



Tompkins County Election Worker News

Tompkins County
Board of Elections

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“To make democracy work, we must be a nation of participants, not simply observers.” – Louis L'Amour

Our “Quiet” Year?

At the Board of Elections during the run up to the November 2008 election, the phones never stopped ringing, the mail was delivered and sent out by the boxful, and a steady stream of people lined up for their turn at the counter. Temporary staff and volunteers pitched in, and the regular staff worked overtime.

Now it's 2009, and all is quiet at the BOE. Employees take naps and dream of 2012, while cobwebs form on the telephones and filing cabinets.

Um, not quite...

While the observable hectic activity has slowed to a more manageable pace, the workload hasn't diminished, just shifted.

For one thing, about 70 local offices are up for election this year. These include District Attorney, County Legislators, City Alderpersons, Town and Village Supervisors, Councilpersons and Superintendents. Candidates for these positions need to correctly file petitions, financial disclosures and other legal documents. The staff at the BOE will spend a lot of time helping candidates and committees with the process.

In addition to the large number of races later in the year, the Board is also involved with many smaller elections. The Board provides various levels of support for Village elections, school board elections, and fire district elections.

Meanwhile, certain tasks continue day in and day out, year after year. New voters register, current voters change address or party affiliation. Databases need constant checking and updating. Reports are constantly compiled and filed with the State. Voting machines receive periodic maintenance. New procedures, laws, machines and software means staff training. Recruiting and training over 300 election poll workers each year is a never ending process.

As if that wasn't enough, we're now planning for a “pilot program” in the City of Ithaca with the new voting machines (see next page), which will require a significant voter education initiative and special election worker training.

So while one might imagine this year is a pleasant interlude for the Board, the reality is 2009 has been a very busy and extremely challenging year. Guess those naps will have to wait!

Important Dates

TBA: Inspector training will probably begin in August, depending on how many districts have Primaries. We will contact you when we have more information.

**Sept. 15:
Primary Election**
(If needed) Polls open noon to 9 p.m.
(Inspectors arrive by 11:30 a.m.)

**November 3:
General Election**
Polls open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. (Inspectors arrive by 5:30 a.m.)

We Want to Hear From You!

We hope you are still interested in working as an Election Inspector this fall. Please let us know by emailing or calling us, or mailing us the availability form attached to your interest letter. As always, we can never thank you enough for your help and dedication!



Voting Machine Update

New York State has still not finished certifying the use of our new voting machines. However, in order to show the Federal government that New York State is trying very hard to comply with HAVA, counties were asked to do a "pilot program" this fall using the optical scan system.

We have offered to try the new system in the City of Ithaca poll sites. Instead of using a lever machine, voters in the City will receive a paper ballot to fill in, and then deposit it into the scanner. All other poll sites in the county will be equipped like they were last year: the old style lever machine and a ballot marking device.

We will conduct special trainings for any election workers who will be involved with using the new system. Some procedures are the same, (voters sign in the poll book, voters not listed get affidavits) and some procedures are new (voters are given a paper ballot to fill out, then feed it into the scanner.) We will make sure every site using a new machine has workers with the necessary special training.

The new machines will require a few changes in the way we manage poll sites. We're working out the details based on election law and the new processes.

It is extremely likely that this will be the final year for using lever machines in NY State (I know you've heard that before!) so our pilot program should help us make the countywide transition go more smoothly. As always, we appreciate suggestions from you, our "troops on the ground."

New Pollsite - Lifelong

Because of ongoing repair work at GIAC, we cannot use that building as a poll site this year. Thus we will be moving Ithaca City Second Ward, Districts 1 and 3 to Lifelong, located at 119 W. Court St. We anticipate being back at GIAC in 2010.

On the Lighter Side...

Students in a Government class were discussing the qualifications to be president of the United States: you must be a natural born citizen and at least 35 years old. However, one girl started complaining that these requirements were unfair, and prevented many capable individuals from becoming president. She finally said, "What makes a natural born citizen any more qualified to lead this country than one born by c-section?"

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Check our Web site:

www.votetompkins.com,

for the latest election related information. Back issues of *Election Worker News*, as well as other election worker information may be found by clicking the link on the left side column labeled "Election Workers."

For questions or comments about this newsletter, contact Tom Paolangeli, 274-5522, or email: tpaolangeli@tom-pkins-co.org.