

Election Preparedness

Polling Place Lines and You

Lines are inevitable. The number of registered voters is steadily increasing as new residents move into the county. Presidential election years always bring a surge in registration and participation. Looking forward to November 2008, more growth, and lines at the polling places, are inevitable.

Electoral Boards and General Registrars in Virginia have taken, and are taking, actions to minimize the causes of long lines that are under their control – increased and improved training of election officials, splitting of polling places to reduce the number of voters assigned to a specific location, moving to polling places that are larger and can accommodate more voters, additional splits in the pollbooks to create more check-in stations, and purchasing more voting booths in each polling place. While these actions will go a long way toward alleviating some of the problems, they all come at an increased cost, and are only a minor fraction of what can be accomplished if everyone gets involved, including YOU. Here is what you can do.

Updating Your Voter Information

Don't put off until Election Day what you should have done already. Making sure that your voter registration data is current and accurate will go a long way towards making your voting experience at the polling place smooth and trouble-free. Otherwise, investigating changes that haven't been updated slows down the voting process for everyone. Further, voter registration books close almost a month before any given election, so waiting until Election Day to update your information may cause you to exceed a grace period affecting your eligibility to vote.

Virginia Election Laws

[§ 24.2-423](#) *Whenever a registered voter changes his legal name, either by marriage, divorce, order of court, or otherwise, the voter shall promptly notify the general registrar of the jurisdiction where he is registered.*

[§ 24.2-424](#) *Whenever a registered voter changes his place of residence within the Commonwealth, he shall promptly notify any general registrar of the address of his new residence.*

Know Before You Go

Check your Voter Registration ID Card to determine your polling location. Don't have a Voter Registration Card? Call your General Registrar's office! Your polling place may have recently been moved to a new location. Do you know the location of your polling place? If not, call your General Registrar's office! Assisting lost voters is time-

consuming, slows the check-in process at the polls, and creates increased personnel demand on local voter registration offices.

Learn about the candidates and issues before Election Day. Asking for this information at the polls creates backups in the lines, and may even create thorny legal issues for volunteer poll workers. That's right, legal issues, because volunteers are not allowed by law to provide any information regarding issue or candidates that may influence your vote!

Before going to the polls, know what your ballot looks like and how to properly mark your ballot to ensure your ballot will be counted. A sample ballot may be requested from your local General Registrar's office and often, the General Registrar's office will post sample ballots on their website.

Learn what type of voting machines are used in your county or city and how to use the machines. This information can be obtained from your Registrar's office. Volunteers at the polls are willing to answer any questions regarding how to use the machines; however, this does cause delays in the lines. It is the voter's responsibility to become informed before going to the polls.

Prepare Yourself

Bring appropriate ID and have it ready to show to the Pollbook Officer when asked. Digging in your pocket for a wallet or rooting around in a deep purse to try to find your ID slows down the check-in process and makes those behind you have to wait even longer. If you do not have identification, you are allowed to affirm your identity by signing a form at the check-in table. But again, this creates delays for you and other voters.

Virginia Election Law requires that your state, out loud, your full legal name and current residence address. Don't hesitate when asked. Don't assume because you know the volunteers at the polls that you don't have to do this. You are only delaying the inevitable and making others wait. The election officers at the polls are required to have all voters follow this process.

Participate – Volunteer

It takes a lot of people to run an election. Everyone you see working in a polling place is a volunteer – your friends, your neighbors, and your family members. They are all committed to making your voting experience pleasant and ensuring your vote is counted. Many times, polling place efficiency could be greatly enhanced if only a couple more people were available to “work the books”, assist with outside polls voting, or assist a voter with special needs.

Update, Know, Prepare, Participate

YOU can greatly enhance the voting experience for yourself and everyone else. **YOU** can speed up processing. You can shorten lines. You can gain great personal satisfaction from exercising your right to vote. Or, you can complain about the long line you had to endure to cast your ballot. It's your choice. It's your vote.

Want to help? Call your General Registrar today! Shenandoah County – 540-459-6195.