

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine, Governor  
Members, General Assembly

**THRU:** The Honorable Viola O. Baskerville,  
Secretary of Administration

**FROM:** Jean Jensen, Secretary of State Board of Elections

**DATE:** September 29, 2006

**SUBJECT:** HB 110 Report- An Analysis of Impact of Aging Population on  
Agency Services

The State Board of Election (SBE) is cognizant of the aging of the population, and actions are being undertaken to address the impact of the aging of this population in the delivery of services to our constituents. We believe that we must adjust the delivery of our services to meet the following impact of an aging population:

- Need for polling places to be accessible for all persons.
  - Need for election material to be appropriately formatted for readability.
  - Need for shorter wait time in line on election day
  - Need to recruit poll workers and train poll workers from different generations
  - Need to expand alternative modes of voting
1. **Accessibility:** As the population ages, physical mobility is increasingly impacted. To address these concerns related to mobility, the agency is vigorously attempting to ensure that all its polling places are accessible. To that end, we have surveyed our polling places in the Commonwealth and have determined that some of those facilities are not accessible to persons with disabilities and to those older persons who may have mobility concerns as a result of aging. Hence, to ensure that all polling places are accessible, SBE is requiring localities to bring those polling places into compliance with the mandatory provisions of Title 24. 2-310, which state that polling places shall be accessible to qualified voters as required by the provisions of the Virginians with Disabilities Act, the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Moreover, SBE is allocating federal funds through its HAVA (Help America Vote Act of 2002) monies to reimburse localities for expenditures related to removing barriers to polling places that are not accessible.
  2. **Forms/Ballots Design:** The agency is to review all its publications, including its website, to ensure that the font, design and color images used to communicate information are accessible for those persons who may have some vision related medical problems. HAVA funds have been expended in the past to print large-

print publications related to voters' Voting Rights and Responsibilities. Also, SBE may need to conduct a study related to the type and font size used on its paper ballots, registration applications and absentee voting applications to ensure that all documents used are accessible and do not in any way prohibit persons within a particular age group from participating in the registration and voting processes.

- 3 Electronic Poll Books:** Over the past few years, SBE has been piloting and exploring the use of electronic poll books. Each of the pilot programs was a huge success. Localities that have conducted pilot tests in previous elections have determined that the use of these electronic poll books has lessened the time voters have to spend in line waiting to verify their name to receive authorization to vote. Hence, this would be a benefit to those older voters who may have mobility issues; yet, they wish to come into the polling place to vote because they perceive that process as more desirable than voting absentee or curbside.

Moreover, studies are being conducted to determine the economic feasibility and practicability of having electronic poll books as opposed to having paper poll books. Currently, the costs associated with paper poll books include the costs associated with initially mailing the paper poll books to the localities; the localities returning (mailing) the poll books to SBE; SBE mailing the poll books to the vendor for voting credit; and the vendor mailing the poll books to SBE. . Lastly, SBE pays for the costs of returning the poll books to the localities after the vendor has completed keying voting credit data.

VITA charges SBE for the processing and printing of the poll books. SBE also pays costs associated with transporting the poll books to and from SBE to the localities, and to and from the vendor. The use of electronic poll books would remove the costs associated with the printing and transporting of the poll books to and from the localities and to and from the vendor. Hence, these pilot programs have demonstrated the efficiencies that cannot be achieved from the use of the current paper formatted poll books.

- 4. Poll Workers:** The average poll worker is beyond the age of 65. In an effort to recruit election workers from different generations, SBE is encouraging localities to partner with non-profit organizations to increase the number of college age students participating in the electoral process as poll workers. HAVA specifically has made provisions for this effort through its Help America Vote College Program. Through a federal grant some localities are benefiting from this program that encourages students enrolled at institutions of higher education, including community colleges, to assist State and local governments in the administrations of elections by serving as nonpartisan poll workers or assistants. SBE is mindful that this measure aimed at college students is not intended to eliminate older workers at the polls, but it is intended to promote generational cooperation and diversity as related to the electoral process.

- 5. Increase Publication of Alternative Modes of Voting:** To ensure that voters in this targeted age range are aware of all aspects of the registration and voting processes, SBE will emphasize through its media campaign and print materials all the alternative options available to voters for participating in the electoral process. Specifically, voters will be apprised of efforts made to ensure that all polling places are accessible; that voters may vote curbside; that there are specific voting machines aimed at persons who may have some age related problems; that voters may request, per the reasons stated in Title 24, an absentee ballot; and that voters may request assistance, if needed.

To conclude, the State Board of Elections (SBE) is aware of the concern for this targeted population and has increased its efforts to ensure optimum participation in the electoral process of all its citizens within the Commonwealth.