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A Message from the President

By Jerry O. Eaton, ECA President, (R) Commissioner, Jefferson County



Jerry O. Eaton, Jefferson County

Dear Fellow Election Commissioners and Government Officials,

The 2012 election year was one of the most lengthy and challenging in the history of the State of New York. The beginning of the year started with the redistricting of our state's Congressional and State Legislative seats. In addition to this once in a decade process, New York was involved in Federal court action due to the state's failure to comply with the 2009 Military and Overseas Voting Act (MOVE) in a timely manner.

The ultimate result of this failure to comply with this law was the decision by Federal Judge Gary Sharpe to move all Federal Primary elections to June 26, 2012. Disagreement in the New York State Legislature stymied our Association's goal of a combined Federal, State, and Local Primary for 2012. This had serious fiscal, logistical, and political consequences for counties.

Counties conducted a minimum of three countywide elections with most running four or more over the course of the year. In addition to these challenges, county

costs exploded due to extra paper ballots, additional absentee ballot mailings due to multiple Military personnel ballots, election inspector pay, and trucking of voting machines and other election supplies.

The General Election provided a major milestone due to the fact that the paper ballot/optical scan voting systems were used for the first time in a Presidential Election. Boards of Elections were dealt a serious crisis when Hurricane Sandy slammed into the greater New York City/Long Island region creating havoc on our citizens and the ability to run elections smoothly. Despite the intense damage to this area in terms of life and property, the Boards in this region dutifully carried out their responsibilities despite the severe carnage that was wrought.

As we begin 2013, it's more imperative than ever that our Association work with the State Legislature to enact comprehensive election law reforms. Many of our state's election laws are badly in need of revision or are simply irrelevant in today's paper ballot/optical scan world. Antiquated election laws are hampering many aspects of sound election management and have unnecessarily driven up election costs on taxpayers and the counties.

In closing, I would like to thank all those dedicated election professionals who work so hard to run honest and fair elections throughout New York. Without fanfare and throughout many trying circumstances, county Boards of Elections continually work to ensure that the people's most basic and hard-won rights are protected and preserved.

Jerry O. Eaton,
President

ECA
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January 14-17, 2013
Albany, NY

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Changes for 2012 and 2013

By **Vicky Olin, (R) Commissioner, Steuben County**

In August, 2012, DMV implemented a new method of collecting voter registration applications received in DMV offices. The new program was piloted by 2 DMV offices and is now in operation at all DMV's in NYS. The new method permits the customer to answer a series of voter registration application questions (the same questions asked on the NYS BOE voter registration application form) on a payment terminal device (VeriFone) located at the DMV workstations.

BOE's are now receiving a printed form that contains the applicant's name, date of birth, DMV Client ID, address and the answers they provided to all the voter registration application questions on the (VeriFone). Also included on the printed form is a digitized image of the signature the customer provided DMV when they were issued their photo document from DMV.

DMV is hoping to implement part II which is the electronic transmission acceptance of the voter registration data from DMV to the BOE's, by mid 2013.

DMV expects to be able to pay vendors for necessary programming changes to allow County voter registration systems

to electronically accept and process this information. Homegrown counties can have similar dialogues with DMV about the cost if needed. The business requirements needed for this process still need to be ironed out. Once that has been completed contracts will need to be signed before any programming changes by the voter registrations vendors can be started. Based on this timeline, it will be difficult to achieve the mid 2013 date indicated by DMV.

What will happen with the electronic transmission once it is in place will depend on the system that you currently have, for example if you do not have a full document imaging system (most counties do), you will open the DMV file sent to you, print out the scanned pages and proceed with your normal registration process. If you have Full Document Imaging, the voter registration information from DMV will be imported into a "holding area" and once the information has been processed and approved by staff from both parties, the full document image, the digitized signature, and voter information will be accepted into your voter registration system. This method should provide assurance of bi-partisan review and approval while saving time in

data entry and allowing resources to be spent on verifying data rather than entering it.

How does this affect our Budget? Vendors may increase maintenance cost due to the increased complexity of their system that they will be maintaining once program is up and running. DMV has not agreed to pay for any maintenance fees although one year of maintenance and support is typically included in state contracts such as this. Our vendor, NTS has said that they will let us know in advance of any maintenance increases, so the counties can plan ahead for their budget. Something else you might want to put in your budget is widescreen monitors or dual monitors for each staff member; they will be very useful for staff to be able to view images and voter registration data at the same time - side by side.

We have had some bumps in the road, with these changes and probably a few more to come. Just remember if you are having problems with anything that you are receiving from DMV send a copy and a written explanation to the state board so it can be addressed. Remember if you don't let someone know there is a problem it won't get fixed and we need to fix it now before it is a finished product.

2012 - A Year to Remember

By **Nancy Leven, (R) Commissioner, Livingston County**

In rural Livingston County, it has been a busy year with elections as it has in every county. For us it started with the March Village elections, then the June Federal Primary and next up was the September State and Local Primary. Many times in past years we haven't needed to even hold an election but this is 2012 and nothing is normal anymore. The redistricting brought change to our Assembly lines and therefore a Primary and a vacancy in the District Attorney's office brought the same.

The DA's race brought much energy to the election. At the close of polls on election night the DA's race showed only 19 votes between the two candidates. Up next was the counting of the absentee and affidavit ballots. After just one full day of counting who would predict that the close race would become tied. After our first trip to Court, over a few contested ballots, the race

showed one candidate up by one vote. But then an addition error was discovered which sent us back to Court as it was perceived by one candidate that we had mysteriously found a ballot.

With the Primary not held until Thursday, September 13th and a small staff, each time the two Commissioners were to appear in court 35 minutes from the office and in another county it meant fifty percent of the staff was out of the office and with fifty percent left to carry on to finish what they could of the Primary and forge ahead on the next election. The Judge ruled that it was only an addition error and that the count would stand bringing the race back to a tie meaning the political party's committee would make the decision as to who their candidate would be. (EL Section 6-148(3)). However, it was Wednesday, October 3rd and ballots to the Military were required to be out by Friday.

The political party immediately notified their members of a new meeting and set out to determine a candidate. With a decision finally in place just the next evening, I emailed the printer. We had previously sent three versions of the ballot and just needed to let them know which to print. With our envelopes labeled we waited for the ballots. They arrived in time for us to get them in the envelopes, drive to the post office and carry them to the counter with a couple of minutes to spare before the 5 PM closing time on Friday, October 5th to meet the required MOVE deadline. Another task completed by the deadline, but a Primary date earlier in the year would have definitely made it easier and less stressful!

New York Still Faces Extra (Costly) Elections

By Joseph Welch, Chairman, NYSECA Legislative Committee

The ECA is looking forward to 2013 when it expects the state legislature to finally settle upon a single date to hold the federal, state, and local primary elections. In 2012 the state suffered the expense of holding a federal primary in June and then another state and local primary in September; estimated to cost an extra \$45-50 Million out of the taxpayers' pockets.¹ The expense notwithstanding, it appeared that voter confusion about the split primary was at an all-time high, and voter turnout, at an all-time low. And at the very heart of the matter were the military voters who were up against impossible time constraints to return their voted ballots in the pinch of time imposed by a mid-September primary election.

In a style much akin to that of King Solomon, Federal Court Judge Gary Sharpe was forced to impose an order on the State of New York; if New York's legislature couldn't compromise, then the ballot will be split in two.² It was an eventuality that many, if not most, Commissioners believed would be averted. Ultimately the separate primaries were what the state had to endure.

Blame whomever you please: a politically polarized state legislature that failed to deliver; a federal court order forcing upon the State a June 26th "federal-only ballot"³; an unyielding Department of Defense that wouldn't afford the State (yet another) waiver to hold federal primary elections in September⁴; or perhaps the stars simply misaligned with all the wrangling about redistricting and incumbents circulating petitions in March. The fact remains, Commissioners still face running two separate primaries in 2014, and that's a problem for military voters, Boards of Elections, and the taxpayers of New York.

Having two primary elections is just the most glaring example of wasteful spending amidst dozens of provisions that remain on the books; provisions that are costing the state and counties needless amounts of tax dollars. And all this is happening in a political environment where both sides of the aisle appear eager to dial back unfunded state mandates and reduce spending. So Elections Commissioners are confident that the legislature will pick some key agenda

items from the ECA legislative agenda that seek to eliminate expensive and outdated laws which are remnants from the lever machine days. These are laws such as capping election districts at 1,150 voters. The new machines can easily handle three times as many, and it would drastically reduce poll worker expenses. Other proposed changes include repealers and amendments aimed at giving Commissioners more flexibility with the location and staffing of polling places; as well as rethinking the concept of local registration days which have high costs and yield negligible results.

The ECA's legislative agenda remains abundant with policy changes that the entire legislature can and should pursue in 2013.⁵ The ECA stands ready to help.

¹ NYS Board of Elections' February 2012 estimates

² January 27, 2012, Judge Sharpe's Memorandum and Decision, *United States v New York State*

³ Id.

⁴ November 16, 2011 NYS Board of Elections press release

⁵ For a copy of the entire legislative agenda email josephw@co.steuben.ny.us

A New Clerk's View of the BOE

By Kate Ferris, (D) Clerk, Saratoga County

I used to think I had a pretty good handle on how the election process worked.

After all, I am a responsible citizen accustomed to carrying out my civic duty. I vote in most elections, even the ones for school and library. But it wasn't until I joined the Saratoga County Board of Elections that I found out just what it takes to actually *hold* an election. As a new clerk in a year with three primaries and a presidential election, I have developed a unique appreciation for the work that goes into the privilege of voting.

Over the last year I learned that there is so much more than candidates filing paperwork to get on a ballot. There are the bags of supplies (paper clips, affidavit kits, 100 feet distance markers, Notice to Voter statements, etc.) that must be put together for every district. I discovered that a pen isn't a pen, but a ballot marking device. I knew there were poll books, but I didn't know there were personal barcodes for every registered voter in the county. And it's not just one ballot style for the county, but in the case of the presidential election, 20 ballot styles for the different combinations of town and congressional and state senate and assembly districts.

I found out just how many hours and hours of training are given to hundreds of election inspectors so that they know the procedures for greeting voters, running the machines, and most importantly, tallying the results. (Admittedly, some of the inspectors could have benefited from paying more attention during class, but it's a lot to take in. I know. It took me four times around for some of it to sink in.) I learned what it takes to program memory cards and ready the machines, not to mention get them to and from 196 polling sites in far-flung parts of the county. I came to appreciate (well, dread actually) the time-consuming process of recanvassing, especially when candidate representatives are observing (and objecting to) the opening of absentee and affidavit ballots. But candidates do have a right to know who won fairly and squarely. Isn't that one of the reasons why we're here?

Yet the most remarkable thing I discovered was how much people care about being able to vote. Who knew how much an elderly man, confined to a nursing home, worried about getting his absentee ballot for a local primary? Who knew how delighted new citizens could be when they came in to register, proudly

showing off their naturalization papers? Who knew how many moms and dads of college-aged children would do whatever it took—get the application, drive it across the state, have the kid fill it out and sign, then bring it back—to get their child registered to receive an absentee ballot? Who knew the urgency of a patient calling at 4:00 p.m. on November 6 to ask that a voting machine be brought to her at the hospital? Who knew what distances people displaced by Superstorm Sandy would go to cast their vote? Who knew how many people would try to get around the system somehow, someway, to vote without being registered?

During the last 12 months I have gained great respect for the knowledge of the commissioners, deputy commissioners and my fellow clerks—knowledge of election law and regulations, of processes and procedures. I am in awe of the patience and genuine helpfulness of my colleagues to see that every voter has the ability to vote, and that every vote is counted. I already knew how fortunate we are to live in a country where we can freely cast our ballots, but I never knew how vital the staffs of BOEs were to the entire process. Now I know and take pride in what we do.

A Dying Breed: The Challenge of Fostering New Civic Involvement in the Electoral Process

By Jeffrey D. Farrell, (D) Deputy Commissioner, St. Lawrence County

“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

- President John F. Kennedy

President John F. Kennedy’s iconic quote from 1961 is a perfect summation of civic ethos eternalized by the generation that came of age during and after the Second World War. The involvement of America’s “Greatest Generation” in the electoral process has been widespread and constant. When reading an inspirational quote that transcends party lines it often drums up idealistic feelings and thoughts making you ponder, “What can I do for my country, state, county, town, city, or village?” In an ever-changing and demanding world the idea of civic duty to a 26-year-old man can ultimately be pushed aside for the next great tech gadget or a drink with friends. As the challenge of the long Election Day thwarts many from now participating in the Election process they once dominated. The active involvement of the twenty-somethings is nominal at best for a rural area like St. Lawrence County.

As many of the most capable and longest serving poll workers begin to slowly decrease their involvement in the elections process, political and civic involvement will be a necessary point of discussion. In the upcoming years, our task will be determining how to best encourage and recruit a new generation of poll workers. Recent efforts to drum up new poll workers in St. Lawrence County have focused on local colleges and universities, advertisements in local print media and listings on our county website. Unfortunately, such efforts have been largely unsuccessful in encouraging youth involvement in St. Lawrence County.

Recruitment of new poll workers must mimic the modern mobilization techniques utilized by recent political campaigns around us. The new electronic voting machines ushered in technological change in your office, redefining the way in which you conduct an

election. Why are we not complementing the traditional methods with new techniques? New media methods such as Twitter and Facebook now reach a broader audience and can be used as a central point of contact. Facebook and Twitter advertising can target specific demographics such as age, gender, county, state, and city. This broader attempt to contact a specific demographic facilitates a spread of information allowing for people to learn more about the benefits of being an Election Inspector, whether it is the pay or the feeling of helping out their community.

Whether these challenges are met with legislative intervention or tackled by the staff in your office, it is not too soon to develop a recruitment strategy. Attempting to fill the gaps now could lead to a person’s lifelong involvement in politics and grow a spirit for civic engagement.

One for the Record Books: 6 Elections in 2012

By Brian Abram, (R) Commissioner, Chautauqua County

This past year turned out to be the “*perfect storm*” for elections in Chautauqua County. We joked around our office that we had “the election of the month”, and our machines were getting frequent flyer miles! Our first election was in March, when thirteen of the fifteen villages decided to take the plunge and have us run their elections. While the turnout was low, and the competition for the offices limited, you still have the sites, workers, ballots, transportation of supplies and everything else that is standard to the election process. Once the villages were wrapped up, the calendar was flipped to April, and the New York State Presidential Primary was next in line. Once again, our voter turnout percentage was very low, but the work associated with this Countywide election kept us busy.

Three weeks after the Presidential Primary, as we wondered why winter never came to Western New York, school budget votes were on the horizon. Chautauqua County

has eighteen schools, and three of them decided to have us now run their elections. While visiting a school election, I was approached by a majority of voters who said to me after they voted, “How long have you used these machines?” My initial reaction was, “Uh-oh...if they haven’t voted on our optical scan machine before (we’ve been at this since ’09) what was it going to be like at the November Election?” As we marched into June, the Federal Primary was next on our agenda. That made four straight months that we had the machines in the field, poll sites staffed, bags packed, ballots created, etc. Once again, a lot of effort to was put in to allow the voters a choice.

Four down, two to go. The September Primary was a Countywide election. The day was moved to a Thursday because of 9/11, our voting was for minor party lines, and it was the fifth time in nine months we opened out sites for the voting process. I wondered if they were tired of seeing us!

The granddaddy of elections was last, and we estimated about 25% of the voters were going to be ‘new’ voters, meaning they’d never voted on our optical scan machines. During the pre-election Coordinators meeting on the Friday before D-Day, both Commissioners stressed patience, customer service, and flexibility to our poll sites coordinators. It was our sixth election in 2012, and this was the moment that would hopefully turn the tide away from “What happened to the old machines...I like them better”.

All in all, I’m glad to have it done. We hit the voting storm, but that turned out to be nothing compared to what our colleagues downstate faced in the other perfect storm...Sandy. We are blessed to have the opportunity to allow voters the opportunity to choose who they feel best represents their needs, even if it felt like the “election of the month”.

New Technology: It Isn't Just About Voting Machines

By Tom Ferrarese, ECA Secretary-Treasurer, (D) Commissioner, Monroe County

When I was elected Secretary/Treasurer I told you that I wanted to update and upgrade some of our processes. My background provides me with experiences that support that and it is something I felt I could do for the Association. Since June we have moved our Email process to Constant Contact, an industry standard. We are still working out some bugs but it seems to be going well. When my term is done I will pass on administrative rights to the next Secretary/Treasurer who will continue with the same system avoiding having to set up a new email system. We also have a number of options available with Constant Contact to store past notices with attachments and to survey our members. The system also maintains addresses, phone numbers and faxes along with tags for Commissioners' & Deputies, CBOE Staff, NYSBOE, ECA Committees, Vendors, and State Legislators and other elected officials. We also are now using QuickBooks on-line to handle our finances. This will also be something that is "passed" on so the wheel doesn't have to be reinvented. I give our past Secretary/Treasurers a lot of credit as they each had to set up these procedures when they took over.

We are going to test several options for conference calling and web-based communications. We currently have the capacity to provide shared audio and video files along with regular documents for our

members and look forward to making use of that in the near future.

We also now own the rights to "NYSECA" on the web. This means that we will be able in the next few months to have people go to www.nyseca.com and find us. We also picked up the rights to ".us" and ".org". We are working with our web committee to design a new site that will allow us to expand and improve our presence on the web. We can't thank NTS enough for the time and space that they have provided us. They have expressed the desire to continue to support us as we start this move to a new site.

We are working on setting up Forums for our members to use to trade ideas. They work differently than Blogs in that each Blog belongs to a person Forums don't – they belong to the Association. Forums can be set up for different groups (i.e. technicians, ballot designers, legislative planning, vendors, etc.) and within each group there can be different topics. This is just a general overview. There is still a lot of work to be done in this area but it seems

to be a direction that a number of you have expressed interest in.

All of this work also requires business rules that we are currently developing and will be bringing to the membership through the Executive Committee for approval. These business rules will provide the framework for the use of this new technology. Your support is also important. As many of you discovered sometimes interacting with your County Informational Services departments was necessary to make sure you were getting emails through the new system and we are not there yet with everyone but are getting closer every day. Your patience and willingness to work with us will hopefully provide for a more open and active Election Commissioners' Association.



"Office Procedure" Notebooks

By Cathleen E. Rogers, (D) Commissioner, Hamilton County

Hello Everyone! Hamilton County is the third largest county land-wise and least populated in NYS. The ratio of Republicans to Democrats is three to one. The Hamilton County Board of Elections consists of two full-time Commissioners and two part-time Deputy Commissioners. Our office has four black notebooks which consist of BOE "Office Procedures". These notebooks are located in a general area where both Election Commissioners have access to.

In 2011 and 2012 the NYSBOE came into the Hamilton County Board of Elections office and went over in great detail the

Hamilton County "Office Procedure" notebooks to make sure it coincides with the NYS Election Law and all "new" federal mandates. This is not only handy for a new Election Commissioner but for us "seasoned" commissioners. Let's say the "new" commissioner has a question and is not sure of what section of the NYS Election Law to refer to, these four notebooks not only have the day-to-day procedure but the section of the NYS Election Law right next to it.

It consists of the following: Affidavit Ballot Absentee Ballot procedures, Annual Report, BOE Monthly Activities, Budget,

Ballot Layout Order, Confirmations/Mail Check/Transfers, Machine Custodians, Cancellations/Purging, Challenges, DMV Verification, DMV Transmittals, Election Chargeback's, EMS Programming, Enrollment Changes, Felonies & NYS Court System (explaining the Different Departments), Federal Voters/Military, Election Inspectors, NVRA Purge, NCOA, NYS Voter (Duplicates, Deceased, Felonies), petitions, Voter Registration Coordinator, etc.

There was an extreme amount of work that went into these notebooks, but it was well worth it.

Resistant to Change

By Anthony Scannapieco Jr., (R) Commissioner, Putnam County

Nobody cares how you vote, three years ago for some; two years for the rest we implemented the BMD voting machine and scanner into the voting process in New York State. It is human nature to be resistant to change. We have all received complaints from voters of “people seeing how I voted”. I reiterate nobody cares!

This year we had a Presidential Election, so we have the one in four-year voters who have not used the new voting system and so again we have the complaints of *people can see how I am voting*.

We, the Board of Elections instruct our poll workers to keep the lines back, give out privacy folders, don't stand too close to the machines, sometimes they listen and sometimes they don't. We cannot stand in every polling place and we cannot change the voting machines that we have to use.

We have had numerous discussions over the last few years on this issue and realize that this is more of a *perception rather than fact*. The first year I actually had a woman tell me that somebody could read her ballot through the school window! We can all tell

similar stories. The fact is we actually have complaints that they can't read the ballots because the print is too small so how can they read someone's ballot.

In order for us to ease the public's perception we must continue to have our poll workers keep people back behind the line, give out privacy folders, have the machine inspectors stand back unless asked for assistance and educate the public. Remember nobody cares how you voted!



Primary, Primary, Primary...

By Nancy Leven, Executive Committee Chairman, Livingston County

In looking back Commissioners across New York knew we would be put to the ultimate test in 2012 and we were! Budgets started out on everyone's mind as we were pondering how to stay within a budget when you were unsure of how many elections there were going to be. With a Presidential election year looming, we knew it would be a costly year. When the new machines arrived some counties were able to add staff but with the economy getting tighter others have had to lay off staff. How were we going to do more with less? We had tried to impress on the State Legislature just how important it was for us to have the Federal Primary combined with the State and Local Primary. Money could be saved by holding one less election and that is important; however, the main reason for the Commissioners' Association supporting an earlier Primary date was to have all candidates in place long before any certification of the ballot would need to occur. Court cases have a tendency to drag out and usually decisions made at the last minute mean changes to the ballot. Since the arrival of the paper ballot system ballot changes are more difficult than ever since the work to complete the testing of the machines has dramatically increased and if your ballots have been printed, it is extremely costly to re-print.

With the decennial census coming to an end, this meant realignment of the Congressional, Senate and Assembly districts. Once the Legislature could decide on the lines (not an easy task) we made all the necessary changes in our voter registration systems. This would become a very, very time-consuming

procedure for those who have multiple Congressional, Senate and Assembly districts in their counties and include much staff especially for someone the size of New York City! Yet, the majority of us completed it while we were preparing for our first Primary and while some were finalizing village elections!

Then it was how and when would we get all of the Inspectors trained? And did we really need to? They would be working multiple elections this year. The new machines require training Inspectors annually rather than once every three years. As for the need for annual training, well yes it's needed, because some adult learners just don't want to learn new tricks nor remember them! Our sensitivity training in recent years has taught us not to say old dogs any longer but the average age of the Inspector certainly isn't decreasing! So we all squeezed in some classes.

Primary, Primary, Primary that was the word for the year and by our summer conference many of us were tired of it and getting tired. Pick an election, any election they all seemed to start running into each other and it was getting difficult to keep them straight and we hadn't even gotten to the big election of the year yet. With the State and Local Primary so close to the General Election, no one had time to breathe or vacation! Time off was now on the back burner as work days got longer as did the work week. Mail was coming in by what seemed bucket loads, of course we were sending it out that way too. Local registration came and went and with it the deadline to register now the phone calls really started getting interesting. “I didn't know there was a deadline to register to

vote?” or “I only moved last year, can I go back to the county I moved from to vote?” stated many callers. Oh, each county could write a book with the stories they heard!

With the general election nearing, the work load and pressure was still increasing while our families consider us tired and cranky, we would complain we weren't seeing enough of them. The office seems like our home since we are spending so much time in it. As if this wasn't enough, outside forces dealt another blow to many of our counties in the form of Superstorm Sandy. Not only were families devastated by the storm so was much of the infrastructure including offices and poll sites. How can one function at work when you have lost everything at home? It wasn't easy for many, but we are resilient.

Election Day arrives and the day is long. At this point, most of us just want it over so we can move on with our lives. Soon the polls close and the results come in. The day is over; we can go home for a couple of hours before we are due back in our offices. But it doesn't end there. It takes weeks to certify the results and as I write this many counties still have contested ballots in court. Our thoughts are with you. We are all in this together; we are one big family spread across New York State. We know how to deal with adversity and we always get the job done. A good job done by all Commissioners and their staff across the State, you should be very proud of all you accomplished this year, it's been a tremendous year. Take time during whichever holiday you celebrate to spend time with your family. Enjoy the New Year. We will reflect back, talk and de-stress at the January conference. I can't wait to see all of you!

“The more things change, the more they stay the same.” (2012)

By Robert C. Howe, (R) Commissioner, Cortland County

After 10 years have passed I wonder if they have changed that much.

We have gone from one unified voting machine Statewide to two voting systems in the State. That has cut the communication between the Boards by not having the same system Statewide.

County Administrators are still trying to cut our budgets and they seem to gravitate to the Boards of Elections in doing so. Yet, they want results as fast as possible on Election night.

The State Legislature is still very slow in making changes in Election Law to

expedite the recommended changes from our Association. Yet Federal, State and Local politicians go through our Boards to get elected.

The cost to do elections has certainly gone up. The training, Inspectors, Machine Techs, and programming.....give me the old Lever Machines! Better yet, maybe we should as a State think about voting by mail and save the extra costs our counties have incurred. It is harder and harder to find Inspectors who want to work a long day and not get compensated enough. They now have to learn

how to run tapes, record seal numbers, attend extensive training classes, and have much more interaction with the Voter.

As I stated ten years ago as your President, it would be great help if the State Legislature would respond to our Association as to the recommended changes we have proposed. I hope to comment again in another ten years to see where we are as an Association and as a State.

Best wishes,
Uncle Bob

Reprint of 2002 Article “Time For Action” (Now 10 Years Later)

By Robert C. Howe, President, Election Commissioners’ Association of the State of New York



Hello Fellow Voters, Welcome to the 21st Century! We are about to enter a new era in voting in the State of New York which we have never seen the likes of,

and may never see again. Starting in 2003, there will be new electronic machines, mandated training programs, centralization of machines by the counties, maybe a June Primary and a possible change in what the ballot will look like. This to be all in place by the 2004

Presidential Election if not sooner! Many interest groups will be at the table to support their agenda as to what they want done in New York State. It is our duty to the voters of the state, to be sure that the wishes made known are doable and practicable, The Association must take an affirmative role in the changes that are coming. If we fail to do so, we will be doomed to a system that is no better for us or our voters, than in years past.

The county legislators should be supporting their boards of elections with the new reforms coming. This is not the time to cut their budgets, especially the travel! I cannot think of a more important time to go to conferences and regional meetings than at the present. Remember that to hold a public

office you have to go through your local board. Does it make sense to cut a department that will be going through drastic changes? This will affect each and every one of you.

The state legislators will be affected also. You, as legislators, will be asked to make changes in election law, in a timely manner, not like you have done on previous state budgets. From where I see reform, you cannot delay your decisions. You will have to move like you never have before! What happens with this reform will affect you directly. Please listen to the NYS Board of Elections and your local boards. Time is of the essence!

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Extended Warranty Agreements from Dominion

By Jennie H. Bacon, (D) Commissioner, St. Lawrence County

As we have made it through the busy 2012 Election year, now we must focus our attention into the future. The upcoming end to our warranty on the Dominion Image Cast machines; the five-year warranty that was included in the purchase price of the units when originally purchased is coming to an end. Is it really possible five years has past? Dominion is offering an extended warranty, it is important for all counties to consider this option. The warranty is similar to an insurance policy, it is there if we need it, and will pay for itself if we are required to use it.

Dominion reports that the cost of repairing a machine can range from \$100 to \$3,500, not that we should anticipate every machine will need maintenance. However, having the

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Be prepared for the storm and perhaps the sun will shine!

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security in place to know Dominion will cover whatever issues we may have, for a county like St. Lawrence that is budget strapped as is, makes the extended warranty an easy decision. Dominion’s warranty agreement is offered at a very competitive market price that is not intended to take advantage of counties; it’s available to ease the mind and offered as per unit, per year warranty.

The extended warranty agreement from Dominion includes hardware coverage, however does exclude the ballot box. Who hasn’t had the friendly faces of Mike and Michelle show up ready to tackle any problem you may be experiencing? Or sent your scanner unit off to Ogdensburg, NY (in St. Lawrence County) for a repair? Dominion ensures all counties the same level of customer service we have been receiving. We all need to consider that the machine is just that, an electronic machine, and honestly how many of you keep a computer for over five years and expect nothing to go wrong. Be prepared for the storm and perhaps the sun will shine!

Short Staffed and Making It Work

By Amy Daines, (R) Commissioner, Yates County

Plan early & streamline everything.

Yates County has a small voting populace of approximately 14,500. Our office consists of full-time Commissioners, part-time Deputies and we have positions we call Machine Technicians and Machine Custodians.

We began streamlining activities by creating checklists and spread sheets in excel so we could quickly produce the disposable documents the Inspectors need year after year. The "suitcase supplies" at one time were stored by type (all district signs, all vote here signs, all no cell phone use signs, all notebooks, etc....) then spread out prior to deployment, collected and repacked. We have begun using a system we call "put away

ready" whereby as each suitcase is unpacked after the election it is immediately repacked with everything but the critical election



specific documents. We have a pouch with all paper supplies (registration cards, affidavit envelopes, notice to voters etc...), we have a

sign pouch (district name, no cell use, vote here, distance markers with everything needed to measure and mark 100 feet, etc....) and an odd & end pouch. We have also separated machine-related supplies and ship with the machine and keep the Inspector table-related supplies in the suitcase - this change has resulted in less confusion and fewer mistakes, particularly where the seals are concerned.

The check lists have proven invaluable, the various pouches have simplified the confusion, and after about 3 elections my fellow Commissioner remarked, "WOW, everything is put away and ready to go.... It's working!" This revelation happened in November of 2011, just in time for our biggest year ever.

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