

Minutes – State Board of Elections Advisory Review Workgroup

September 28, 2022

Attendance:

1. Jason Corwin
2. Barry Condrey
3. Josette Bulova
4. Katie Boyle
5. Kim Cummings
6. Walt Latham
7. Lisa Koteen Gerchick
8. Franchelle Tyson
9. Tram Nguyen

Chair Koteen Gerchick called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM with a quorum.

Minutes from the July 6, 2022, meeting were approved unanimously.

Chair Koteen Gerchick reviewed the meeting schedule with the group. Dates in November were discussed, and due to scheduling conflicts, the decision was made to hold the next meeting on December 5. It was also decided this would be set as an in-person meeting but with an option, as the law allows, for individual members who have an excuse to participate remotely to do so to facilitate attendance. It was noted that the chair presents to the state board of elections in their January 2023 meeting.

Chair Koteen Gerchick then began the discussion of the elements for consideration as benchmarks to measure a successfully conducted election, referencing the document “Advisory Review Workgroup Priorities Among Elements of an Election.pdf”.

Section 1 – Voter turnout.

This was discussed at length. Topics included the measure as a percentage of the eligible voting population (EVP), reporting on the methods of voting, reporting on why people did not vote (obstacles), and what drives voter turnout. Tracking voter turnout is important for many reasons. It was noted that candidates drive turnout and that it is not a direct indicator of a successful election but rather one part of a holistic approach and needs to be included.

Section 2 – Voter registration.

It was noted that registration does not drive voter turnout. The ease of registration has driven high levels of adoption. The Department of Motor Vehicles process was discussed. Same day registration is an indicator in this area. Not appropriate to use registration metrics for comparison one year to the next, due to the Presidential election effect. The numbers can be included, for context.

Section 3 – Completeness of data required by U.S. Elections Assistance Commission (EAC).

Virginia complies 100% with the EAC’s biannual Election Administration and Voting Survey. The topics covered by the survey are already included in the Workgroup’s list of data to be evaluated. The fact that the Department of Elections (ELECT) completes the survey does not

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separately indicate a successful election. Therefore, the item will be removed from list of indicators.

Section 4 – Website utility and voter look-up tools.

Discussion centered around the current elections website and its supporting election management system (a/k/a “VERIS”), the need for modernization, usability, mobile responsiveness (use on small form-factor devices such as smartphones and tablets), American with disabilities act (ADA) compliance and stability during periods of peak usage. Members discussed whether the scheduled re-design of VERIS is the opportunity to correct the flaws identified. The Workgroup recommends that ELECT create standardized webpages that local elections officials could adapt for their own localities to assist in accuracy, completeness of information, consistency, and user friendliness.

Section 5 – Communications and voter outreach.

Members generally indicated agreement that voter outreach needs to be enhanced; there was some discussion about the benefits of the state coordinating messaging for uniformity and consistency. Resources allocated for voter outreach could be an indicator in evaluating an election.

Section 6 – Election management system functionality.

How data entry options affect timeliness and accuracy of reporting was a topic of discussion. For example, how the system could be improved to prevent data entry errors when reporting results by precinct under the new statutory requirement.

It was suggested that a process be developed to vet proposals to determine how the proposals would be implemented and what their effects would be in the field. It was suggested that a means to measure system functionality could be to survey election officials after an election to determine how well the election management system met their needs.

Section 7 – Ballot access for prospective candidates

Members agreed with Chair Koteen Gerchick suggestion to set this issue aside for now due to its complexity.

A holistic, comprehensive look at the candidate experience was suggested rather than looking specifically at ballot access requirements.

Section 8 - Precincts and polling places.

It was noted that data on precinct sizes are already collected and that standards exist for the size and number of voters in precincts. There was a question whether this should be in the Code of Virginia. (§24.2-307 of the Code sets minimum and maximum precinct sizes.) Members agreed with chair Koteen Gerchick suggestion to leave it as a data point and combine with section 13.

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Section 9 – Ballot preparation.

It was noted that this topic is covered by statute. The “ballot on demand” process was discussed, as well as potential failures and challenges. It was agreed that this should be combined into section 13.

Section 10 – Security

The Workgroup considered that cyber security and physical security are difficult topics to discuss or report on in detail, for obvious reasons. Discussion centered around the need to reassure the voting public that the election process is secure without divulging so much information that we place the same processes at risk. A focus on compliance without specifics was discussed. It was decided that Barry would connect chair Koteen Gerchick with ELECT privacy officer Arielle Schneider for more discussions.

Section 11 – Logic and accuracy testing.

It was quickly pointed out that this area is well covered in state code. This should be considered a data point and left included.

Chair Koteen Gerchick reminded members that the next meeting will be December 5th.

There was no public comment because there were no members of the public present.

Adjourned at 12:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry S. Condrey
November 23, 2022