

## 2006 ANNUAL REPORT

The NY State Legislature, in the summer of 2005, passed their HAVA implementation legislation. We knew then that the changes in election administration at the county level were substantial – revolutionary. We knew we would need added resources and adjustments to procedures to accomplish all that needed to be done. The failure to authorize the recommended deputies last year has had a significant negative impact on our ability to accomplish objectives in 2006.

Some of our challenges this year have included:

1. In addition to our normal work flow, Commissioners spent significant time coordinating efforts and information flow with the NYS Board of Elections, fellow county commissioners of election, county legislators, county administrators, media, voting equipment vendors, and advocacy groups.
2. The consolidation of election activities performed by the 19 town clerks and the city of Syracuse as well as their town and city councils has created new needs at the County Board of Elections to deal with inspectors pay and annual training, voting machine custodians treated as county employees rather than town centered operators, reapportionment of election districts, and an intensive audit of all polling places for accessibility and combining multiple election districts in polling locations. Working with the county comptroller's office, we developed a payroll system for election inspectors.
3. With the delay in purchasing new voting machines until 2007, we worked with town clerks and town supervisors to maintain the lever voting machines in their town locations, to transport these voting machines to and from polling places for both the

- primary and general election, and to agree to assist in returning sensitive voting materials on election nights to the CBOE. Their willingness to remain partners with us in election activities has enabled us to conduct difficult Primary and General elections.
4. There has been a need to understand and then to implement both an interim and a permanent replacement voting system for our county. Reviewing the available Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) and Optical Scan (Opscan) voting systems included vendor demonstrations at elections conferences as well as at the county legislative chambers for the voters, legislators, county administration and the media. Determining the federal, state and local funding sources was an ever changing target.
  5. The US Department of Justice lawsuit against the NYS Board of Elections in federal court in March required input from each county to include a county proposal for an interim voting system-in reality a ballot marking device-accessible to the disabled just for the 2006 elections. Purchase, acceptance testing, and training of this interim voting system were all new experiences for the CBOE.
  6. Identifying the North Area Facility as the future home for all lever machines for 2006 and remodeling this facility to accommodate all new voting systems for next year has been a continuing work in progress. Cost estimates for renovation exceed \$900,000. It was difficult, to say the least, to prepare the lever machines for the 2006 elections.
  7. Replacing our in-house Information Technology (IT) voter registration computer system with a vendor (NTS) system created a need for our office to learn new

- procedures and concepts. This NTS system is geared to integrate with the HAVA required statewide interactive voter registration system which too is still a work in progress. We began the full document voter registration application conversion in March. When this process is completed in 2007, we will have captured the full registration record for each voter and will be able to destroy the records two years after this is done. This eliminates a substantial part of our filing. This will also allow us to free up valuable space now used to store these records.
8. We learned in June, 2006 that the 5% matching funds for HAVA funds that the NYS Legislature passed in 2005 were never appropriated. As such, counties were being required to pick up that 5% in 2006/2007. Also, the NYS Office of Government Services (OGS) indicated they were not accepting in-kind expenditures for the required match of \$184,005 for permanent replacement voting systems at the time of ordering these voting systems. They will require cash with the purchase order next year.
  9. In June, our CBOE was tasked by the SBOE to submit a Poll Worker Training/Voter Education Plan and a Polling Place Access Improvement Plan by 7/31/06. This was before we even knew what type of new voting system we will purchase and use in 2007. There was a threat that if these plans were not submitted in a timely fashion, the funding available to Onondaga County of \$263,035 and \$194,761 respectively for each of these plans could be lost.
  10. For the first time in anyone's memory at our Board, we had all 5 recognized parties (Republican, Democratic, Independence, Conservative and Working Families) in the

9/12/06 Primary. Inspectors were required to use the primary lever for the first time in many years.

11. We hired temporary employees to survey all polling sites for accessibility. We eliminated polling places that clearly were not accessible per federal ADA standards. We have attended training sessions to allow us and our staff to determine what makes a location accessible. Prior to the Primary election we also began the consolidation of sites that we want in place to use with the new voting system, in 2007. We made polling place adjustments for the General election and will continue to make further adjustments. We are also working with some polling locations that are willing to make their premises accessible.

One of our objectives was to eliminate all stand alone polling sites. The new touch screen voting machines will be able to store ballot styles for every election district. A person with a severe disability may require as many as five to twenty minutes to vote. With multiple machines at each polling site we would be able to move voters to the next available machine. This will minimize lines from forming during busy voting hours. The voting machines will be able to allocate the results to the right election district at the end of the night. Polling place consolidation also allows us to share inspectors if we have a shortage and will make deployment and servicing of voting equipment more efficient.

We sent out five year polling place agreements for all polling sites. We offered no compensation to polling places which may have caused us to lose about a dozen polling sites.

12. The annual mail check cards were mailed in mid August thru NTS rather than a local vendor. These cards identify the polling place for each voter. Since we had generated a significant reduction in polling places, there was a significant movement of voters to new polling places. We also applied for and received non profit status with the US Post Office which saved the county approximately \$14,000 on this one mailing to every registered voter.
13. Transparency and Documentation requirements caused by NVRA/HAVA implementation and NYS consolidation significantly and permanently increased the CBOE workload. This, in turn, has stretched our staff beyond the limits. We have had 3 of 18 permanent staff retire this year.
14. In terms of budgeting, 2006 and 2007 continue to be works in progress. There were no county chargebacks to municipalities for 2006. 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. There has been a need to follow federal and NYS contract process especially for the purchase of new voting systems. We had never been involved in this process.
15. From June thru October, we dealt with an independent organization's voter registration effort that had a significant number of fraudulent registration applications. District Attorney investigators made an arrest regarding this situation. It was a time consuming effort for our office.
16. In an effort to eliminate congestion of our phone lines – we installed a polling place locator on our web-site in September. By entering an address and a date of birth, a voter can find out if they are registered, what party they are enrolled in, where their

polling place is – including a picture and see a sample ballot.

The implementation of HAVA and the NYS legislation caused our County Board of Elections to begin a process to restructure our priorities and procedures.

a. With a renewed demand for transparency in elections administration, there has been an added emphasis on communication of the total election process with all stakeholders – our staff, poll workers, voters, candidates, political parties, media, federal Election Assistance Commission, NYS Board of Elections, NYS Election Commissioners Association, regional election commissioners, schools, town clerks and supervisors, federal, state and county legislators, as well as state and county governments.

b. An enhanced voter outreach program will involve a specific agenda to directly involve students at high schools and colleges to register as voters and to understand our election process. Initiatives have been taken to integrate advocacy groups to reach the disabled community.

c. We began to develop and implement a new training program for inspectors. The new voting system, a new focus on disability sensitivity and NYS laws created a new requirement to train and test all inspectors annually versus one third of inspectors every three years. To accomplish this well we had more hands on classes with fewer inspectors in each class. This created a need for more than our one team to train and test them. A plan is being developed for either inspectors or custodians to assume the new responsibility to set up their polling places with temporary disability equipment for each election. We determined that to keep our current inspectors will require more communication with them throughout the year.

New recruitment procedures are being developed and implemented to replace a large turnover of inspectors.

d. Voting machine technicians and custodians have a new county versus town and city focus and were compensated on an hourly rate rather than the number of voting machines serviced. A new structure is evolving for the supervision and maintenance of a new county facility to store, maintain, transport, secure, and service at least 500 new voting systems. This will involve a new log of all voting machine activity with a bar coded control system and security cameras. While we performed acceptance testing for the "Plan B" interim disabled accessible voting system, there is a need to set up procedures for acceptance testing, as well as quarterly audits and battery recharging of the new permanent voting systems. A new climate controlled environment must be created to deal with the new voting systems, replacement parts and consumable supplies. The new voting systems will require an automatic 3% paper audit of all voting systems used after each election and possibly more, if ordered by the courts.

e. Our NTS voter registration system began the process to provide a seamless connection to the new statewide interactive voter registration data file. This system will enable immediate confirmation of an applicant's NYS driver's license number or last four digits of their social security number and identify duplicate voter registrations. The CBOE versus the IT department prepared reports and published voter lists.

f. There are new CBOE responsibilities regarding polling places. There is a need to constantly review/monitor for accessibility and for the ability of individual polling places to house multiple election districts while trying to be sensitive to concentrations of senior and disabled voters. We must find a way to provide temporary accessibility items in a timely fashion for each election cycle while minimizing loss and replacement of such items. There are new quarterly NYS and federal reporting requirements for all this. And, to safeguard voting rights at multiple election district polling places, election day coordinators will need to be identified and assigned.

We have begun a dramatic change in elections administration. Change is difficult for all people. Our staff has also been affected. It would seem that almost all our procedures are changing, timelines constantly being adjusted, and new rules and regulations are being promulgated at the SBOE. One could say we are a Born Again Board of Elections. And all this will continue into the extended future.