

# 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

## ORGANIZATION

The Onondaga County Board of Elections is a County Office, responsible for all Federal, State, County, City and Town elections, along with the Villages of Camillus, Manlius and North Syracuse. Under present law, all villages (except Camillus, Manlius and North Syracuse) and school district elections, as well as fire, water and other special district elections, do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Board of Elections at this time.

The structure, responsibilities and duties of the Board are set forth in the New York State Election Law. Formal Board meetings and documentation of actions, discussion and decisions are being maintained.

The Board of Elections offices were relocated from downtown Syracuse to 1000 Erie Blvd West, Syracuse, New York. Our Thompson Road Service Center moved to this location in late July and our offices moved in late September.

## PERSONNEL AND BUDGET

In keeping with state mandate, two Commissioners, one Republican and one Democrat administer the Board of Elections. The Commissioners are recommended by their respective County committees and appointed by the County Legislature every 2 years. The Board had 16 full time positions.

Both Commissioners' terms ended on December 31, 2010 and were reappointed for another two years.

2011 was a local election year. (4) Justices of the Supreme Court, County Executive, District Attorney, Comptroller, 17 County Legislators, (2) City Court Judges, City Auditor, (2) Councilors at Large, (5) District Councilors, (4) Commissioners of Education, 19 town offices and the Village of Camillus Mayor, (2) Trustees and Trustee to fill vacancy.

The Board of Elections is funded solely by the County of Onondaga. The 2011 budget as modified (BAM) include the following:

### **Total 2010 Budget**

Total County Budget	\$ 3,016,104
Salaries (full time)	\$ 759,187
Salaries*(temporary)	\$ 461,512

(\*includes temporary clerks, election inspectors, voting machine technicians, training consultants)

## **ELECTION COST**

Onondaga County is responsible for paying all election costs. These costs include storing, transporting and maintaining the Imagecast machines, paying machine technicians and election inspectors.

The County Board of Elections reviews all polling places for use and accessibility and tests and certifies all voting machines in Onondaga County. There are **275** Imagecast voting machines and **25** Imagecast scanners only voting machines in Onondaga County.

There were no county election charge backs to municipalities for 2011. HAVA will have some one time reimbursements that will require future annual operating expenditures. HAVA requires the county to maintain a pre-HAVA level of expenditures. We are required to follow Federal and NYS contract processes for the purchases most related to the new voting systems.

## **ELECTION DISTRICTS**

In 2011, there were **461** Election Districts in Onondaga County. Five (**5**) of these were non-working districts. There is an average registration of **603** voters in each district. In 2011, the smallest district contained **3** voters (City 6-8) and the largest had an enrollment of **1,337** voters (Cicero 16).

## **POLLING PLACES**

There were **176** polling sites in Onondaga County in 2011. All polling places in Onondaga County sign a five (5) year lease.

Due to lack of voting area in some locations, each location was laid out to accommodate the integration of the Imagecast Voting System with the voting equipment. Each diagram was drawn and saved in an architectural program. The diagrams were printed and placed in all election supply bags and given to machine technicians for use on election day.

In 2011, the County HAVA Funds Program for Polling Place Access Improvement allowed the Board of Elections to construct a polling/training center at our new offices. This involved paving and stripping the parking lot and installing an ADA entrance way. This cost approximately \$80,000. The Board also repaved a portion of the parking lot at the Camillus Fire Station.

## **SERVICE CENTER**

Onondaga County continued to rent the Thompson Rd facility until 8/1/2011 to house the 300 Imagecast voting system and the supplies needed to conduct elections. All the equipment and supplies were moved to our new location in late July 2011.

## VOTING MACHINES TECHNICIANS/CUSTODIANS

Two (2) full time Onondaga County Voting Machine Custodians are responsible for maintaining, testing, and preparing the Imagecast voting systems for each election site within Onondaga County with the assistance of centralized voting machine technicians.

The State mandates quarterly testing of the Imagecast voting system. It takes a bipartisan team approximately 1 hour per machine. This testing is done to ensure that the machines are functioning properly.

We are required to perform a process called pre-lat. This process requires the creation of a test deck, which requires someone to vote each position on the ballot and requires them to use all disability apparatus. Six seals are attached to each machine and their numbers are recorded on the Statement of Canvass sheet. The machines are packaged for delivery to the polling places. This also had to be done with a bipartisan team and took nearly 1½ hours per machine.

In 2011, there were 24 additional voting machine technicians in Onondaga County. Voting Machine technicians are appointed by the Board of Elections each year. In 2011, the voting machine technician rate of pay was \$20.50 an hour.

All 24 technicians were trained on the operations and troubleshooting for the Imagecast voting machines. Our two full time machine custodians however, did provide field support for all the voting system.

The NTS Custodian (Asset Tracking and Management System) was purchased for tracking voting system equipment. The program is designed to provide comprehensive bar-coding/tracking of the voting equipment. This allows our staff to maintain a history and chain of custody on the voting system and the equipment to provide the necessary reporting to the State Board of Elections.

Temporary fixes were again used to bring Onondaga County polling places into compliance with the Federal Help Americans Vote Act. The technicians were successful at setting up and taking down the temporary fixes in a 48 hour time frame around each election day.

The number of machines used for each election in 2011 was as follows:

<b><u>ELECTION</u></b>	<b><u>IMAGECAST VOTING SYSTEMS</u></b>
Primary September 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>44</b>
General November 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>184</b>

Additional spare Imagecast voting systems were prepared in case of breakdowns before each election.

## ELECTION INSPECTORS

The election inspector program was restructured as follows:

Polling Site Manager – PSM  
Voting System Specialist – VSS  
Regular Inspector – RI

- A. Polling Site Manager is responsible for assigning work to all the inspectors in the site, making sure the voting system specialists have the machine up and running, directing voters to the correct election district and returning the ballots, memory cards and supplies to the designated site after the close of the polls. They can also fill in for a regular inspector when needed
- B. Voting System Specialist is responsible to open and run the voting machine during the hours of voting. They can also fill in for a regular inspector when needed
- C. Regular Inspector is responsible for processing the voters and ballot distribution.

New York State Law requires county boards to conduct **annual** mandatory “hands on” training sessions for all poll workers with an exam. Poll workers are paid for their election duties by the county at a rate approved by the county legislature. Polling Site Managers were paid \$235 for a General Election; Voting System Specialists were paid \$200 and a Regular Inspector were paid \$160 for the day. PSM and VSS are asked to report to work at 5AM to get the site opened and the voting machine ready for 6AM. Regular inspectors still report to work at 5:30AM.

Only NEW Poll Site Managers and Voting System Specialists received a second training on the machines and should be able to fix most problems that may occur during the day. They must also be willing to work anywhere in Onondaga County. An open house was held on the Saturday before the election at our new training center for returning Poll Site Managers and Voting System Specialists as a refresher. The session lasted 3 hours and approximately 85 people voluntarily attended. Those who attended were not compensated.

Our board continues its working relationship with Onondaga Community College (OCC) for inspectors. To get young people interested in the election process, we worked with OCC and the Political Science Department to make the election process part of the accreditation of the course assignment. If the student did not complete this assignment, he did not receive the credit.

After creating an extensive training program in 2009 for the election inspectors, our staff established a process for scheduling the election inspections for their Hands-On training. A total of 54 training sessions were scheduled at the BOE Service Center on Thompson Road during the month of May with a capacity of 50 inspectors per session which lasted about 2½ - 3 hours where 1,403 attended. 13 additional certification classes were held at the new BOE Training Center for new and returning inspectors where 168 people attended. A total of 3 machine training sessions with an exam were scheduled in October for new PSM and VSS candidates at the new BOE Training Center which lasted approximately 2 ½ hrs where 44 people attended.

A total of **1,591** election inspectors attended the hands on training. Only **12** inspectors failed the test. The training included the actually handling of all the paperwork used at a polling place during an election. Each inspector was also shown, as part of their training, how to open and close the Imagecast voting machine. Election Inspectors are paid \$25 per training session each year.

## **BALLOT ACCESS**

Certain towns hold caucuses to select their candidates, but most candidates are required to file petitions to seek public office. All petitions for candidates for public office or party position, entirely within Onondaga County, are filed with this Board. Anyone seeking an office that crosses county lines is required to file in Albany at the New York State Board of Elections.

In 2011, candidates for public office filed **185** party designating petitions and 19 party position petitions. Each petition is logged in by Board staff and each candidate for public office is notified in writing that a petition has been filed on his/her behalf and the candidate is given an opportunity to accept or decline the designation or nomination. Any objections to the designation of a candidate are filed with the Board and ruled upon by the Commissioners. In 2011, there were 6 challenges to designating petitions filed. The Board received specifications on (1) of the challenges. There were also (4) Opportunity to Ballot Petitions filed. Candidates desiring to run on an independent line are required to file independent nominating petitions. In 2011, **12** independent nominating petitions were filed. There were (4) challenges to these petitions with specifications filed on 2 of the petitions filed. Additionally, **21** Certificates of Nomination were filed. There were (**0**) challenges with specifications filed on the certificates.

There were a total of (8) candidates removed from the ballot because they failed to file there acceptance form, (2) candidates removed because they did not receive the party authorization and (10) candidates because they lost the September Primary Election.

Party authorizations are filed for candidates who are not members of a Party for which the candidate wants that Party endorsement/line. Party authorizations were filed for the following (4)Democrats; (2) Republican, (31)Conservatives, (124)Independence, (29)Working Families authorizations were filed.

## **IMAGECAST BALLOT PRINTING**

In 2011, our office, County Print Shop and the IT Department worked hand in hand to allow the Board to print the stubbed ballots in house. Ballots used in the ICP's are required to be bound and have a numbered stub.

The number of offices on the City of Syracuse ballot would not fit on the standard 17" paper. The ballot needed to be 22". Our print shop was not equipped to handle this size ballot so we had to have Phoenix Graphics in Rochester, New York print them.

Having the Print Shop do our ballot printing instead of an outside vendor has saved our department thousands of dollars

## VOTER REGISTRATION

The qualifications for voting in New York State are as follows: 18 years of age by Election Day, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of the State and County for 30 days prior to election. Residents of the County are allowed to register up to 25 days prior to an election during the year. **330** voter registration forms were delivered to the Office of the Board of Elections in person.

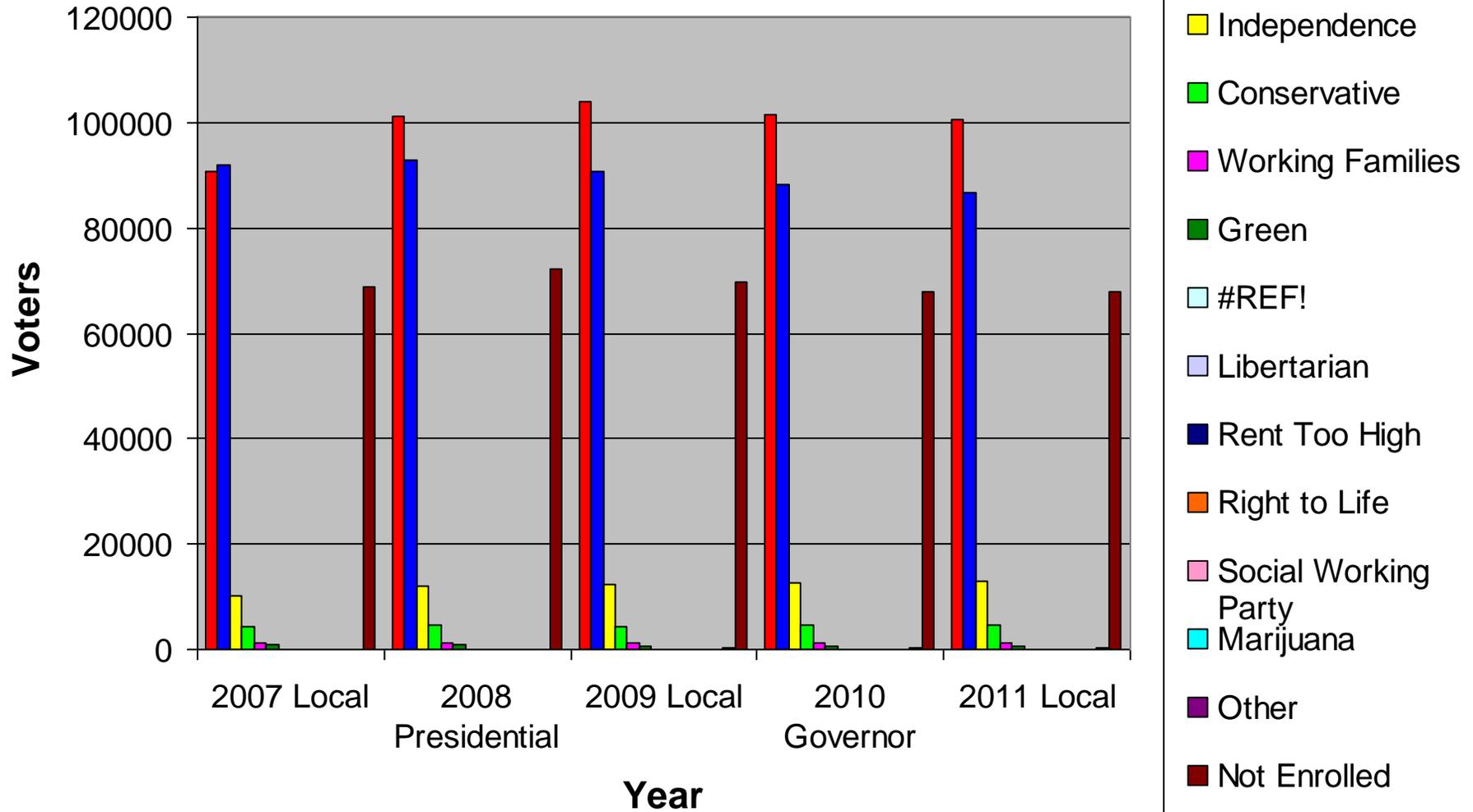
Two(2) temporary staff were hired to help our staff process all the voter registration applications received in our office for the Primary and General Elections. Our regular staff could not keep up with the incoming mail received daily. The temporary staff helped with address changes on returned mail check cards, scanning/indexing and cropping of all documents received, registering voter registration forms and answering phone calls from voters.

295,769 **(Active/Inactive)** residents of Onondaga County were registered to vote for the 2011 General Election. This number includes **20,691** inactive voters. Under the National Voter Registration Act [NVRA] a voter must be made inactive if mail sent to them is returned as undeliverable. If they remain inactive for 2 successive Federal elections, their registration will be canceled. Voters can activate themselves by voting, signing a petition or notifying the Board that they still reside at the address indicated in the Board's files.

The Board processed **16,767** registration application forms during the year. This number includes **13,314** mail registration applications and **3,453** applications received over the counter through registration drives or other types of resources. Not all of these registrations were new voters. Many of them moved from one part of Onondaga County to another.

Pursuant to the federal court decision in the Green Party case of 2005, local election boards are mandated to keep enrollment numbers for the following groups/independent bodies until 2014: Libertarian, Freedom, Taxpayers, Antiprohibition and Rent Too High Party. These are independent bodies which had gubernatorial candidates on the November ballot in 2010. These independent bodies are treated as though they are recognized parties for enrollment purposes only. In 2011, there were a total of **659** Green, **147** Libertarian, **0** Freedom, **0** Rent Too High and **156** other parties. (See chart #1)

## Enrollment Numbers - Onondaga County



## **VOTER REGISTRATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Our Commissioners reviewed the election process with some groups during the year. They included students in the Syracuse University Newhouse School, CNY Political Leadership Institute and the International Visitor Leadership Program. The Board of Elections is often asked to speak at high schools and community meetings on such topics as the importance of voting; registering to vote; organizing a registration drive; and voting procedures.

Our staff demonstrated the Imagecast Voting System at town clerk's offices, the NAACP, festivals throughout the county (Seneca River Days), Jazz in the City, senior luncheons, and several disabled groups (Aurora, Enable and Arise).

In 2011, **5,700** registration forms were distributed to the high schools, town and village offices, various libraries and post office branches. An additional **7,250** voter registration forms were distributed to various other groups along with **491** forms mailed out to individuals upon request.

The following is a partial listing of the many diverse groups that organized registration drives:

### **Colleges and most area High Schools**

Syracuse University Alpha Fraternity and Delta Sorority, Onondaga Central School, F-M High School, Central Square Schools, Fowler High School, NYPIRG and St. Daniel's Head Start Program

### **Professional Associations & Labor Unions**

Syracuse Teacher's Association

### **Human Services, Community, & Neighborhood Organizations**

The League of Women Voters, Organization of America; NAACP, Youth Days, Eastwood Neighborhood Association, Jazz in the City

As registration deadlines approached, press releases were faxed to all area media in August, September and October. General information faxes were also sent to local media as Election Days grew nearer informing the general public of polling hours, polling places, and phone numbers to call for questions. Public access television stations and a number of radio stations agreed to regularly broadcast registration deadlines and phone numbers at the Board of Elections to call for more information. Registration deadlines and mail registration forms were posted on our website for voters to access.

Currently, about **79%** of approximately **350,000** eligible voters (citizens' 18 years and over) are registered to vote in Onondaga County.

## **MAIL CHECK CARDS**

Each year the Board is required to send a notice to each voter to determine if they still reside at the same address as in our files. The card also contains information that can be useful to the voter, including polling place location, dates and times for primary and general elections and information about registration and absentee voting. In 2011, **272,045** mail check cards were mailed out in late July. Of those cards, **18,476** were returned to the Board as moves within the county, moves outside of the county/state, undeliverable, post office boxes, left no forwarding address, etc. A number of these voters use post offices boxes and have not moved. The Board again used NTS Data Services to process our mail check cards.

All in-county address changes were processed before the general election which reduced affidavit voting.

## ABSENTEE VOTING

Registered voters who will be outside of Onondaga County on Election Day and those who are physically unable to appear at the polls are eligible to receive absentee ballots. There are several types of absentee voters:

- A. *MILITARY*--Members of the Armed Forces and their dependents.
- B. *REGULAR*--Voters who are out of the county or ill on Election Day or Primary Day.
- C. *PERMANENTLY DISABLED*--These voters are on a permanent list and receive a ballot for each election.
- D. *SPECIAL BALLOT* - For those who are unable to vote in person due to Religious Scruples, Duties for the Board of Elections or a Victim of Domestic Violence

In 2011 the numbers of absentees processed are as follows:

TYPE OF ABSENTEE	ELECTION DATE			Nov 8 <sup>th</sup> ALL
	Sept 13 <sup>th</sup>			
	REP	CON	IND	
<b><u>Military</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	22	1	0	210
<i>Returned</i>	5	0	0	44
<b><u>Regular</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	94	2	0	1408
<i>Returned</i>	81	1	0	1198
<b><u>Permanent Disabled</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	178	13	0	2072
<i>Returned</i>	85	3	0	1269
<b><u>Special Ballot</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	6	0	0	423
<i>Returned</i>	6	0	0	393
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	300	16	0	4113
<i>Returned</i>	177	4	0	2904

The total number of voters that voted in person at their polling place that had returned an absentee ballot to our office in 2011 were 2 at the September Primary and 9 at the General Election.

In 2011, the Board of Elections hand delivered ballots to nursing homes with more than five residents voting absentee. The ballots are delivered and voted under supervision of a bipartisan team from the Board. During the September Primary Election, 1 nursing home was visited for a total of 9 ballots processed and in the General Election, 12 nursing homes were visited with a total of 373 ballots processed.

## **MOVE ACT OF 2009**

The Military Overseas Voters Empowerment Act requires that counties make official ballot materials available electronically to military and overseas voters who request it. The State Board hired a vendor (Scytl USA) to establish a program on a secured site ([www.secureballotusa.com/NY](http://www.secureballotusa.com/NY)) for military and federal voters.

In 2011, only (3) military voters used the email ballot from this site. Improvements in 2012 will be more productive for the Military and Federal voters.

## **PAPER BALLOT COUNTING**

The Board counts all non-stubbed paper ballots centrally using a Sequoia Voting System optical scanner and ballot tabulating machines. The electronic absentee counting system greatly enhances and expedites our canvass procedures. This machine counts absentees and affidavits paper ballots. Candidates receive their official vote tally earlier and this office can certify election results with the State Board of Elections prior to the deadline.

We are still waiting for the Dominion Absentee Counting System to be certified by the State Board of Elections. We hope to replace our current system with this one by the 2012 general election.

## **AFFIDAVIT VOTING**

Registered voters who move within Onondaga County remain registered and can vote at their new polling place on election day by affidavit ballot. We processed 34 affidavit ballots during the September 13<sup>h</sup> primary, of which **9** were valid and 331 for the general elections on November 8<sup>th</sup>, of which **285** were valid in 2011.

## **COURT ORDERS**

Voters who failed to register in time for the primary or general elections can obtain a court order. Our office had lawyers from the Democratic and Republican parties available at the Board of Elections to assist voters in completing the necessary forms to present to the Supreme Court Judges on Election Day. There were **0** Court Order processed at the September 13<sup>th</sup> Primary and **5** court orders processed for the November 8<sup>th</sup> General Election. Of those 5, 1 was denied by the Judge. After obtaining a court order, a voter is allowed to vote on the machine in their home election district.

## **ELECTION RESULTS**

With the county now using the Imagecast voting system, many changes had to happen to receive the election results in a timely manner. Election Central was no longer needed since the Imagecast machine is equipped with a thermal tape with the election results for that polling site. Also, each voting machine has a poll worker/administrative memory card with the election results saved on it. NYS Regulation 6210 states that all poll worker/administrative memory cards must be secured at the close of polls.

After careful thought, the Commissioners decided that we needed to have Memory Card Runners on election night to go and retrieve the poll worker memory cards at all of the town polling sites. A total of 44 memory card routes were mapped out by the Commissioners. Election runners were paid \$35 per route plus mileage. All runners were to be at their first polling site at 9PM. The City of Syracuse polling sites were directed to return their poll worker memory cards with their supplies on election night. All memory cards were returned on election night by 10 PM.

The memory cards were read on the Election Management System (EMS). Once read the system provides the public, candidates, and the media with quick and accurate unofficial results on our website. Results are available within minutes of the memory cards being delivered to the Thompson Road site.

The Board requires Inspectors to return their supplies on election night. City inspectors are required to deliver their supplies directly to the Service Center located on Thompson Road. The town inspectors, however, return the black suitcases containing all the ballots and election materials to their designated areas for pickup by a trucker or machine technician for return to the Service Center. This method provides increased security for elections materials and also prevents a last minute scramble if the Board receives a Court Order to secure election materials.

## **CANVASS OF RESULTS**

All Imagecast voting machines are recanvassed at the Service Center once all the machines have been picked up and returned. This process is completed within one day. The administrative memory cards are removed from the machines and read by the EMS. Results are then compared to the poll worker memory cards from election night.

The Commissioners oversee the counting of absentee, affidavit and military ballots. They are responsible for ruling on any questionable ballot. According to New York State Election Law, Section 10-114 increased the time for military ballots to be received at a Board of Elections from 7 days to 13 days after a General Election. Absentee ballots are not counted on election night after the polls close. All paper ballots were inspected and scanned with appropriate headers and end sheets. After all paper ballots were scanned, a final summary report was generated. The results were then downloaded and merged with the voting machine totals.

The paper ballot and machine results are merged and entered directly on the computer terminal. Board personnel then verify all entries. The official canvass is certified by the Commissioners and forwarded to the State Board of Elections. Bound copies of this document are printed in February and distributed to candidates and other interested parties upon request.

## VOTER PARTICIPATION--2011

	<u>NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE VOTER'S</u>	<u>NUMBER VOTING</u>	<u>TURNOUT %</u>
<b>Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> Primary:</b>			
REP County Leg 12 <sup>th</sup>	6,705	1459	22%
County Leg 13 <sup>th</sup>	6,742	1079	16%
Town of Camillus	6,228	1013	16%
Town of LaFayette	1,394	478	34%
Town of Lysander	5,973	982	16%
IND (Lysander Justice)	666	35	.05%
CON County Leg 13	422	59	14%
Syr Councilor @ Ig	654	68	10%
Town of Lysander	230	54	23%
Salina 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ward Councilor	95	22	23%
<b>Nov.8<sup>th</sup> General Election:</b>			
All Parties	275,078	71,765	26%

### 3% AUDIT

The 3% audit was done for the Primary and General Elections for the total number of voting machines used during the elections. Using software from RANDOM.org, a draw is made at 9PM on election night of the voting system to determine which machines will be audited. It took 6 staff members 7 days to complete the audit on 7 voting machines that contained 17 election districts.

### FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

New York State Election Law requires all state and local candidates and committees to file electronically with the State Board of Elections. Candidates for Federal offices file with the Federal Election Commission, Washington, D.C. Local filers who do not intend to raise or spend over \$1,000 are still required to file with our office.

Financial Disclosure training for treasurers and candidates was presented by the New York State Board of Elections on June 2<sup>nd</sup> the Onondaga County Curtain Auditorium at the Galleries in Syracuse, New York.

## **WEB SITE**

The Board of Election's web site, which was launched in 2000, continues to thrive.

The Board and the County's Web Site Administrator jointly revised the website to improve navigational ease for the end user. We have now added pages of information and instructions for:

- Press Releases
- Election Inspectors
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Clickable button directing voters to the 2010 General Election Results
- Clickable button directing voters to education on voting machines sponsored by the State Board of Elections (VoteNY.Com)
- Clickable button for Military and Overseas Voters (MOVE ACT) providing them with on-line ballot access

The polling place locator feature is now updated as frequently as necessary through the updated web table builder from the vendor.

We continue to place an emphasis on educating the public as to those services available through the internet, and the ease in obtaining necessary forms and instructions. Callers continue to be informed of their options when requesting forms.

Election results are now available on our website.

## **LONG RANGE GOALS**

We would like to enhance our voter registration system to allow us to go paperless. The NTS software called "ScanFlow" would stream line the processing of voter registration and absentee ballot applications. Another NTS product called T-Rex would enhance our election night reporting operation and allow us to bridge our candidate data with our Dominion Election Management Software (EMS).

We would also like to update our central count absentee scanner. When we purchased the Dominion ImageCast Voting System we were promised one new scanner when they were certified. We also intend to purchase one additional scanner. This system would also interface with the Dominion EMS and T-Rex.

This would eliminate entering the same candidate data 3 times and reduce mistakes.

Once the NY State Legislature finalizes redistricting of Congressional, Senate and Assembly lines, we will be able to address our existing election districts(ED's). It is our hope to reduce the number of ED's county wide and balance the number of voters in each ED. Another goal is to make all village lines contiguous with our ED boundaries. This would allow villages to move their elections to November and would result in a savings to village taxpayers.