

Taking the ballot to the people: Plans & preparations for the 2016 election

Preparations for the 2016 election season are well underway. The Elections & Voter Services Division (EVS) presented its latest report to the City Council’s Elections & Rules Committee on Tuesday, March 29, 2016, highlighting some of the crucial work being undertaken this year.

EVS is committed to ensuring all eligible Minneapolis voters have both the opportunity and the ability to cast a ballot. Driven by this commitment, EVS seeks to eliminate unnecessary barriers to electoral participation and to make voting as easy as possible, taking the ballot to the people in as many ways as possible.

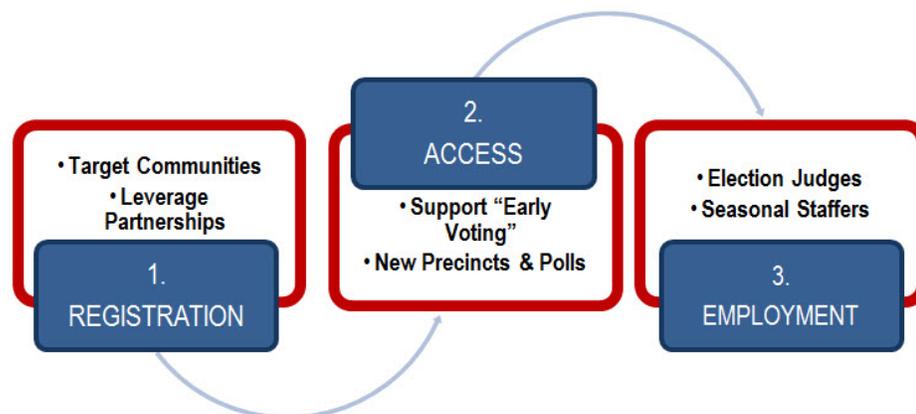
To achieve that objective, the Division will focus its plans for this year’s presidential election in three areas: (1) increasing voter registration; (2) improving access to the ballot box; and (3) recruiting the right staff in the right places to support voters at every step of the process. The report highlights some key strategies to support these objectives.

The [full report](#) is available on both the Elections & Voter Services website vote.minneapolismn.gov, and the City’s [legislative information site](#) containing all Council and Committee agendas and legislative files.

[Video](#) of the meeting is also archived for viewing at any time.

REGISTRATION as a key focus

Registration is the necessary first step to participating in an election. As the Elections & Voter Services Division (EVS) has



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expanded outreach and education efforts, it has become clear that ensuring voters are registered is the key to providing a smoother experience for voters, poll workers, and staff.

Focusing on registration will not address all the complex factors contributing to a steady national decline in voter participation, nor will it automatically increase actual voter turnout. Nevertheless, it is a necessary step to easing access to participation. While the ultimate decision of whether or not to participate rests with individual voters, ensuring those who choose to participate face as few barriers as legally required is an underlying value that drives the work of the EVS Division.

Nationally, an estimated 51 million eligible citizens are not registered to vote, approximately one in every four Americans. The Secretary of State puts the number of

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eligible but unregistered Minnesotans at 800,000. According to the Pew Center on the States, an additional 24 million existing registrations (or roughly one in eight current registrations) are inaccurate. In addition to registering when voting for the first time, it is necessary for residents to re-register when moving to a new address, making a name change, or when it has been more than four years since last casting a ballot. This contributes to a large number of existing registrations which require updates, most often due to a move or name change following marriage, for instance.

EVS launched its voter outreach and education (VOE) program in 2013 and has built on its initial successes in subsequent years. In 2016, registration will be at the center of all outreach efforts, particularly targeting under-represented communities. VOE plans include an assortment of strategies that maximize resources, build capacity, and leverage community partnerships to reduce the registration gap and make voting as accessible as possible for all eligible Minneapolitans.



Increasing ACCESS: Through absentee voting

Absentee voting begins 46 days before each regularly scheduled election. Absentee ballots can be cast either in-person or by mail. In 2016, absentee balloting for the primary will run June 24 to August 9, while absentee balloting for the general election will run from Sept. 23 to Election Day on Nov. 8.

In-person absentee voting is similar to—and is even sometimes referred to as—“early voting.” However, there are important differences between no-excuse absentee in-person voting and true early voting. Nevertheless, because many voters refer to in-person absentee balloting as early voting, EVS will use and promote this term, as well as the opportunity to cast an absentee ballot, to encourage voters who choose to take advantage of this option in order to reduce the potential for long lines and extended wait times at the polls on Election Day.

Given the probability of setting new records for absentee participation in the 2016 Presidential Election, preparations are underway to expand absentee voting options to reduce long lines and wait times and offer more service options to voters.

Just as in the last three years, in-person absentee voting will be offered at City Hall, primarily in the rotunda, for both the primary and general election. Additionally, plans are being made to offer in-person voting at up to four additional sites during the 46-day absentee period leading up to the general election. Keeping with the overall theme of “**taking the ballot to the people,**” this strategy would give all voters a choice of up to five “early vote” locations, significantly increasing access to the ballot box and convenience to voters. Geographic considerations are being taken into account for where to locate these satellite voting locations, as well as population and demographic data, and previous voting trends.

Polling place additions and changes

After considering population growth and voter turnout figures, seven new precincts are being added in 2016, bringing the total number of polling places on Election Day from 125 to 132. The changes include the addition of four new precincts at new polling locations, the reallocation of four existing precincts within one ward into seven precincts, and the relocation of seven polling locations. The seven proposed new precincts will eliminate five current precincts that exceed 2,500 registered voters each.

See the tables on the next page for all of the precinct and polling place location changes occurring in 2016.

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New precincts and polling places for 2016

New precincts with new polling locations are located in wards 2, 9, 10, and 12:

W2-P11 Longfellow School	portion of existing precinct W2-P1
W9-P9 Church of Gichitwaa Kateri	portion of existing precinct W9-P1
W10-P10 Spring House Ministry Center	portion of existing precinct W10-P8
W12-P13 Keewaydin School	portion of existing precinct W12-P5

Ward 13 is experiencing the greatest number of precinct changes, due to a concentration of precincts with high numbers of active voters. It is in this ward that four existing precincts are being divided into seven new precincts:

W13-P2 Lake Harriet School - Lower	W13-P2 St John's Episcopal Church
W13-P3 Linden Hills Park*	W13-P3 Linden Hills Park*
W13-P4 Pershing Park	W13-P4 Church of St Thomas the Apostle
W13-P5 Mt Olivet Lutheran Church	W13-P5 Pershing Park
	W13-P11 Lake Harriet United Methodist Church
	W13-P12 Christ the King Church
	W13-P13 Mt Olivet Lutheran Church

**precinct boundary change; name & location remain the same*

The polling locations slated for relocation in 2016 include some which will be permanently relocated, while others will change only for 2016 due to construction issues:

W3-P5 Ukrainian Event Center (from St Maron Catholic Church)
W4-P7 St Austin Church (from Luther Memorial Church)
W5-P3 North Commons Park (from Rainbow Terrace)
W5-P5 Masjid An-Nur (from Lyndale Manor Highrise)
W6-P5 American Indian Center (from Phillips Community Center)^
W7-P9 Scottish Rite Temple (from Temple Israel)^
W9-P5 Walker Community Church (from Powderhorn Park)

^relocated only for 2016, due to construction

Repeated, widespread communication via multiple channels will be crucial to help minimize voter confusion related to these proposed changes. Hennepin County sends a postcard update to each affected address in any new or updated precinct. In addition to this county notice, EVS will collaborate to help spread the word via community websites, social networks, community meetings and events, newsletters, mailings, and other means. Posters will be sent to all former polls to be posted at entrances to instruct voters of the new location and revised precinct boundaries. The simplest key message that will be reiterated in voter education efforts to all Minneapolis residents relating to voting on Election Day in 2016 is: CHECK YOUR POLLING PLACE.

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New polling place signage

A partnership is underway with DesignWorks at the Minneapolis College of Art & Design (MCAD) to overhaul signage used in all polling places. DesignWorks is an on-campus studio which utilizes full-time MCAD students to develop design solutions for both the college and outside clients.

Currently, there is a mix of signage in polling places, some of which has been created over a number of years by various staffers as well as other required signage provided by the Secretary of State. This patchwork of posted regulations, legal notices, instructions, and various forms are all presented with inconsistent sizes, colors, and fonts, resulting in a visual cacophony that can be confusing and easily dismissed by voters. In addition, way-finding signage is spotty, providing little help to voters in navigating polling place locations (both inside and outside).

Incorporating standards established by the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) Design for Democracy, the new signage created by DesignWorks will provide a clean, cohesive, consistent, and easy-to-digest set of signs with uniform sizes, colors, fonts, and other design cues used in ways that quickly and easily identify each piece as informational, instructional, or way-finding in nature. Translated versions of the signs in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish will also be available, with some signs designed to incorporate multiple languages. Finally, the new signage will incorporate elements of the City's visual identity and be compatible with EVS branding. The production of this new polling place signage is on track to debut in polling places in time for the August 9 primary.

Erase the Line project

The Presidential Commission on Election Administration has stated voters should not be made to wait more than 30 minutes to cast a ballot. This has created a potentially impossible goal, especially in a high-turnout election. A nearly endless list of contributing factors can impact wait times—many of them outside the direct control of election administrators; for example, voters who don't prepare in advance, don't know what is on the ballot, and, therefore,

tie-up a voting booth while taking time to read the ballot for the first time, creating a backlog of voters in the queue.

Nevertheless, one of the primary objectives in 2016 is ensuring voters experience reasonable wait times at the polls on Election Day. To that end, EVS will work to quantify exactly how long voters do wait in polling places to better plan for and manage future elections. The Division is excited to be partnering with the D.C. Board of Elections (DCBOE) in its **Erase the Line** program to collect and evaluate data that will provide the City meaningful metrics that can be used to improve Election Day logistics.



All collected data will be compiled into a post-election report which EVS can analyze to identify areas to alleviate delays and problems on Election Day. It will also identify choke points in the voting process before they become problematic. The DCBOE will send staff to select sites around the country participating in its **Erase the Line** program. Lester Bird from D.C. will be on site with EVS during the August 8 primary to learn about Minneapolis processes, observe data teams in Minneapolis polling places, and provide assistance to EVS staff.

EMPLOYMENT

Election judge recruitment campaign: #changetheroutine

EVS has collaborated with the Media Active team from Intermedia Arts, a Minneapolis-based multidisciplinary arts organization, to develop a campaign focused on election judge recruitment. Media Active is a team of teen artists who work on professional-quality media projects, offering the young artists valuable real world experience and providing their clients high-quality results.

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Media Active developed a compelling storyline featuring two relatable main characters going about their daily routines, which involve a good deal of community involvement and service. These two characters both choose to further **CHANGE THE ROUTINE** by becoming election judges, another form of community involvement and service, and meet up for the first time on Election Day.

To accompany the full-length video, Media Active has produced shorter versions, including excerpts suitable for mediums such as Instagram, as well as a series of still photos and other visuals optimized for sharing through multiple social media forums. As a result, EVS will have a coordinated visual campaign that can be carried through recruitment materials for election judges.

CORE: Using partnerships to recruit election judges

The former Adopt-A-Precinct program has been updated, redesigned and given a new name to provide a clearer sense of its purpose and scope. Following work with the City Attorney's Office in 2015, Charitable Organizations Recruitment for Elections (CORE) is now a formalized

program available to nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organizations.

Through the CORE program, participating organizations qualify for compensation for recruiting election judges. All recruits must meet the statutory requirements for election judges, set forth in Minn. Stat. § 204B.19, as well as City requirements, which includes completing a mandatory three-hour training session and abiding by the EVS code of conduct.

Election judges are always needed

Elections & Voter Services will be hiring approximately 2,500 election judges to help voters by serving in the city's polling places on Election Day. All election judges must meet the minimum qualifications outlined in state law, as well as attend a three-hour mandatory training course.

The rate of pay for election judges is slated to increase to a minimum of \$13.30 per hour on Aug. 1, 2016, making this a rewarding opportunity on many levels. Anyone interested in serving as an election judge can apply [online](#) anytime.

*Providing equal
access to ALL
people.*

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CHANGED**
the routine.

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*Become a
Minneapolis
Election Judge
today.*

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Seasonal opportunities

Given the small size of its full-time professional staff, EVS relies heavily upon a team of seasonal staffers for every election. These seasonal staffers begin coming on-board as early as March to help with initial plans and preparations. As an election draws closer, the number of staffers grows dramatically. All aspects of working with election judges require additional staff support, from recruiting to scheduling, training, and paying them. Other staffers work at the warehouse to manage supplies, test equipment, and deploy and retrieve materials from polling places.

The single biggest need for seasonal staff is associated with absentee voting. For in-person absentee voting, the increased levels of turnout coupled with extended service hours and additional satellite locations will require a substantial commitment of personnel. Whether in-person or by mail, absentee voting requires a significant amount of processing for each ballot and its associated series of envelopes at multiple points in time. This translates into a need for adequate staffing to handle this time-sensitive and variable workload. It is important to recognize both the number of in-person absentee voters and absentee mail ballots being received increase substantially as Election Day approaches, placing further demands on staff to get all of the absentee ballots received both in-person and by mail processed and tabulated before Election Day.

Different teams are needed to handle each in-person voting location, to visit all health care facilities to serve residents, to process mailed ballots, to accept or reject returned ballots, to prepare and tabulate ballots, and to serve as absentee ballot runners on Election Day and for the general election throughout the absentee voting period.

Hiring is underway now with opportunities available primarily working with the absentee voting process for seasonal positions that will be primarily full time starting in June and ending after the general election in November.

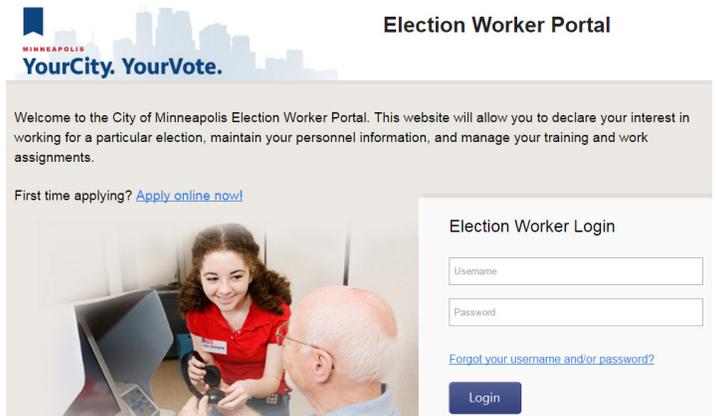
If you are interested in one of these positions, or know someone else who might be, please take a look at the currently open positions and [apply online](#) now in the City's NeoGov system.

Look for the following job titles under the Current Job Openings listed in the City Clerk department in NeoGov for complete job descriptions, required qualifications, and to submit an application:

Elections Support Specialist I—Absentee Voting

Elections Support Specialist II—Absentee Voting

Program Aide II



Election judges: Watch for the election worker portal

Election judges serving this year will experience a new and improved way to interact with EVS: the Election Worker Portal. The Portal is a website that allows election judges and EVS to communicate with one another quickly about personnel information, work and training assignments, and more. It is a crucial component of the new Election Management System (EMS) being put into place this spring. Going forward, it will be the primary means of communication between EVS and judges, and it can be easily accessed from any computer with an internet connection and a web browser. Of course, staff can also still be reached quickly by phone or email.

To access the Portal, each judge will be given their own unique login credentials. When judges log in for the first time, they will enter their personnel information, eliminating the need to collect this information at the time of training. This also allows the judges the freedom to update their personnel information whenever necessary.

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From the Portal homepage, judges can view a list of upcoming elections, and at the beginning of each election season, select the elections they are interested in serving for, and select their shift preferences. From this information, EVS staff can assign judges to work on Election Day. Once assignment are made, they will appear in a judge's Portal on their Work Assignment tab, and the judge can let EVS know if they accept the assignment. Judges can even view a map with directions from their home address to the polling place they will be working in.

On the Training tab, judges can see which courses they are required to attend and which courses they have completed, view available sessions for each training course, and select sessions to attend. Once selected, scheduled sessions will display on the page along with date, time, and location information (including a map with directions, just like with work assignments.)

Shortly EVS will be sending a letter out to all election judges officially kicking off the season and welcoming judges to log in to the Portal for the first time. Judges should keep an eye out for this because it will include important log in credentials as well as other important information regarding the 2016 election season.

EVS staff are thrilled with the implementation of this new system, and are equally thrilled for election judges to try it and let us know what they think!

e-Poll books in Hennepin County—but not Minneapolis in 2016

Hennepin County has purchased electronic poll books to expedite and streamline the process of updating voter records in the roster on Election Day. These devices are secure tablet computers that will replace the current paper voter check-in process. The county will implement these devices in polling places in conjunction with a new mail absentee program in the 2016 for all cities except Minneapolis.

The Elections & Voter Services Division in Minneapolis is committed to voter service and, on Election Day, is particularly focused on line management to minimize or avoid long lines and wait times. EVS is planning multiple initiatives to this end, including efforts like adding seven new precincts on Election Day, promoting absentee voting both in-person and by mail, and putting a heavy emphasis on voter outreach and education. Both the City and the County recognize that Minneapolis' success or failure in administering the 2016 Presidential Election means success or failure for the County as well.

Minneapolis supports Hennepin County's mail absentee voting and e-poll book initiatives, but will not participate in those initiatives until 2017. The risks to prompt, efficient voter service outweigh the potential gains of implementing these new initiatives in the County's largest municipality in their first year. Off-year municipal elections typically have lower turnout, making 2017 a more practical time to implement major programmatic changes in Minneapolis. In addition, Minneapolis will benefit from any lessons learned and the process improvements that will be made following the program's initial implementation.

Because the high priority of serving voters in a timely manner is paramount, EVS's focus will be on implementing its new Election Management System and other process improvements and initiatives developed in more than a year of planning for the 2016 Presidential Election. To accommodate an anticipated increase in absentee voting, EVS will have a central count tabulator on site to streamline and enhance process efficiencies, and will be increasing its seasonal staffing levels.



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Expanded voter resources are coming

EVS plans an array of refreshed resources for 2016, including the production and distribution of a Voter Guide to all Minneapolis households this fall. In addition, EVS will be distributing materials provided by the Secretary of State, including new and existing items translated into additional languages for the first time.

Several materials have been available in Spanish, Somali, and Hmong, in addition to English for many years. The Secretary of State provides materials such as Voter Registration Applications, Absentee Ballot applications, voter fact sheets, and other key documents and has previously translated those materials into Hmong, Somali, Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese. Beginning in 2016, those materials will also be available in Mandarin, Oromo, Amharic, Laotian, and Cambodian.

As in prior years, EVS will make all its educational materials, tools, and information available for those wishing to use such materials for their own voter engagement campaigns. EVS is also exploring the creation of ready-made "Voter Registration Drive Packets" to facilitate successful registration drives by local groups and associations, and will also make staff available to help coordinate and contribute to non-partisan registration drives.



Calendar—Key election dates

Candidate filing period - May 17-31

Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services handles filing for Minneapolis School Board Director seats. These candidates file at City Hall.

Primary - Tuesday, Aug. 9

Absentee voting begins - June 24

Pre-registration deadline - July 19

Presidential General Election - Tuesday, Nov. 8

Absentee voting begins - Sept. 23

Pre-registration deadline - Oct. 18

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

Minneapolis residents will vote for U.S. President, U.S. Representative, State Senator, & State Representative. In addition, some State Supreme Court Justices, District Court Judges, and Minneapolis School Board Directors will also be on the ballot.

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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