 228 precincts. In Ohio I had 1,365 ballot styles for 273 precincts! Ohio requires that you have one electronic voting machine for every 175 voters so I had nearly as many machines in Ohio as we have in Fairfax for 1/5 the number of voters. Fairfax, and Virginia, place up to 5,000 voters in a precinct while Ohio has a maximum of 1,400/precinct. Therefore we had quite a bit more administrative work. The similarities are the staff and election officials. I have found that wherever you go, people involved in elections only worry about one thing. Providing a great election for the voters. The pride that staff and election officials take in their jobs is amazing. (story continues on page 2)



Rokey W. Suleman, II (pictured right) is sworn in as General Registrar of Fairfax County by Clerk of the Court John T. Frey.

November 2008 Election (cover story con't)

Q. Why did the County decide to implement a new voting system right before a Presidential election?

A. The County was forced to by state law. Fairfax County does not have enough electronic voting machines to handle the expected record turnout this November. We were facing the prospect of incredibly long lines and all of the bad publicity that comes with it. Virginia passed a law that not only prevented us from buying extra electronic voting equipment but also prevented us from even renting equipment for the day. We had to do something. Paper ballots will give our voters the opportunity to complete their ballots faster so that our lines are as short as possible. We'll still have lines....just not as long as they would have been had we not bought the optical scan equipment.

Q. What do you believe to be your biggest challenge concerning the November election?

A. The biggest challenge concerning the November election will be handling the expected record turnout. We are already well into the preparations for November. The optical scan equipment will provide polling locations with enough ballots which we hope speed up the process for both the voter and election officials.

Q. Have you had time to explore Fairfax County and if so what do you like to do here in your spare time?

A. I really haven't had much time to explore Fairfax County yet. I have found some good restaurants and am always looking for suggestions! I like to explore the little places. In my spare time I love to play softball so I am hoping to meet some people here so I can join a team next year.

Rokey Suleman, II was appointed the General Registrar of Fairfax County on May 7, 2008. Suleman was the deputy director of the Board of Elections in Trumbull County, Ohio, since 2004. He grew up in Warren, OH and has been involved in elections since high school!

In Ohio, Suleman led a transition from a punch card voting system to an optical scan and direct-record electronic combination system. Fairfax County is making a similar transition.

Fairfax County to Implement New Voting Machines All election officers required to be trained for November election!

Training is going to be **VERY** important this election. We are expecting a higher than normal turnout and we will be utilizing optical scan equipment for the first time as well as our touch-screen machines. Because of these changes in equipment and election day procedures, we are requiring that all election officers, experienced and new, attend a training class prior to this election.

You will have the opportunity to select a class from many times and locations throughout the county. It is important that you attend the entire class. If you arrive to training late or leave early, you may be required to attend another session. We need to ensure that EVERY official is thoroughly trained regardless of his/her years of experience. Included in the VoteNotes, is the training schedule and locations.

Your participation will ensure that when the nation watches, Fairfax County shines!

2008 VIRGINIA ELECTION LAW CHANGES

While there were many bills relating to election law that were enacted during the 2008 Virginia General Assembly, these are of particular interest to our election officers.

- **§24.2-404 Pollbook & Lookup List**

Neither the pollbook nor the regional or statewide list of registered voters shall include the voter's day and month of birth, but shall include the year.

- **§24.2-652.2 Wireless Communications at Polls**

Provides that the prohibition on wireless communication between voting machines does not apply to voting machines purchased by any locality before July 1, 2007. As an aside, Fairfax County purchased its machines in 2003.

- **§24.2-309 Precinct Freeze**

No changes to precinct boundaries from February 1, 2009 to May 15, 2011 due to the U.S. Census. (There are a few specific exceptions.) In addition ordinances to change precinct lines because of **§24.2-307** (presidential turnout) must be adopted on or before February 1, 2009.

- **§24.2-653 Provisional Ballots**

Requires recording the provisional voter's information on the Provisional Ballots Log, instead of the pollbook.

- **§24.2-701 Absentee Applications**

Assistance allowed to all disabled absentee voters. Ballot may be sent to address where voter is temporarily confined due to disability or illness. Also, applicant "unable to sign" procedures apply if due to "disability" ("physical" removed.)

- **§24.2-700 Who May Vote Absentee**

Disability category has been broadened to include any "person with a disability" who is unable to go to the polls because of their disability, illness, or pregnancy.

FAIRFAX COUNTY OFFICE OF ELECTIONS NEWS

Congratulations!!!!!!

Deputy General Registrar **Gary Scott** and Election Specialists **Rebecca Corner** and **Regina Zinzer** have been designated as Certified Elections/Registration Administrators (CERA), the highest professional achievement given by the Election Center. CERA designation is achieved only through a multi-year course of study conducted by The Election Center's Professional Education Program. The intent of the program is to professionalize the management of voter registration and elections administration in promoting and preserving the public trust in the democratic process. In addition to Ms. Corner, Mr. Scott and Ms. Zinzer, the following staff are currently certified: **Rokey Suleman**, General Registrar, **Judy Flaig**, Elections Manager, and **Sonia Skipper**, Business Analyst.



CERA Plaque



Welcome !!!!!

Welcome to **Sue Daniels**, a seasonal employee for the last several years, who has joined the Office of Elections. Many of you already know Sue from her duties assigning election officers. Sue served as Chief Election Officer at the Oak Marr precinct for the past 4 years.

Also welcome to two new rovers, **Kathryn Martin** and **Richard Thompson**. Kathryn Martin has served as a Chief in numerous polling places throughout the County and Richard Thompson has mostly served as a Chief in the Lee District area.

Did You Know...?

The July 7, 2008 issue of Election Administration Reports highlighted a recent issue of *American Politics Research* (Vol. 36, No. 4.) In that issue, a research team from Brigham Young University and Kent State University found that voter evaluations of poll workers are responsive to wait times, feelings of privacy while voting, poll worker training, and special poll worker recruiting efforts. When voters feel good about their interactions with poll workers, they feel better about their voting experience and more confident about the electoral system. Their research, described in "At Your Service," used exit poll data from two counties in Ohio in 2006 to determine how voters react to poll workers and how poll workers affect the voting experience.

"We preach the virtues of democracy abroad. We must practice its duties here at home. Voting is the first duty of democracy."

Lyndon Johnson, 36th U.S. President

DATES TO REMEMBER

- **In-Person Absentee Voting Begins:** Friday, September 19, 2008
- **Deadline to Register to Vote:** Monday, October 6, 2008 at 6:00 P.M.
- **Satellite Voting Begins:** Wednesday, October 15, 2008
- **Applications Must Be Received by Mail or Fax:** Tuesday, October 28, 2008 by 5:00 P.M.

FAIRFAX COUNTY RELATED WEBSITES

<http://www.sbe.virginia.gov/>

Virginia State Board of Elections

<http://www.fec.gov/>

The Federal Election Commission

<http://www.fvap.gov/>

The Federal Voting Assistance Program

<http://www.virginia.gov/>

Commonwealth of Virginia Home Page

<http://legis.state.va.us/>

Virginia General Assembly

ON THE BALLOT IN NOVEMBER

U.S. President/Vice-President

U.S. Senate

U.S. House of Representatives

**Fairfax County Bond Issue on
Parks and Park Facilities**



Fairfax County Office of Elections
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 323
Fairfax, VA 22035

Mailing Label

**DID YOU KNOW THAT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CAN BE
OBTAINED VIA THE ELECTORAL BOARD'S WEBSITE?**

- ✓ Upcoming Elections
- ✓ Election Returns (from 1990 to the present)
- ✓ Absentee Voting
- ✓ Polling Places
- ✓ Street File Locator
- ✓ Election Calendar
- ✓ Elected Officials
- ✓ Candidate Information
- ✓ Campaign Finance
- ✓ Student Page Program
- ✓ Working at the Polls
- ✓ Voting Equipment Information



To request reasonable ADA accommodations,
call the Office of Elections at
703-324-4735 Fax: 703-324-4706
General Registrar 703-222-0776
TTY: 711 (Virginia Relay)
E-mail: elect@fairfaxcounty.gov
Web: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb