

Trends

No Data Available

Legend:

▲ Increase,
 ▼ Decrease,
 ↔ Steady

Key Performance Areas

No Data Available

Productivity

No Data Available

Legend:

▲ Improving,
 ▼ Worsening,
 ↔ Maintaining

For more information on administrative key, and productivity measures, go to www.vaperforms.virginia.gov/agencylevel/index.cfm

Background & History

Section 24.2-103 of the Code of Virginia lays out the statutory responsibilities of the State Board of Elections (SBE). The Board is to supervise and coordinate the work of the county and city electoral boards and of the registrars to obtain uniformity in their practices and proceedings and legality and purity in all elections." The Code also requires the Board to "make rules and regulations and issue instructions and provide information consistent with the election laws to the electoral boards and registrars to promote the proper administration of election laws." In addition, the Board is charged with ensuring "that the members of the electoral boards and general registrars are properly trained to carry out their duties" and for setting "the training standards for the officers of election to be fulfilled by the local electoral boards and general registrars." The State Board of Elections is either partly or fully responsible for many additional functions, including the administration and enforcement of campaign finance laws and regulations for state and local candidates, compliance with federal mandates on elections including the operation and maintenance of an electronic statewide voter registration system, voter registration list maintenance activities, implementation of state legislation involving elections, administering the reimbursement process for general registrar and electoral board salaries, and many other tasks.

Voting is a fundamental freedom of Virginia citizens; it is the backbone of a free and democratic society. We envision SBE as the public's guardian of freedom within a democratic society. As good guardians, we protect and serve the integrity of the vote. SBE sets and upholds the standards and practices that provide voters with the highest level of confidence that elections in Virginia are administered in a fair, unbiased, orderly and secure manner. Integrity of the vote, voter confidence and easy access to the electoral processes are key elements to ensuring that every eligible citizen has an opportunity to vote and, to have that vote counted.

The State Board of Elections is supported primarily by two major funding sources: state general funds and a federal grant to implement and administer requirements of the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) requirements.

Primary Product & Services

- Maintenance and improvements to the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), Virginia's electronic statewide voter registration and election system used by SBE and all localities to administer the voter registration and election processes in Virginia
- Development and maintenance of Virginia's online voter registration system
- Assistance and policy guidance to county and city election officials
- Training to local election officials
- Assistance and information to federal, state and local candidates on filing and campaign finance requirements
- Provide voter lists to candidates, courts, and nonprofit organizations
- Establishment and supervision of voting system technology and security standards
- Testing, certification, and approval of new voting equipment systems
- Provide election forms and materials to Virginia registrar offices
- Candidate certification services

Agency Executive Progress Report

- Ballot proofing and certification services
- Certification of results of elections for federal and state offices
- Ballot referendum services
- Campaign finance disclosure and compliance services
- Campaign finance reporting software
- Proposal, assistance and drafting of legislation
- Voter registration form development and distribution
- Voter registration procedure training services to other state agencies and to private citizens and groups involved in voter registration activities
- Electronic pollbook training and creation services
- Administration of grants to local election offices for hardware including new electronic pollbooks, new voting equipment, and other items
- Administration of salary reimbursements for salaries owed by the Commonwealth to general registrars and local electoral boards
- Administration of reimbursements for presidential primary expenses incurred by localities
- Administration of voter registration list maintenance programs, including multistate agreements to share voter registration data
- Voter education and outreach public relations programs

Customer Base

SBE serves a variety of customer groups and each customer group expects fast, convenient, courteous, and quality service delivery. The customer groups range from all of Virginia's citizens eligible to vote to the 5.25 million registered voters and the 133 county and city general registrars who partner with SBE to provide voter registration and election services to local county and city voters and candidates. Every customer group rightfully expects easy and convenient access to personalized voter registration services and information as well as personalized election related information and documents. This expectation has been fostered and promoted with the acceptance and use of technology as the vehicle to convenient access to SBE's service offerings. Increasingly, communications and exchanges of information between SBE and its customers are occurring instantaneously online from their homes or offices. Our customers expect that the services provided by SBE to be available to them 24-7 by way of technology and the internet. SBE staff is dedicated to quickly, efficiently and accurately responding to the customers.

SBE partners with other state agencies including the Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Social Services, Department of Health (Vital Statistics), Virginia State Police and other agencies involved in the voter registration or list maintenance process to enhance the voter registration experience for Virginia voters. Virginia also works with the Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security Secretariat in educating and promoting awareness of military voting issues. Virginia increasingly works with other states, counties, and cities to share voter registration and voter history information to aid in keeping Virginia's voter registration rolls up to date.

Customer Listing

No Data Available

Key Agency Statistics

Any discussion of statistics and voting in Virginia needs to begin with mentioning that the Commonwealth is growing. Recent estimates from July 2012 calculate Virginia's population near 8.2 million people, an increase of over one million since the 2000 Census was taken. The voting rolls have similarly grown during this period. From January 1, 2000 to January 1, 2013, Virginia added almost 2.5 million voters to its rolls. Most experts project Virginia will continue to grow with the Commonwealth expected to add one million residents per

Agency Executive Progress Report

decade over for the next few decades. As Virginia grows, its voter rolls will also continue to swell. While this is exciting for the Commonwealth, it poses some obstacles to state and local election officials, especially in a climate of continuing budget cuts. As Virginia adds voters, this will require the establishment of additional (and/or larger) precincts and polling places which requires additional pieces of voting equipment more staff, and generally more resources. It is important that policymakers take into account the growth of the Commonwealth when making decisions regarding the funding of elections.

It is also worth noting that this growth is not happening uniformly around the Commonwealth. Certain parts of Virginia are losing or have stagnant populations and other parts, particularly in Northern Virginia, have high growth in certain areas that poses considerable difficulties for local election officials in ensuring enough available voting equipment and adequate polling place facilities for voters. In areas with population loss, certain adjustments in election administration practices need to be made to maximize a shrinking or stagnant population and tax base that ultimately impacts their level of funding.

Statistics that point to the accuracy of Virginia's voter registration rolls are other important pieces of data. Virginia had approximately 530,000 inactive voters on its voter rolls at the time of the November 2012 General Election. Inactive voters are individuals that have been flagged as having an issue with their registration status, specifically with their residence address. This high number (approximately 10% of the number of active voters) demonstrates that additional resources and steps need to be taken to identify individuals who move in and out of Virginia, as well as those who move within the state from one locality to another to ensure they update their registration information. Voters that move, changes names, and have made other life changes that would impact their registration record, and who do not update or cancel their registration records may face problems and delays during the check-in process when they do arrive to vote. A recent study by the Pew Foundation revealed that approximately one in eight registrations nationwide are inaccurate at least in some respect. While SBE has ramped up its efforts in identifying and seeking to correct these errors, continued efforts need to be made to improve the accuracy of the voter rolls. This is especially important in parts of the state that are very transient, including in areas with universities and colleges, high military population areas, and in Northern Virginia.

Other important statistics to note are voter turnout numbers and percentages, the number of types of voting equipment in use in the Commonwealth, and the number of general registrars that are only authorized to work on a part-time basis:

- Voter turnout is relatively consistent in the Commonwealth based on a four-year election cycle. The presidential election every four years sees turnouts generally around 71% to 72% with no greater deviation of 6% in turnout from the highest to the lowest turnout presidential elections. Generally, the gubernatorial election has a turnout of approximately 44% with, historically a consistent turnout from one election to the next. Non-presidential federal election years have a similar turnout of approximately 45% from year to year, varying somewhat depending on whether a U.S. Senate seat is up for reelection.
- Virginia currently uses approximately 26 different models of voting equipment. The wide variety of equipment make it difficult for SBE to monitor and provide effective guidance to localities
- Virginia still has 16 localities that do not have a full-time general registrar. General registrars in these smaller localities have the same responsibilities and legal obligations to meet deadlines, service voters, and perform their duties under the Code of Virginia and federal law as all other registrars. This is a difficult job and three days a week is not sufficient for registrars in small localities to adequately perform their jobs and meet the requirements of modern election administration.

Finances

The State Board of Elections is supported by two major funding sources: State general funds are used to support state mandated responsibilities and a federal grant administered by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) is used to implement election administration requirements from the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA).

67% of the agency's general fund budget is used to provide reimbursements to local governments for general registrars and local electoral board member salaries. SBE is left with 33% of the leftover general funds to administer the numerous responsibilities and functions of the agency.

SBE also utilizes HAVA funds that were appropriated by Congress in 2002 to help fund the agency's functions. HAVA funds account for approximately 60% of the agency's annual operating costs. After an initial large appropriation of HAVA money to purchase new voting equipment and other upgrades to the electoral system as required by the federal legislation, Congress appropriated "requirements payments" to aid states in compliance with the legislation. While those requirements payments ended in FY2011, SBE has worked to conserve these funds and these remaining funds constitute the agency's annual HAVA budget. SBE has drawn down all available HAVA funds from the federal government and Congress has not announced any plans to appropriate any additional funding for federal mandates. While the HAVA funds are used for many purposes, including absentee voting, compliance with federal voter registration list maintenance requirements, voter education, and other functions, the majority of the HAVA funds go towards operation and maintenance of Virginia's statewide voter registration system, VERIS. In 2012, Virginia updated its HAVA Plan outlining how the remaining HAVA dollars are to be spent.

Agency Executive Progress Report

Another funding stream worth mentioning is the Election Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (EAID) grant. EAID is a federal grant originally tied to HAVA that relates to improving the accessibility of the elections process to those with disabilities. Virginia was originally appropriated slightly over \$2,000,000 for those funds and currently has slightly less than \$500,000 remaining from that fund source. EAID funds are spent to ensure polling places are accessible to individuals with disabilities, to train election officials on how best to promote access and participation of individuals with disabilities in elections, and provide information to individuals with disabilities about the accessibility of polling places.

With the continued reduction of the agency's annual general fund budget, it is worth mentioning that the HAVA grant requires a minimum level of state spending ("maintenance of effort") towards implementing and maintaining HAVA requirements. It is essential to take into account this maintenance of effort requirement when considering any further budget reductions to the agency.

SBE is also aggressive in pursuing additional grant funding and has been successful in recently obtaining a grant from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) to develop technologies to assist overseas and military voters and a small grant from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities to develop services for disabled Virginia voters.

Fund Sources

No Data Available

Revenue Summary Statement

The agency collects revenue through the following sources:

- Campaign Finance Civil Penalty Payments which are deposited directly to the Treasury of Virginia;
- Interest collected through the Treasury of Virginia on the principal amount of the federal grant funds distributed through the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds;
- State primary fees paid for by candidates participating in primaries for U.S. Congress or statewide offices (SBE does not retain this money, it is deposited back into the General Fund);
- Expenses paid by municipalities for SBE to recoup costs associated with administering May elections for towns and cities;
- The sale of voter registration and voter history data; and
- Revenue for reasonable expenses for complying with public requests for voter registration data and costs associated with the numerous Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests the agency receives on an annual basis.

Key Risk Factors

The State Board of Elections' (SBE) main impediment to achieving its goals relate to the impact of continued budget cuts and the uncertainty surrounding the future funding of election administration from the federal, state, and local levels. SBE's general fund budget has been slashed by approximately 33% since Fiscal Year 2007. Concurrently, the costs of complying with state and federal mandates for elections have risen, labor expenses for items including fringe benefits have increased, and fees from other state agencies for services such as VITA have been raised significantly. While spending has been cut, Virginia continues to rely on and spend its remaining federal HAVA grant funds which are scheduled to be extinguished within five to seven years. These funds account for approximately 60% of the agency's operating budget. These long term cuts that happened at the federal, state, and local levels have resulted in certain stress fractures and cracks in the infrastructure of the electoral system, some of which were on display during the November 2012 General Election. The uncertainty and unpredictability regarding future funding levels at all levels of government make long-term strategic planning difficult and speculative.

In light of continued budget cuts, SBE has been especially aggressive in pursuing additional funding streams. First, in August of 2011, SBE drew down the last remaining HAVA dollars available from the federal government (\$6,970,000) which fully tapped that funding stream. Second, in late 2011, SBE was awarded a \$1,800,000 dollar grant from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) to fund research and IT projects aimed at easing the voting process for overseas and military voters. SBE also recently received a \$30,000 grant from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) for projects to increase knowledge of voting accessibility for people with disabilities and the aging community and to improve and expand the participation of individuals with disabilities in civic and community activities. SBE also recently submitted a grant application for a second grant with FVAP that, if approved, will allow for

Agency Executive Progress Report

additional resources for military and overseas voting initiatives.

At some point in the near future, additional funding is needed to ensure SBE can perform its statutorily mandated objectives. While SBE has been aggressive in pursuing additional funding through grant opportunities, these awards typically go to specialized areas and with strings attached. These special grants cannot replace a long-term general fund stream of revenue that can be relied on from one budget to the next. Ideally, that time for additional funding will come sooner rather than later so that the agency can conserve its remaining federal HAVA dollars for longer-term and special projects that benefit the localities. Simply put, SBE will be in serious danger of not being able to comply with state and federal mandates to administer elections if additional state funding is not provided by the time the HAVA funds begin to dry up. It is also important that consideration be made to provide this funding prior to the next presidential election in 2016.

Performance Highlights

In spite of annual budget cuts, the State Board of Elections (SBE) continues to make substantial progress in improving its service performance in administering elections and voter registration activities in Virginia. The agency has been recognized several times recently for its progress in utilizing technology to improve the voter registration process, increase voter education and improve efficiencies in the elections process. Some of the honors, accolades, and distinctions over the past several few years include:

- Winner, Annual Governor's Technology Awards IT as Efficiency Driver—Government to Citizen, for Online Voter Registration; Microsoft Dynamics 2013 Customer Excellence Award Winner in Government Administration: SBE was part of the Commonwealth's team that was recognized by Microsoft for its implementation of the Microsoft Dynamics shared service platform in March of 2013. Specifically, SBE had implemented the new campaign finance reporting solution and a locality contact management solution based on the Microsoft Dynamics platform.
- SBE was named a finalist for the 2012 Governor's Technology Award program in the IT as Efficiency Driver – Government to Citizen category for the new campaign finance reporting application, COMET.
- SBE received an award from Google in July 2013 acknowledging our contribution to the Voting Information Project and for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of elections through open data.
- Virginia was one of seven pioneering states to launch groundbreaking multi-state voter registration data sharing initiative: Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC).
- Enactment of agency-drafted and Governor-sponsored bill requiring training of groups involved in voter registration drives.
- Meeting performance measure of all 133 localities having Voting Systems Security Plan approved and reviewed by agency.
- Launch of new and improved State Board of Elections website.

A long-term goal of SBE was attained in 2013 when Virginia enacted Online Voter Registration. Virginia was approximately the twelfth state to implement this important reform and successfully launched the system in the summer of 2013. Online Voter Registration adds integrity to the registration process, saves as much as 80 cents per application processed, and improves the accuracy of the voter rolls. This voter-friendly reform is an important step in modernizing Virginia's antiquated voter registration process and was recently recognized as a winner in the Governor's Technology Award program.

Another important item to note is Virginia's compliance with federal and state laws for mailing absentee ballots for overseas and military voters. Virginia had been under a consent decree with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to comply with the federal MOVE Act that mandates ballots be mailed to overseas and military voters 45 or more days before a federal election. Due to Virginia's compliance with the laws over the course of several elections, Virginia is no longer under that consent decree.

SBE's success in obtaining grant awards, including the \$1.8 million dollar FVAP grant and grant from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities are also notable achievements.

Performance Measures

Management Discussion & Analysis

General Information about the Ongoing Status of the Agency

Leading up to the enactment of the FY2012-2014 Budget, the State Board of Elections set forth an ambitious and specific set of goals to continue to improve the administration of elections in the Commonwealth, the agency's customer service efforts, and the internal management and operations of the agency. SBE has achieved many of its goals set out in the beginning of the FY2012-2014 biennium including:

Agency Executive Progress Report

- The launch of a new agency website that aims to better educate and inform Virginia voters about the voting process;
- Major improvements to the voting process for overseas and military voters, including the online ballot delivery system for these voters;
- The enactment and implementation of online voter registration;
- Upgrades to Virginia's computerized statewide voter registration system (VERIS);
- The launch of important multistate voter registration data sharing agreements aimed at improving the accuracy and integrity of Virginia's voter rolls;
- Design and launch of an online officer of election training portal aimed at educating Virginia's thousands of officers of election;
- Enactment of legislation and implementation of online and in-person training requirements for third-party voter registration drive groups; and
- Launch of COMET, a new online application for political candidates and committees to file campaign finance reports

Looking ahead, SBE is focusing on improvements to the three critical components of the voting process: the voter registration system, the voter check-in process, and voting on voting equipment. In addition, SBE looks forward to working with the General Assembly on recommendations to improve the absentee voting process.

Virginia has come a long way in recent years in modernizing its voter registration processes, however, additional steps are needed to enhance the integrity of the voter rolls, improve the accuracy of the records, identify unregistered but eligible voters, fix outdated and inaccurate records, and increase efficiencies in the system that would result in cost savings to SBE and the local general registrar offices. First, SBE will continue to increase the resources devoted to voter registration list maintenance programs, including participation in multi-state data-sharing agreements aimed at identifying voters who have moved from Virginia and into the state. Second, SBE will work to enhance VERIS, Virginia's statewide voter registration system the general registrars use to administer the voter registration and elections in Virginia. Priorities related to VERIS include enhancing the system to monitor for fraudulent registration and voting activity, improving the interface between VERIS and election officials, giving registrars access to improved data and metrics to better plan for Election Day, improving voter history and voter registration lists for candidates and political parties, and improve absentee voting functions by auditing turnaround of absentee ballot requests. Third, SBE and DMV will continue to partner to develop a process to electronically transfer voter registration data from registration transactions completed at DMV Customer Service Centers. These transactions account for approximately 50% of all registration transactions and the current paper-based system is costly, inefficient, and results in lost applications, delays in processing applications, and other problems. Finally, SBE will work to increase its public outreach on the availability of the new online voter registration portal to dramatically increase the number of registration transactions completed online. These steps are all in furtherance of the Commonwealth's Enterprise Strategic Priority 20 ("Improve operations to ensure delivery of government services in the most efficient and effective manner.") A specific strategy to achieve this priority is to "enhance the voter registration process." (20.14)

Second, SBE will work to improve the voter check-in process by continuing to develop and enhance the electronic pollbook (EPB) program launched by the agency in 2008. EPBs are laptops or tablet devices with special software used at polling places to verify voter eligibility at the check-in table. While the launch of the EPB program was successful, as the program matures, SBE needs to make certain adjustments and reallocate resources to maximize the potential of the program. EPBs can be utilized to enhance the security of the check-in process, improve the accuracy of voter history data, and provide data that can aid election officials in processing voters more quickly to avoid long lines and congestion at the polling place. SBE will develop programs and allocate resource to meet these goals while tailoring the program to Virginia's specific laws and needs. In addition, when possible, SBE will help fund locality purchases of EPB hardware including tablets, laptops, and bar code scanners.

Third, SBE plans on addressing Virginia's voting equipment needs. Virginia is in need of an upgrade to the voting equipment used in its polling places. Much of the equipment was purchased nearly a decade ago or more and is beginning to wear down or become obsolete. Most of the voting machines in use in Virginia are Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) machines. Starting several years ago, the General Assembly took steps to ban the purchase of additional DREs due to concerns regarding their security and auditability. Cash-strapped localities have been forced to make repairs to the aging DREs while cannibalizing existing inventory to keep enough machines running. Most localities cannot afford a wholesale replacement of DREs with the purchase of digital scan machines, the equipment that will eventually replace the DRE fleet. Moreover, there are statutory requirements based on population per precinct that sets the minimum number of DREs per polling place. Some localities are in danger of not having enough working DREs to satisfy this statutory requirement. In short, SBE seeks to move forward with a plan to administer a statewide replacement of aging voting equipment with more efficient, reliable, and secure digital scan voting equipment.

SBE will also continue to develop and enhance existing initiatives in the training and voter education areas, its efforts related to military and overseas voting, and other initiatives.

Information Technology

Budget cuts, scarce resources and increasing public demand have required SBE to produce new and more efficient service delivery mechanisms. Increasing security issues and the cost of technical services provided by VITA and other external technology resources have impacted the agency's Information Technology (IT) environment. The IT environment is further stressed by lack of sufficient number of IT staff that is required to support comprehensive statewide systems such as VERIS.

To address these factors, the agency has taken advantage of the opportunities that exist because of the popularity of Internet technologies to deliver high demand services to Virginia citizens, our clients, customers and constituents. These efforts are best demonstrated by the implementation of online voter registration, an initiative that moves Virginia towards paperless voter registration and a more efficient, secure, and voter-friendly registration system. Other examples include the 2012 launch of SBE's new website which greatly improves citizen access to information and election related data and the 2012 launch of the new campaign finance management system, COMET, which has been a resounding success and has enabled the agency to reallocate resources to other divisions.

Agency Executive Progress Report

Continuous changes in federal and state laws relating to absentee voting, voter registration, election administration and campaign finance require the development of an agile IT environment that is poised to respond to the wide variety of business problems faced by the agency. A cornerstone of this effort has been the recent complete rearchitecture of the SBE server infrastructure. The new infrastructure has reduced the risk through redundancy and the proper separation of development and production environments. In addition, the new infrastructure has increased the capacity and efficiency of the servers to handle the increased application processing that is currently needed.

Workforce Development

SBE promotes innovative thinking and the use of technology in bringing efficiency to the workplace. SBE has used technology to automate certain functions, including the pollbook production process, voter credit importing, FOIA tracking, certain mail processing functions, and other areas are scheduled to be automated as a result of recent budget cuts.

In many cases, SBE has had no choice but to increase efficiencies through technology. Continued budget cuts have resulted in multiple layoffs over the past several years and have required SBE to do more with less. Accordingly, existing staff are asked to be more versatile and perform additional duties and functions. While SBE has a dedicated and hardworking staff, to recruit and retain a highly competent workforce, SBE needs the resources to eliminate salary suppression to have its best employees remain with the agency. Resources are needed to align current staff salaries to make them comparable with other state agencies' salary levels. In addition to the regular change of leadership at the top of the agency based on four year appointees by the sitting governor, SBE sees a high turnover rate with staff. This can be largely attributed to the lower salaries. In spite of the difficult job market, SBE still finds it difficult to retain its best staff.

As stated above, technology is taking an increasingly important role in administering elections. Investing resources to upgrade the "tech" skills of existing staff without this technological know-how is extremely important. The regular updating of the skills of staff members with the technological know-how is also important.

One of SBE's main goals is to provide high quality policy advice and guidance to the local election community. In addition, SBE's policy guidance is critical to the General Assembly during the legislative session and to the State Board in advising on the passage of Board policies and regulations. In order to provide high-quality guidance, SBE needs highly-educated and talented individuals who either possess a Juris Doctor degree or comparable skills and experience.

Recent changes to the rules capping the maximum number of work hours for wage employees have also impacted SBE. SBE has relied on wage staff to perform many important functions, particularly in a support role for policy analysts and election preparation. Changes brought on by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) have required state government to substantially limit the maximum number of work hours allowed for wage staff.

Physical Plant

The State Board of Elections office occupies the 1st floor of the Washington Building located in Capitol Square, Richmond, Virginia. Agency training space and the board room are located in the basement level of the Washington Building. All space is leased from the Department of General Services. The agency anticipates no change in the leased space requirements.