

Office of Elections

LOB #45:

VOTER REGISTRATION

Purpose

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 ensure the maintenance of complete and accurate voter registration records in accordance with Federal and state law. The Voter Registration Division's role has continued to grow in volume and complexity due to the population growth of the County, the increasing complexity and additional requirements imposed by new legislation and regulation, and the complexities of new hardware and software systems.

Description

From 1990 to 2015 the number of registered voters has grown from 415,000 to 700,000. In order to fulfill its mission, the Voter Registration Division of the Office of Elections has established working relationships with numerous County agencies such as: County Attorney, Human Resources, Libraries, Print Shop, Facilities Management, Circuit Court, Department of Information Technology and the Department of Tax Administration. Additionally, Voter Registration has direct contact with elected public officials and candidates actively running for office.

Virginia, unlike many states, holds a November general election every year, while Fairfax County has at least two and often three elections every year and sometimes as many as five or six, there is no definitive method of projecting the exact 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, increase voter activity), the competitiveness of the election races on the ballot, and the effectiveness of "get out the vote" efforts on that part of interested groups.

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 2016, the Office can expect a much greater level of activity affecting voter registration due to the upcoming presidential election.

Processing the voter registration applications is a multi-stepped operation which requires a voter information notice to be mailed to the voter at the home address. The processing of incomplete applications requires additional research and represents approximately 25 percent of all applications received. Incomplete applications require additional correspondence which increases the workload of this division.

In addition to processing applications, Voter Registration staff must process:

- voter inquiries made in-person, by telephone and e-mail. An extremely high volume occurs in the months prior to each November election;
- name and address change requests;
- applications which must be forwarded to other localities;
- cancellations;
- transfers;
- registration deletions and reinstatements;
- petition verification for candidates and other related candidate paperwork,
- street and map changes;
- re-precincting needs; and,
- filing.

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In addition to the responsibilities listed above, the Division is required to “receive, catalog and review” campaign contribution and expenditure reports. The Division has the authority to impose and collect penalties for violations of campaign reporting requirements. Voter Registration staff is also tasked with supporting voting activities such as: in-person and satellite voting coverage, verification of precinct rosters, pre and post-election processing of voting records.

Benefits

The benefit of the Voter Registration Division is to allow the eligible residents of Fairfax County to exercise their right to participate in the democratic process and to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Mandates

This LOB is mandated by the Constitutions of the United States and Virginia and various sections of US and Commonwealth of Virginia laws and regulations. The percentage of this LOB’s resources utilized to satisfy the mandate is 100 percent.

Trends and Challenges

The Office of Elections has expanded hours to offer more flexibility to the citizens of Fairfax County. The department is open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except Thursdays where the office is open until 7:00 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. With voters demanding expanded in-person absentee voting opportunities, the Office of Elections has not only added satellite in-person absentee sites, but has also expanded the hours beyond normal business hours during the weeks in advance of a general election, including Saturdays in an effort to supplement the minimum requirements of by the Code.

Additionally, Office of Elections staff is required to provide support when requested by either or both of the two major political parties, if they choose to nominate their candidates by “firehouse primary,” convention or canvass.

As personal electronic devices become more and more prevalent, the Office of Elections has adapted to provide improved access to the voter registration and voting process. The Office of Elections works diligently to maintain a balance between the expectations of the public and the limitations imposed by the need to safeguard voter and voting information.

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Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #45: Voter Registration			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$1,417,158	\$1,508,796	\$1,573,878
Operating Expenses	388,458	277,590	422,172
Total Expenditures	\$1,805,616	\$1,786,386	\$1,996,050
General Fund Revenue	\$68,266	\$68,668	\$69,043
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$1,737,350	\$1,717,718	\$1,927,007
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	13 / 13	14 / 14	16 / 16
Exempt	5 / 5	5 / 5	5 / 5
Total Positions	18 / 18	19 / 19	21 / 21

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Registered voters	726,071	702,132	708,678	690,000	725,000
Registrations, transfers and address/name changes processed	112,700	120,000	86,000	100,000	175,000
Cost per registration, transfer or address/name change processed	\$5.40	\$5.40	\$5.65	\$5.40	\$5.65
Percent of registrations, transfers and address/name changes completed without error	98.0%	98.0%	98.1%	98.0%	98.2%

The level of activity in the Voter Registration division is dependent upon many factors. Some of these factors include the profile of the election (i.e. presidential year), the competitiveness of the election races on the ballot and the effectiveness of the “get out the vote” efforts on the part of interested groups. While the recent (July 2014) On-line voting application capability included on the Virginia Department of Elections website has the potential to slightly increase Fairfax County staff efficiency on voter registration processes, the Office predicts a significant increase in the number of registration transactions for FY2017 due to expected strong participation of the two major political parties, increased activity from third party organizations such as the League of Women Voters and the Office of Elections, all of which will be encouraging voters to register or update their registration records. The summer and early fall of 2016 will see many organizations conducting voter registration drives. These groups do not typically host large numbers of election focused activities during non-presidential years. The increase in third-party registration drive activity combined with a typically high turnout election fueled by constant media attention, on-line voter registration and a transient community make significantly increase registration transactions in FY2017 highly likely. Therefore the Office of Elections has incorporated this expected increased registration activity into its management plan.