

House State Government Committee  
Hearing – Thursday, March 25, 2021  
Election Day Operations  
Patricia P. Nace, Election Director (Retired)

Thank you for inviting me today.

My 20 years working in an election office started in 2001 when I was given the opportunity to be the Election Director for Union County. I remained there until 2007 when I was asked to be the Election Director for Snyder County. I retired in February 2020. I had 37 successful elections – 4 Presidential years 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016.

When I retired in February 2020, I was asked to stay on as a consultant in Snyder County and assist the new election director in the day to day operations. When Northumberland County's election and voter registration office staff resigned, I was asked to be a consultant and help them prepare for the Presidential Primary in June and remain for the end of the year until new staff was hired. My contracts for both counties have been renewed until the end of this municipal election year 2021.

I was asked to testify today because of my assisting two counties as a Consultant.

Challenges for Election Directors with Act 77 are as follows:

1. Voter Registration deadline was changed to 15 days (instead of the original 30 days).
2. Canvassing of ballots – absentees staying in the county. Counting no earlier than the close of polls at 8 p.m.
3. Receipt of ballots in office up to 8 p.m. Election Day.
4. Over the counter absentee voting.
5. Voting awareness – the way a voter handles their absentee ballot.
6. Mail in voter applications.

Election Day:

- Staff reports early morning 6 a.m.
- Poll workers are calling in for help setting up and opening the polls.
- Machine issues – all day long. Staff sometimes needed to visit and repair.
- Office opens
- Staff needed at counter to assist voters handing in ballots before the 8 p.m. deadline. This step required time stamp, SURE receipt, adding to other absentees for canvassing.
- 7 a.m. polls open. Calls from poll workers on voter issues.
- Call from voters with various questions. This continues all day. Staff could remain on the phone for the entire 13 hours. Snyder County had 16,618 ballots cast in 2016 and 19,238 ballots cast in 2020. Northumberland County had 37,142 ballots cast in 2016 and 44,644 ballots cast in 2020.
- Confusion with Judges of Elections and handling of absentee ballots at the polls, providing provisional ballots and process for this.
- Problems with SURE running slow when trying to help voters or clock in absentee ballots.
- Staff preparing to canvass – envelope opening, backfolding and laying flat. Most counties have tens of thousands of ballots and would require a staff to perform this preparation.
- Polls close at 8 p.m.
- Judges are calling in with questions of closing.

- Staff is preparing to accept returns, run reports all while canvassing is occurring.
- Staff is accepting Judges and Inspectors with returns.
- Could be a 23-hour day for most Election Directors.

As you can see from this scenario, an Election Director cannot oversee all these tasks alone. Act 77 has made this difficult.

#### Solutions:

1. Department of State should not wait until the last minute and send emails out with new directives. Clearer guidelines. Directors need easier communication with DOS staff. Telephone calls to DOS staff are not returned. Election Directors are busy and not all have time to review their emails.
2. Strive to eliminate “absentee” voting and have only “mail in” absentees.
3. Return to the 30-day deadline for voter registration. Act 77’s 15-day deadline is a challenge when staff are trying to perform other tasks. I always said that it takes 3 months to prepare for and election and 3 months to clean up after one. Don’t add more to this list.
4. Take away the voter’s right to take their absentee ballot to the polls. Vote absentee or at the polls. This adds to poll worker confusion and long lines.
5. Provide funding for poll worker training. Poll workers are vital to elections. They conduct elections with accuracy, integrity, and dignity. When I asked a 90-year old why she does this, her reply was “it’s my civic duty”. Please don’t make it harder for them.
6. Make it easier to appoint poll workers. Snyder County has over 125 poll workers (25 precincts); Northumberland County has over 370 (74 precincts).
7. Change canvassing from 8 p.m. Election Day to 7-day prior. Give the counties more time for tasks on hand.
8. Change deadline for absentee application to 15-day deadline. One week prior has always been a problem; now more of a problem with USPS delays. Give both voter and election office more time to complete the process. Less “too late” absentees. Go back to applying for an absentee ballot every election, keep permanent voters (medical disabilities).
9. Help the counties more with additional expenses—such as, needed equipment, more staff to handle the volume of absentees or finding more space to successfully conduct the election. Snyder County expenditures for Elections/Voter Registration in 2016 was \$175,143 and \$281,647 in 2020.

#### In closing:

I have added to this document a job description for Director of Elections. Hopefully, this will give you a clearer understanding of their job and just how valuable they are to successful elections. Thank you for the time allowed and asking me to testify. I am truly grateful for my years as Election Director and the people met along the way. Pennsylvania election directors are to be commended. With all the constant changes, they accept the jobs with pride and accomplishment. There is much to do but I am positive Pennsylvania will continue to have successful elections.

**FOR INFORMATION ONLY:**

**SNYDER COUNTY  
DIRECTOR OF ELECTIONS**

**OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

To serve the Snyder County Election Board as its Director.

**SUMMARY**

A Director is responsible for the administration of elections.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

- A high school diploma or equivalent, college level education is desired.
- A valid PA driver's license and proof of insurance, substantial related management experience, and typing speed and proficiency of at least 75 wpm.
- Ability to perform duties assigned by law, the Snyder County Board of Elections, and/or the PA Department of State.
- Understanding of, experience, and management successful and efficient database management, a strong understanding of and ability to use Microsoft Office products (including but not limited to Microsoft Word and Excel), Adobe Acrobat, various software applications included with Windows operating systems, and the ability to learn new software applications, including but not limited to voter registration (SURE) and election management programs (ENR).
- Ability to comprehend a variety of information documents, election law terminology, and PA law concerning elections and government administration, including but not limited to PA Purdon's Statutes Annotated, PA Election Code, PA Constitution, PA Advisories, Memoranda, and assignments and instructions from board members, and the PA Department of State.
- Familiarity of voting machines used in Snyder County and other automated office equipment.
- Ability to adapt to stressful and emergency situations and events in a professional, calm, and thoughtful manner and to conduct self at all times in a professional and courteous manner.
- Strong and effective written and verbal communication, time-management, organizational, problem-solving, and customer service skills.
- Ability to convey or exchange information, including giving and managing assignments from Election Board.
- Familiarity with relevant state and federal policies and practices and the handling of budgets and public appropriation of funds.
- Ability to work accurately and meet deadlines with frequent interruptions and in a flexible manner, one that allows for changes in assignments and priorities depending upon the time of the election cycle.
- Ability to lift election equipment, storage containers, and other items not to exceed 50 pounds.
- Ability to exercise good judgment and discretion in handling confidential materials and matters.

**PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS**

Tasks require the ability to daily exert light physical effort in sedentary to light work, but which may involve some lifting, carrying, pushing and/or pulling of objects and materials of light weight (5-10 pounds) and on occasion moderately heavy weight (up to 50 pounds). Tasks may involve extended period of time at a keyboard or work station.

**ADDITIONAL FACTORS**

Employees will be limited in the amount of vacation time during the period in which UOCAVA absentee voting has started until the election has been declared official and any recount or post-election audit has been completed. This may or may not apply to all elections held in a calendar year. Ability to work overtime, at times intensive, and required during certain period of the year. Ability to work a full Election Day from 6 am to delivery of the last district's arrival with results card (approximately 20 hours.)

## **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS**

- Prepare and conduct all primary, general, and special elections in the county.
- Process, evaluate, and report election results.
- Supervise the processing of voter records.
- Recruit (if necessary) and train election poll worker officials.
- Keep a full and true record of the proceedings of the board.
- Keep a full and true record of all monies received and deposited with County Treasurer.
- File and preserve all orders, records, and reports pertaining to the administration of voter registrations and elections.
- Oversee the maintenance of accurate current computerized database of voter registration information and information essential to programming election equipment and creating ballots for use in each election.
- Prepare the minutes of board meetings.
- Have custody of all books, papers, and property belonging to the board.
- Provide information to the media.
- Review all directives, advisories, memoranda, correspondence, and materials issued by the PA Department of State and take action as required by those communications.
- Develop a proposed annual budget for the office of Voter Registration and the office of Elections to be submitted to the county commissioners, and monitor the approved budget.
- Assist the public through the use of the telephone, in person, electronic mail, and written correspondence in a professional, friendly, and courteous manner by providing assistance and information, along with procedures, guidelines, pertinent dates/deadlines, forms, fees, or other issues to maintain accurate and uniform responses to routine questions, complaints, or requests for service.
- Operate and utilize general office and election-related equipment, including computers, optical scan machines, accessibility-based election equipment, printers, photocopiers, scanners, fax machines, postage machines, paper cutters, and other office or election related equipment.
- Schedule all election related activities—such as, advertisements, ballot coding, testing of equipment and ballots, packing supplies, moving equipment, etc.
- Operate a computer to enter, retrieve, review or modify data; verify accuracy of entered data and make corrections as appropriate, utilizes word processing, database email, voter registration, and other software programs.
- Perform general office, data entry, and clerical duties including preparing forms and correspondence, reports, memos, faxes, updating databases and spreadsheets, reviewing and editing data for accuracy and completeness, generating reports, entering data using a number pad, and other related functions.
- Process a variety of election related documents per policy and procedures and within designated timeframes.
- Process and enter voter registration information, review registration forms for accuracy, review database for current voting registration status, print and complete certificates of registration, determine appropriate wards, precincts, and voting locations, input information into databases, transmit voter registration forms, and other related duties as required.
- Check completeness and accuracy of petitions; verify the validity of signatures and other information provided by petition signers, assist in other duties related to the certification of candidates and issues to the ballot.
- Receive and accept the filing of forms, reports, correspondence, and other election related documents, including voter registration forms, absentee documents, petitions, correspondence, and resolutions.
- Maintain database of Borough and Township elected officials, including all County, Magisterial, and School Directors. Update after Municipal Elections, resignations, and appointments.
- Maintain inventory of supplies and initiate Purchase Orders for new or replacement materials.
- Update Elections/Voter Registration website as needed.
- Preparing election supplies for kit distribution, sorting and packing ballots, transmit election data, making sure each polling place has all required equipment, poll workers, documents, etc. for Election Day.
- Keep documents for time required per Retention Manual.
- Maintain accurate Campaign Finance reporting.

- Maintain yearly Statements of Financial Interest as required by law for various elected officials and department heads.
- Maintain a working knowledge of the “Right to Know” Act.