

SEPTEMBER 2015

Join us for National Voter Registration Day

To celebrate both National Voter Registration Day and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), the Elections & Voter Services Division will be hosting a special event at Minneapolis City Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 22 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The program will be emceed by Third Ward Council Member Jacob Frey (Chair of the Elections & Rules Committee) with special guests Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon and former Minneapolis Mayor and U.S. Representative Don Fraser, as well as entertainment by local talents featuring Robert Robinson. "The primary tenets of the VRA deserve to be celebrated, but can also be expanded." said Councilmember Frey. "On the 50th anniversary we have the opportunity to do both."



National Voter Registration Day is the largest one-day effort of the year to register voters. It is a great opportunity for all Americans to make sure they are registered to vote so they can participate in upcoming elections. In Minnesota, voters can register, update their registration, or check their registration status online at <http://www.sos.state.mn.us>

Elections Division staff will be on-hand to provide informational packets to support community organizations wishing to conduct voter registration drives, to recruit election judges, and to provide information about the City's new CORE (Charitable Organizations Recruitment for Elections) initiative. More information about the CORE initiative will be available in upcoming newsletters.

Attendees are also encouraged to tour a special Voting Rights Act exhibit that will be on display throughout the historic Court House/City Hall through this fall. The exhibit will focus on the history of the Voting Rights Act in Minneapolis and Minnesota, and will also include artifacts and information on the history of elections in the city.

More details will be shared on the [Elections & Voter Services website](#) and our including [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) channels.

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Connecting with Elections & Voter Services

On the web: vote.minneapolismn.gov

By phone: For all elections related questions, 311 is available weekdays from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Outside the Minneapolis city limits, dial 612-673-3000.

By email: elections@minneapolismn.gov

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The Voting Rights Act 50 years later

Opportunities to educate, motivate, and activate all Minnesotans around issues of voting and democracy



This year marks a momentous anniversary for the Voting Rights Act of 1965. As the Act celebrated its 50th birthday on Aug. 6, it is important to acknowledge its role in expanding access to the democratic process as well as work left to be done.

Sept. 22 (see full article on page one) will provide an opportunity for the community to view this exhibit and will also serve as the culmination of several weeks of activities across the state focusing on the commemoration of the Voting Rights Act.

The Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon appointed a Council, comprised of community partners including the Elections Division, who participated in planning the Celebration of the Voting Rights Act.

The Council's [first official event](#) occurred July 30 at the Landmark Center in Saint Paul. Secretary Simon awarded National Association of Secretaries of State Medallions to civil rights pioneer Dr. Josie Johnson and to the four living members of Minnesota's 1965 congressional delegation: Vice President Walter Mondale, Governor Al Quie, U.S. Representative and Mayor Don Fraser, and Representative Alec Olson. Minnesota's 1965 delegation had the distinction of having its entire membership – both Democrats and Republicans – vote in favor of the original Voting Rights Act.

The [second event](#) planned by the Council was held on Thursday, Aug. 6, at the Harrison Neighborhood community center. The evening included storytelling, learning, and performances, and was kicked off by Congressman Keith Ellison.

Beginning in September and running through the fall, the Division will be hosting an exhibit in City Hall featuring artifacts and memorabilia focused on the history of the Voting Rights Act and elections in Minnesota and Minneapolis. The National Voter Registration Day event on

Calendar

Where to find Elections & Voter Services this fall:

- Open Streets University** - Sat., Sept. 12
- First Annual West Bank Block Party** - Sat., Sept. 12
- Open Streets Nicollet** - Sun., Sept. 20
- National Voter Registration Day** - Tues. Sept. 22
- Open Streets Lowry** - Sat., Sept. 26
- Resident Resource Fair** - Sat., Oct. 3

For more details on all upcoming events, visit vote.minneapolismn.gov

2016 election dates

Party Caucuses* - Tuesday, March 1

Primary - Tuesday, Aug. 9

Presidential Election - Tuesday, Nov. 8

** Caucuses are hosted and held by political parties, not Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services.*

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Elections & Voter Services Division report to the City Council

The Elections Division's wrap up of the 2014 election season, [*The 2014 Gubernatorial Election: An analysis and recommendations*](#), was presented to the Elections & Rules Committee in July. The presentation highlighted the special election for the vacant Third District County Commissioner seat held in early 2014, as well as the state primary in August and the Gubernatorial General Election in November.

The year of absentee voting:

2014 marked the beginning of "no-excuse" absentee balloting in Minnesota, sparking record-setting numbers of absentee voters in both the primary and general election. This included both large numbers of voters casting absentee ballots in-person at City Hall and through the mail.

Looking forward to 2016, increased levels of absentee voting are anticipated. Voters are clearly interested in the ability to cast a ballot prior to Election Day, and Minneapolis will continue to advocate for true early voting in Minnesota. During the 2015 session of the state legislature, the City of Minneapolis joined the League of Minnesota Cities and several other municipalities around the state in pushing for this change in state law. Although these efforts were buoyed by the response to the expansion of absentee voting, early voting was not adopted by the state. While the City will continue to support legislative changes allowing early voting, Division staff will continue working to ensure absentee voting is as accessible as possible for all interested voters through voter outreach as well as partnering with other organizations.

Precincts and population:

Another key area of preparation for 2014 noted in the report was the evaluation of the number of registered voters in each polling place.

As a result, eight new precincts were added in 2014 to help reduce lines at the precincts and changes were made to five precincts to better serve voters' needs. Looking ahead to 2016, the Division will continue to assess changes to precincts and polling locations.

Election judges—"Foot soldiers" of democracy:

The Elections division employed over 1,700 election judges for the 2014 election season. Of this total, the Division was excited to welcome 495 new judges. Election judge recruitment is a year-round task, and new judges are always welcomed. The Division will continue to pursue collaborations with neighborhood organizations, local nonprofits, schools and workforce centers to help recruit election judges that reflect the communities being served.

Additional recommendations for the future

The 2014 election cycle was very busy and provided many great takeaways for improving the 2016 election season. Additional recommendations in preparation for 2016 include:

- Advocating for permissive legislation to allow cities the option of providing qualified interpreters to assist voters in polling places.
- Collaborating with the Minneapolis Public School District to use school facilities as polling places wherever possible. (This recommendation is derived from the report issued by the Presidential Commission on Election Administration.)

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What else is keeping the Division busy: Elections & Voter Services in the community

Election & Voter Services staff is taking full advantage of 2015, which has no scheduled elections, to prepare for 2016. The Division has increased its presence in the community through voter outreach and education at various events and happenings throughout the city.

Elections Management System:

As indicated in the May edition of Election Connection, the Division issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new EMS. That project is moving forward and is ahead of the projected schedule. Currently, the City is in contract negotiations with the top vendor and staff is anxiously looking forward to beginning work with the vendor to design the EMS modules in time for use in 2016. The goal is to have the new system in place by March 2016.

Collaboration with NCR:

Partnering with the City's Neighborhood & Community Relations (NCR) Department, the Division and other members of the City Clerk's office participated in a Cultural Communities Context Tour in June. This two-day tour throughout Minneapolis provided Division staff with an opportunity to meet with several leaders from different cultural communities. Other collaborations with NCR included informational meetings at North Commons Recreation Center and Powderhorn Park for area neighborhood associations to meet with staff from the Elections Division to discuss further collaborations around voter education and the recruitment of election judges.

2016 Polling Places

The Division continues to evaluate current polling places for potential changes to take place before 2016. Elections staff estimates an additional three to seven precincts may be needed for 2016.

Staff Position Manuals:

Division staffers have been busy updating their position manuals. Creating these manuals gives staff the opportunity to re-evaluate current procedures and determine the most efficient processes to in turn assure maximum efficiency in administering elections in Minneapolis.

25th Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act:

Elections staff had accessible voting equipment on hand for participants to try out and gain experience with at the City's celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act held at City Hall on July 23.

50th Anniversary of Voting Rights Act:

The Division participated in multiple events commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act through the summer and fall. (See the article on page two.)

Open Streets:

The Division has been staffing booths at most of the Open Streets events throughout the city over the course of the summer. Through August, Elections Division staff have been on hand at the Open Streets events on East Lake St., Franklin Ave., and Downtown to talk with attendees about registering, voting, and the potential to serve as election judges. Three more Open Streets events are planned in September.

Division staff is interested in getting out into the community and building connections with residents and organizations in Minneapolis. If your neighborhood or organization is sponsoring an activity or event you would like Division staff to attend, let us know! Contact us at elections@minneapolismn.gov or call Barb at 612-673-3764.

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Buen viaje, Jilla!



After serving full time in the Elections & Voter Services Division since 2013, Jilla Nadimi has left the world of voting to teach English in the Galápagos Islands!

She departed this August, with a stop in Columbia and some time in Ecuador before heading to the islands for work within

the public school system. When she returns to the United States, Jilla has plans to enter graduate school.

Jilla's first experience at the City of Minneapolis was as an Urban Scholar. Urban Scholars is a 12-week leadership development summer internship program hosted by the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department designed to expose a diverse group of undergraduate and graduate students to careers in the public sector. Jilla spent the summer of 2012 working with the City's Regulatory Services Department as part of the inaugural class of Urban Scholars. She became the first Urban Scholar hired as a full time City employee when she hit the ground running in Elections, taking the election judge scheduling reins from Carol Strong in the months leading up to the 2013 Municipal Election.

Jilla will be greatly missed—she brought lots of enthusiasm, adventure, and a spirit of innovation to the Elections office. She also was a large advocate for new ways of engaging youth and other underrepresented populations in the voting process.

We wish Jilla well in her new work and home...and ask that she send many beautiful tropical photos to provide a little escape from what is expected to be a busy 2016 election season!

Good luck Urban Scholar Nathan Wiig

2015 marked the 4-year anniversary of the Urban Scholars program at the City, and the third year the Elections & Voter Services Division hosted at least one intern. Over a period of twelve weeks this summer, Nathan lent his abilities and unique perspective to a variety of Division projects. He assisted with elements of the burgeoning Voter Outreach and Education program, created training materials and lessons for Election Judges, analyzed potential alternate training sites, and oversaw a project analyzing and comparing several election judge management functions across a variety of jurisdictions. He even had an opportunity to gain first-hand experience while serving as an election judge for the City of St. Louis Park in their primary on Aug. 11.



A native of Columbia Heights, Minnesota, Nathan is currently attending Minnesota State University Mankato where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Social Work. He is on track to complete his undergraduate studies this fall, and is seriously considering heading to graduate school soon after. He has a passion for public service and a strong desire to help people, and without a doubt he will go on to do great things.

The Division thanks him greatly for his brief, yet impactful, service to this office and to the people of the City of Minneapolis.