

# 2014 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, North Syracuse and Solvay. Under present law, all villages (except Camillus, Manlius, North Syracuse and Solvay) 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.

## 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 end on December 31, 2016.

2014 was a statewide election year, Governor/Lt. Governor, Comptroller, Attorney General, Justice of the Supreme Court; Member of Congress, (2) State Senators, (5) Members of Assembly, County Sheriff,; City Court Judge; as well as special elections for (8) town offices and the Village of Camillus Trustee. There were (3) statewide propositions and; (1) town. Forty one (41) different absentee ballot styles were used in the General Election.

The Board of Elections is funded solely by the County of Onondaga. The 2014 budget as modified (BAM) include the following:

### **Total 2014 Budget**

Total County Budget	\$ 2,518,382
Salaries (full time)	\$ 789,943
Salaries*(temporary)	\$ 403,054

(\*includes temporary clerks, election inspectors, voting machine technicians, training consultants and Memory Card Runners)

## **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 2014. 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 2014, there were **432** Election Districts in Onondaga County. Six (**6**) of these were non-working districts. There is an average registration of **648** voters in each district. In 2014, the smallest districts contained **2 - 5** voters (City 5-8, 11-9 and 17-18) and the largest had an enrollment of **1,303** voters (Camillus 2).

## **POLLING PLACES**

There were **176** polling sites in Onondaga County in 2014.

The polling place diagrams used on Election Day at each polling place in 2014 were revised based on reporting from the voting machine technicians, Election Day workers and the new double privacy booths.

The Funds Program for HAVA Polling Place Access improvement was utilized during the year to purchase replacement and 150 A frame signage to improve polling place visibility throughout the county at a cost of \$21,782 which will be reimbursed back to the County via state "shoebox" funds. The new booths are made sturdier than those purchased in 2008.

## 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 2014, there were 26 additional voting machine technicians in Onondaga County (**5 new**). Voting Machine technicians are appointed by the Board of Elections each year. The voting machine technician rate of pay was \$22.50 an hour.

The voting machine technicians are required to attend a meeting before the General Election to discuss any concerns and or changes regarding the election and the districts they will be covering.

In addition to having all 26 technicians trained on polling place operations and troubleshooting, they were required to attend a special training class and pass a hands on test on troubleshooting the Imagecast. The 5 new technicians were also required to attend both levels of poll worker training, as well. Our two full time machine technicians continue to provide field support for all voting system technicians.

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 2014 was as follows:

<u>ELECTION</u>	<u>IMAGECAST VOTING SYSTEMS</u>	<u>SCANNER ONLY</u>
Primary September 10 <sup>th</sup>	176	0
General November 5 <sup>th</sup>	176	16

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

### BMD VOTING

Primary - September 9 <sup>th</sup>	4
General – November 4 <sup>th</sup>	11

## **ELECTION INSPECTORS**

The election inspector program continues to be structured as follows:

Polling Site Manager – PSM

Voting System Specialist – VSS

Regular Inspector – RI

A. Polling Site Managers are responsible for assigning work to all the inspectors at 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 Specialists are responsible for opening and running the voting machine during the hours of voting. They can also fill in for a regular inspector when needed

C. Regular Inspectors are 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 are paid \$265 for a General Election; Voting System Specialists are paid \$235 and a Regular Inspectors are paid \$190 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 hands on training on the machines which provides them the training to be able to fix most problems that may occur during the day. The VSS class had to attend a hands on class that had a hands on test with a BOE staff member. They must also be willing to work anywhere in Onondaga County.

An open house was held on the Saturday before the General Election at our training center for all Election Inspectors as a refresher. The session lasted 3 hours and approximately 38 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, they did not receive the credit. 20 students attended one of two different classes that were held in September.

Our staff scheduled 92 Hands-On training classes for returning inspectors. All inspectors had to attend either the 3 hour training (NEW) or the 2 hour modified (Returning) hands on training class.

A total of 1,279 election inspectors attended the hands on training. Only 3 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 2014, candidates for public office filed **36** party designating petitions including **1,237** 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. There were **(11)** challenges to designating petitions filed. The Board received specifications on **(0)** of the challenges. There were **(14)** **(1)** for public office and **(13)** committee Opportunity to Ballot petitions filed. The Board received specifications on **(2)** of the challenges. Candidates desiring to run on an independent line are required to file independent nominating petitions. There were **(3)** independent nominating petitions were filed. There were **(0)** challenges to these petitions. The Board received specifications on **(1)** of the challenges. Additionally, **(4)** Certificates of Nomination were filed. There was **(0)** challenge with specifications filed on the certificate.

There were a total of **(0)** candidates removed from the ballot because they failed to file there acceptance form, **(0)** candidate removed because they did not receive the party authorization and **(2)** 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 **(0)** Democrats; **(1)** Republican, **(1)** Conservatives, **(7)** Independence, and **(3)** Working Families authorizations were filed.

Vacancies occurred in the offices of Town of Geddes – Town Councilor, Town of Lafayette – Town Councilor, Town of Marcellus – Town Councilor, Town of Otisco – Town Councilor and Town Clerk, and Village of Camillus - Trustee due to the resignations. . Only **(4)** Certificates of Nomination were filed after the petitions, with **(2)** Republican candidates from the Town of Dewitt, **(2)** Democratic candidates from the Town of Geddes

## IMAGECAST BALLOT PRINTING

In 2014, our office, County Print Shop and the IT Department worked hand in hand to allow the Board to print the stubbed ballots and also the absentee/affidavit ballots in house. Ballots used in the elections are required to be bound and have a numbered stub.

Having the Print Shop do our ballot printing instead of an outside vendor continues to save our department thousands of dollars

Ballots Printed in 2014:

	# of styles	Total
September (Local) Primary (DEM)	176	41,650
(CON)	176	2,580
General Election	429	228,050
	Plus 29 Spanish	

The Print Shop also was able to print 2,000 non-stubbed ballots for the Oneida School District for their May 20<sup>th</sup> School Elections. The ballots were delivered to the Madison County Board of Elections.

## VOTER REGISTRATION

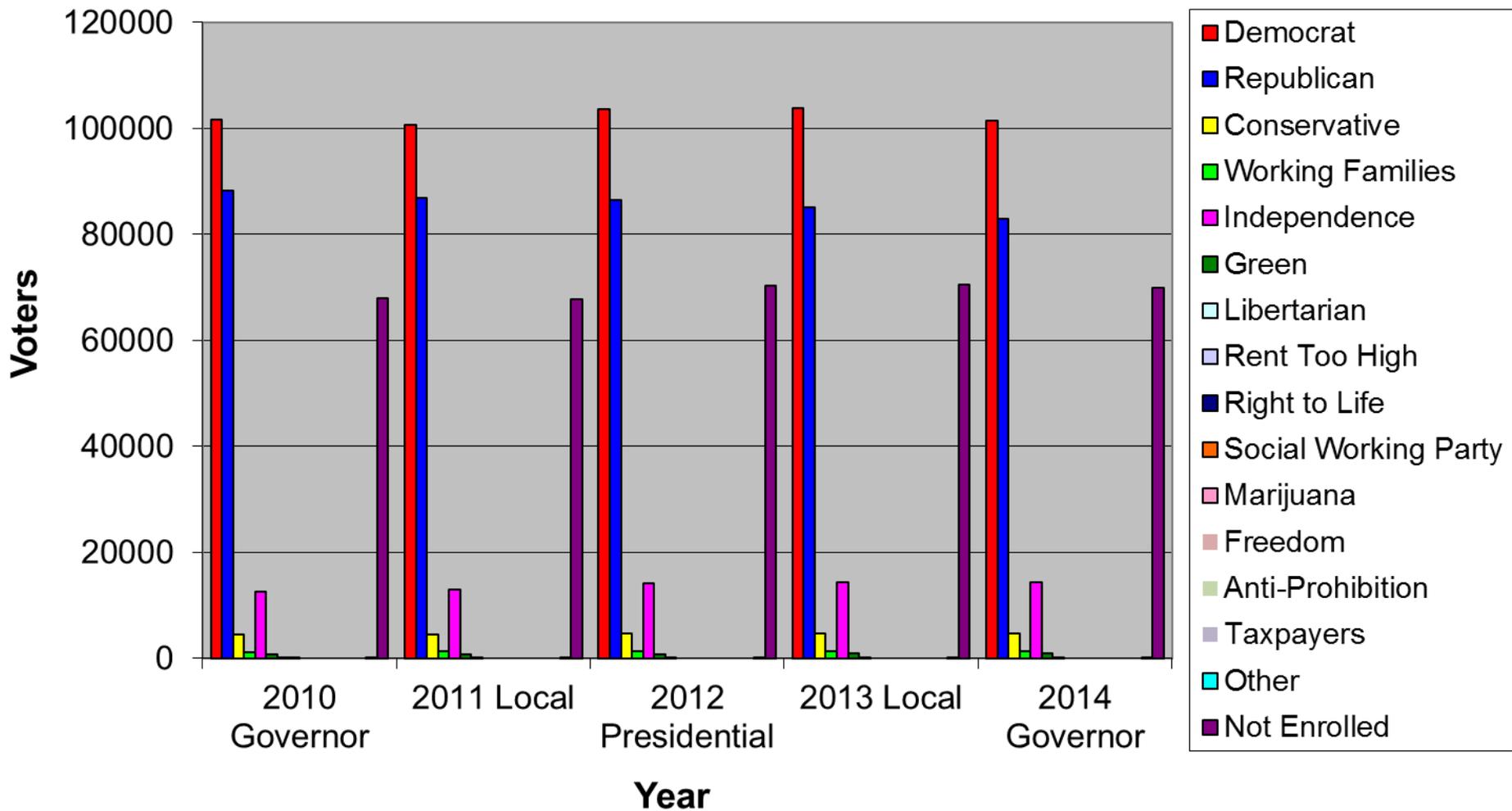
The qualifications for voting in New York State are as follows: 18 years of age by Election Day, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of the State and County for 30 days prior to election. Residents of the County are allowed to register up to 25 days prior to an election during the year. **2,701** voter registration forms were delivered to the Office of the Board of Elections in person.

**303,685 (Active/Inactive)** residents of Onondaga County were registered to vote for the 2014 General Election. This number includes **27,703** 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. The board purged **11,209** voters on the NVRA purge in January of 2015. 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 **19,285** registration application forms during the year. This number includes **4,854** mail registration applications, **7,337** DMV, **2,358** Agency and **4,736** 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. **562** registration forms for other counties were received at our board and were forwarded to the correct county.

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 2014, there were a total of **895** Green, **227** Libertarian, **0** Freedom, **1** Rent Too High, **1** Antiprohibition; **0** Taxpayers and **211** 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, Southern Missionary Baptist Church, The International Journalists and the Southside Academy. 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 Schine Student Center @ Syracuse University for the Onondaga County Bar Association "Law Days", WCNY TV, Southwest Community Center "Health and Civic Engagement Information Fair, McChesney Park "Health and Community Fair, Arise and Aurora of CNY.

In 2014, **13,950** registration forms were distributed to the high schools, town and village offices, various libraries and post office branches. An additional **2,630** voter registration forms were distributed to various other groups along with **2,086** 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, Onondaga Community College, LeMoyne College, , Institute of Technology, ITT Tech, NYPIRG, and several high schools (East Syracuse Minoa, Bishop Grimes and North Syracuse School District).

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

Labor Council, CSEA and SEIU 1199

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

The League of Women Voters, NAACP, ARISE, Health and Community Fair, Transitional Living Services, North Sportsman Club, Seneca River Days, Otisco Rod and Gun Club, Brighton Towers Apartments, Catholic Charities, Sacred Heart Church and St. Joseph's Church.

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 2014, **272,350** mail check cards were mailed out on August 1st. Of those cards, **12,476** 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.

## 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
- E. SPECIAL FEDERAL**--American citizens living abroad whose last address in the states was in Onondaga County.  
This ballot only contains Federal offices.
- (GS) BALLOT**- State and Local Ballot for Military voters in a Federal Election year.

In 2014 the numbers of absentees processed are as follows:

TYPE OF ABSENTEE	ELECTION DATE			
	DEM	Sept 9th CON	Nov 4th ALL	
<b><u>Military</u></b>				<b>(GE)</b>
<i>Mailed</i>	74	18	362	362
<i>Returned</i>	7	3	74	78
<b><u>Regular</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	132	18	3,067	
<i>Returned</i>	106	13	2,802	
<b><u>Permanent Disabled</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	863	37	2,583	
<i>Returned</i>	438	14	1,824	
<b><u>Special Ballot</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	273	2	881	
<i>Returned</i>	205	2	743	
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>				
<i>Mailed</i>	1,342	73	7,408	362
<i>Returned</i>	758	30	5,676	78

The total number of voters that voted in person at their polling place that had returned an absentee ballot to our office in 2014 was: **(5)** September Primary; and **(11)** General Election.

## **ABSENTEE VOTING – con't**

In 2014, 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, there were **(9)** nursing homes visited and in the General Election, **11** nursing homes were visited with a total of **454** ballots processed. Forty one **(41)** different ballots styles were used in the General Election for absentee voting.

We received a new central count absentee scanner from Dominion. Dominion replaced our current absentee central count system at no charge to the county. The new system has eliminated the need to enter candidate data for the absentee system because it is able to interface with the Dominion Election Management Software. We have also seen a savings in our absentee printing costs. The county print shop was able to print our absentees.

## **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 2014, only **(3)** military voters used the email ballot from this site. Improvements in 2014 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.

We replaced our current system with the Dominion Absentee Counting System which has been certified by the State Board of Elections. 2014 was the first year with the new absentee system. It greatly enhances and expedites our recanvass 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.

## **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. In 2014, we processed:

	Processed	Valid
September Primary (9/9/14)	54	26
General Election (11/4/14)	1,346	1,088

## **COURT ORDERS**

Voters who failed to register in time for the primary or general elections can obtain a court order. There were:

	Processed	Denied
September Primary (9/9/14)	3	0
General Election (11/4/14)	81	22

After obtaining a court order, a voter is allowed to vote on the machine in their home election district.

## **ELECTION RESULTS**

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.

**43** Memory Card Runners are used on election night to go and retrieve the poll worker memory cards at all of the town polling sites. 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 10:30 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 our office.

The Board requires Inspectors to return their supplies on election night. City inspectors are required to deliver their supplies directly to the Board of Elections Office located at 1000 Erie Blvd W, Syracuse. 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 Board of Elections Office. 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 Board of Elections Office 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--2014

	<u>NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE VOTER'S</u>	<u>NUMBER VOTING</u>	<u>TURNOUT %</u>
<b>Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> Primary:</b>			
DEM			
Governor	100,738	8,698	9%
Lt. Governor			
City Court Judge	36,895	4,135	12%
CON			
Sheriff	4,706	688	15%
<b>Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> General Election:</b>			
All	275,982	137,298	50%
Parties			

### 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 4 different staff members, at various times, 9 days to complete the audit on 6 voting machines that contained 12 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 May 7<sup>th</sup> the Board of Elections office, 1000 Erie Blvd W, Syracuse, New York. The State Board of Elections also held a seminar in our facility called "Winding Down the Campaign" on January 9, 2014.

## **WEB SITE/FACEBOOK**

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

The Board and the County's Web Site Administrators continue to jointly revise the website to improve navigational ease for the end user.

Our website has seen increased usage following the addition of pages and content for:

- Public Notices
- Press Releases
- Election Inspector Training Materials
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Clickable button directing voters to the 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
- Posting of various caucus notices from the Towns and villages
- Links to follow our Board on Facebook and Twitter

The polling place locator feature is continually updated through the updated web table builder from the vendor. Updated maps for Wards and Towns were placed on the Map Page along with updated maps for the various Legislative Districts.

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.

The Commissioners once again participated in multiple live Q&A sessions at Syracuse.com, to help with voter outreach and education. They also appeared on various media events throughout the year to promote participation at the polls before each of the elections in Onondaga County. They also worked with student media groups at Syracuse University on how to properly cover Election Day and best practices for reporting from pollsite locations.

In 2014 we continued to use our Facebook and Twitter accounts to notify voters of registration and filing deadlines. We also experimented with releasing of results on social media for Village Elections run by the Board of Elections.

## **LONG RANGE GOALS**

After our successful Electronic Poll Book pilot, Onondaga County will continue to monitor the usefulness of this possible resource. While we await direction and legislation from Albany regarding the possible implementation of an Electronic poll book program, we will be seeking to use the equipment purchased during the pilot as gatekeeper systems at some of our more populous poll sites.

We continue to encourage the villages of Onondaga County to move to the November elections. This will allow the Board of Elections to not only administer their village elections, but save the villages' money as they will not have to reimburse costs to the BOE as they do in their March and June elections. Of the 15 villages in Onondaga County, 4 currently have the Board of Elections administer their election and only 1 has a November election. In anticipation of an eventual move to optical scan machines, we believe this preemptive move will not only save the villages' unanticipated costs but reduce voter fatigue and ensure fair elections run by our professional staff.

Lastly we look to amplify our voter outreach programs by addressing outgoing high school seniors in May of this year at many area High Schools. We can not only register and pre-register many seniors; we can also teach them the requirements and deadlines for absentee voting while they are away at college.