2011 Professional Practices

“New Tools for Election Judge Management”

Montgomery County, Maryland

Submitted by:

Montgomery County Board of Elections
18753 North Frederick Avenue, Suite 210
Gaithersburg, MD 20879
Office: 240-777-8527
E-mail: LeslieHatch@montgomerycountymd.gov
www.777vote.org
New Tools for Election Judge Management

The Montgomery County, Maryland Board of Elections with assistance from the Department of Technology Services designed and deployed a computerized, interactive web-based information system for the management of election judges, polling places and youth volunteers. The Election Management System provides a robust, effective and user friendly platform for elections staff to establish, maintain and update election data and requirements. The system is comprised of three management modules Election Judge, Polling Place and Future Vote.

Our goal for development of the system and the Election Judge module, in particular, was to reengineer the process we use to manage people and information to staff polling places on Election Day. Specifically, we needed to become more efficient, responsive and less costly; we eliminated the use of multiple systems and manual offline processes, reduced temporary support personnel costs, improved customer service and responsiveness, established a secure system able to handle multiple users with various access rights, safeguarded personal information and critical data and reduced on-site storage while expediting access to necessary documents.

How the System Works:

- Multiple internal users access the system through a secure “single sign-on” protocol and authorization levels authenticated via the County’s established framework.
- Staff enters personal data and contact information for each applicant with the home precinct auto-filled by the system using an internal GIS file. Multilingual language capabilities and required ADA accommodations are noted.
- Judges are given placement in a work precinct and assigned a position which activates the appropriate training calendar for their position.
- Judge is emailed a Welcome package with their log-in information (web ID and password) and directions on accessing the Election Judge Program via our website (www.777vote.org).
  - The Election Judge Program window offers a download to complete and print the application, links to FAQ’s and the Election Judge Code of Conduct; staffs’ contact information and a link to the State Board of Elections.
  - Judges with an account can log-in to schedule their training, review training materials and the walk-in training schedule and get directions and maps. They can also download a form to update their contact information.
  - Judges schedule training online and receive a system generated email as confirmation. They have the option to print a confirmation page from the scheduling screen. Only available classes appear reducing the possibility of overbooking.
- As judges schedule their own training, class rosters are populated. Individual class rosters are produced for internal use, using the reports feature and are noted in the system. Upon class completion, training staff update the Class Information Report for Recruiters to track each judge’s training completion.
- Precinct staffing requirement data is entered during election set up and tracked by Recruiters using the View Management feature. View Management presents a comprehensive view of all persons placed in the precinct, showing their position, party affiliation, language skills, experience level and training status.
- Once a judge completes training their assignment is confirmed in View Management. Precinct Staffing Lists and post-election payroll documents are produced from this data.
- A number of internal logs are used to record training information, including scheduling activity and class information, including class types, dates, times and training outcome and notes.
- Personalized correspondence is generated by the system (using templates) during each step in the process. In most cases, correspondence is emailed to the judge and a copy is maintained in the system for future reference.
- A Notes tab area allows staff to enter comments related to service including data from our post-election performance review.
- Payroll is processed through the system. View Management data is transferred to the payroll authorization screen and used to verify the payroll documents returned by the precinct. The module allows global and/or individual payment approvals, with service, training and additional payments identified separately. Having the flexibility to adjust service hours and pay rates is especially useful for Early Voting. Once verified, the data is transferred electronically to the County’s Finance Department for check generation.
• The Administrative Dashboard allows staff to set up elections and election cycles, establish and update precinct staffing requirements and training classes and monitor precinct vacancies.
• The system has an imaging component that permits scanning and retrieval of documents related to each judge’s service (8–10 pieces), reducing the need to store thousands of documents.
• Reports Management produces real time reports using system data and Crystal Reports software. Staff designs routine and ad hoc reports to meet internal demands and Board reporting mandates.

Benefits of the System:

• Reduced personnel costs—six full time temporary positions were eliminated. Temporary personnel performed clerical tasks—incoming and outgoing telephone calls and processing mail.
• Decreased printing and postage costs—sending individual and mass emails greatly minimizes our printing and postage needs. Printing of recruitment and training documents was reduced by 60% and postage was reduced by 80%; down from six major mass mailings totaling 40,000 first class pieces to one major 8,000 piece first class mailing per cycle.
• Improved customer service—the website with enhanced features and detailed program information engages the user, improves customer service, increases recruitment and fosters better public perception. The public can get information on the program, download and complete the application (in .pdf format) and contact us when it is convenient for them.
• Expedited, efficient communication—staff and judges prefer emails to regular mail, calling during business hours or leaving voicemail messages.
• Less need for large generic mailings—printing and manual preparation of mass mailings is costly, time consuming and minimally effective.
• Heightened system security—we needed to protect the accuracy of core data and personal information and prevent manipulation or degradation of the system.
• Single sign-on protocols allow access and simultaneous use by multiple users. Each module and component has multiple access tiers; read, write/edit or full access. Right of entry and right of use levels are established based on each user’s responsibility.
• Condensed on-site storage, improved document storage and retrievals—scanned documents are archived off-site and/or destroyed reducing on-site storage.
• Better training—online access to training materials allows Election Judges to review their duties both prior to and after their classroom instruction. For a diverse group of adults with varied learning styles and busy lifestyles, 24/7 access is important and necessary. Better prepared Election Judges benefit everyone.
• Improved training attendance—trainees receive immediate, system generated confirmations instead of competing for class times and waiting days for a mailed confirmation. Trainees schedule themselves, eliminating the need for extended telephone calls with staff and minimizing scheduling conflicts.
• Streamlined and structured data entry procedures—users now expedite the processing of judges. All staff members have access to current resources and identical information and use the same process which reduces errors and ensures program continuity.
• Administrative functions allow users to retain individual and precinct level data to pre-populate the next election and eliminate the need to spend significant work hours to recreate this data. System logs track user entries and activities for supervisory review and quality control.
• Multiple systems and manual offline processes that were time consuming created errors and delayed productivity.

The Election Judge Module is an excellent, efficient, cost-effective elections management tool and a welcome resource for our judges. We are able to process applications much faster and with greater accuracy, maximizing our limited resource of willing volunteers. In the Primary Election, over 80% of our judges self-registered and many rescheduled a training class without having to contact the office. By using the Internet, we have improved our public perception. Based on feedback from Election Judges, the Board of Elections is perceived as up-to-date and proficient with new technologies and praised for easy access—important values to those whose Election Day participation we encourage.