



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

Thank You!

2010 marked the final stages of our complete switchover to optical scan voting machines. This was the biggest change in the election process in New York State in well over fifty years. The staff at the Board of Elections had been preparing for this change for years, but seeing it coming and pulling it off are two different things.

Despite the daunting nature of the task, we're proud to say we had an extremely successful implementation. Most voters had no problem at all adjusting to the new process, and we're confident each and every vote was correctly counted.

So after a big "whew!", our next thought is a huge "THANK YOU!" to all our Inspectors, Poll Site Managers, and Machine Technicians. Everyone really stepped up to the job, learning new tasks and procedures, and educating and assisting voters. It's a cliché, but more true last year than ever: we could not do it without you!

With the experience we all gained in 2010, we expect 2011 will be a little less stressful for all involved. We'll continue to refine our policies and procedures, so please contact Steve DeWitt or Elizabeth Cree if you have any ideas about how we can improve the voting process, whether for workers or the voters.

95 Years of Election Results Online

We recently completed a major project to compile, digitize, and make available Tompkins County Election Results dating back to 1915. Many staff members and interns took part in the various steps to make this possible. Decades of results handwritten in old ledger books had to be entered into an Excel database, proofed, then turned into a format that could be viewed online, and uploaded. As far as we know, we're one of the few, or perhaps only county in the US to have such detailed information online. Check it out on our website, www.votetompkins.com.

Important Dates

March 15: Village Elections in Cayuga Heights, Dryden, Groton and Trumansburg. Polls open noon to 9 p.m. (For elections that start at noon, Poll Site Managers arrive by 11:00 am, Inspectors by 11:30 am.)

April 26: Lansing Village Election. Polls open noon to 9 p.m.

Sept. 13: Primary Election. Polls open noon to 9 p.m.

November 8: General Election Polls open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. (Poll Site Managers arrive by 5:00 am, Inspectors by 5:30 am.)

This a big "local" year. Although there are no State or Federal offices on the ballot, there are almost fifty offices across the County up for election. See vote-tompkins.com for a complete list.



Voter Privacy

One of the most cited concerns expressed by voters around the State about optical scan voting was the feeling that they didn't have total privacy when filling out or casting their ballot. This wasn't too big an issue in Tompkins, but we did have some similar comments. Therefore we've come up with some new guidelines that we hope will help voters feel their ballot is always private.

We'll cover this more in training, but here are some highlights:

- Poll Site Managers will issue a *yellow privacy folder* to each voter as they enter the polling place.
- Encourage the voter to insert their ballot face down into the scanner to help keep their vote private.
- All of the yellow voting booths must be positioned so that people cannot walk behind a voter as they are marking their ballot. The booths should be 24 - 30 inches apart so that the only way one can access the booths is by walking between them.
- The Poll Site Manager will use tunnel tape to mark a line on the floor about 2-3 paces (minimum of 5 feet) from the scanner end of the voting machine. This line is where voters will wait their turn to insert their ballot.
- The Poll Site Manager should be positioned outside of this line at all times unless a voter specifically asks for help.
- All answers to questions by voters shall be done verbally.
- The Poll Site Manager shall never take a ballot from a voter. Voters shall always be responsible for inserting their own ballot into the scanner (except in those rare instances where a voter is physically unable to insert their ballot or the voter has asked for assistance and taken an Assistance Oath).
- If a voter is having difficulty inserting their ballot, the Poll Site Manager can give helpful instruction from outside of the marked line.

Affidavits

A little refresher about Affidavit ballots:

- First call the BOE so we can verify the voter is in the correct district.
- Give the voter the an affidavit ballot and envelope. (Affidavit ballots are different than the regular ballots that go into the machine.)
- When the voter gives the envelope back, make sure he or she signed it and checked one reason box.
- The Inspector must then fill in the Town and E.D. information and also sign the envelope.
- Fill in Section IV of the Challenge Report in the front of Poll Book.
- Place the completed Affidavit envelope in the clear, plastic Election Returns Bag.
- If unsure of any procedure, consult the flow chart we provide you.

Contact Information

Democratic Inspectors:

Call 274-5522, or email:

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or Laura Norman:

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Republican Inspectors:

Call 274-5521, or email:

Elizabeth Cree:

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New Look for BOE Web Site

Last Fall we rolled out a new look and interface for our website. There is a box on the left side of the homepage that links you to items that might be of interest to our Election Workers. Check it out:

www.votetompkins.com

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