



VOTING AND ELECTIONS ACTION PLAN

**Fulton County Board of
Registration and Elections**

**For Submission to the Director of the
Registrations and Elections Department
Thursday, August 13, 2020**

ACTION PLAN

Board of Registration and Elections

Members

Mary Carole Cooney, Chairperson

Mark Wingate, Co-chair

Aaron Johnson

Vernetta Keith Nurriddin

Kathleen Ruth

OVERVIEW OF ACTION PLAN

We aim to provide solutions to the significant challenges faced by voters during the June 9th Presidential Primary Preference Election. These challenges have been identified by us, as well as by the Chairman Pitts Elections Task Force, the Board of Commissioners, the Local Delegation of the General Assembly, the South Fulton Municipal Association, and numerous members of the public. By acknowledging those problems which are systemic and which can be remedied, we can direct the Department of Registration and Elections to make immediate changes. We can also work to obtain long-term personnel and facility changes to ensure our ability to serve voters well in all coming elections. We found the major failures of the June 9th Presidential Primary Preference Election to be the following:

- The absentee by mail ballot process didn't work.
- Too few polling places were available, they were inadequately staffed, and the staff was inadequately trained
- The equipment provided by the State could not be made functional timely, and could not be consistently utilized with the inadequate number of technicians available
- There were excessively long lines and long wait times.

The swift implementation of these recommendations will ensure an efficient and enhanced voter experience for the upcoming presential election November 3, 2020 and for elections in the foreseeable future.

OUR ACTION PLAN

CHALLENGE: PROCESSING LARGE NUMBERS OF ABSENTEE BY MAIL (ABM)

APPLICATIONS AND BALLOTS AMID COVID-19

Action Point 1: Encourage ABM to reduce volume on election day.

Action Point 2: Hire an experienced ABM manager, whose job is devoted to ABM to supervise a Departmental division equivalent to Voter Registration, Elections and Administration, including Sufficient staff dedicated only to ABM with appropriate training. In 2018, 5% of votes cast in Fulton County were absentee mail ballots. On June 9, almost 40% of ballots were cast by mail. Reports from around the country show that this is a national trend that we need to address for the foreseeable future, that is, to ensure that such a significant percentage of votes in Fulton County is processed efficiently.

Action Point 2: Develop a process improvement plan for all ABM processes. Establish/revise policies, procedures, and workflow, including security processes and procedures. Process applications by date as opposed to methods previously used. This will give staff a true sense of how quickly applications are being processed. Additionally, voters should receive their ballots in the order they requested them.

Action Point 3: Investment in new technology for ABM (i.e., ballot scanners with signature verification, ballot printers, high-speed scanners), subject to SOS guidelines.

Action Point 4: Add a receipt notification for electronically submitted applications. The receipt should acknowledge the application is received, when they should expect their absentee ballot to be mailed out to them, when they should see updates on MVP and what to do if they do not get that ballot in a reasonable amount of time.

Action Point 5: Encourage voters to use the SOS online portal for voters to request absentee ballots for the November general election.

Action Point 6: Develop COVID-19 protocols for office operations. While we all understand the constraints of COVID-19, we have a duty to process applications and keep the voting process going. The R&E Department needs clear and concise protocols developed in the event of a COVID-19 related disruption, which redirects resources to keep operations functioning.

CHALLENGE: ENSURE EFFICIENT IN-PERSON VOTING EXPERIENCE ON ELECTION DAY

Action Point 1: Extend and encourage early in-person voting to reduce volume on election day.

Action Point 2: Develop a coordinated deployment of advance teams.

Action Point 3: Conduct comprehensive walk-through of poll locations prior to Election Day. This should include assuring an adequate power supply, each machine is in working condition and if the facility is a non-Fulton County facility, confirm a time that election officials will have access to the facility.

Action Point 4: Build on the State Farm Arena experience to continue providing large spaces across the county that can process voters efficiently during early voting.

Action Point 5: Provide a requisite amount of supplies for each location so that there are not long waits for items like paper. Additionally, better train staff to recognize when supplies need to be replenished at the polling location.

Action Point 6: Technician teams on-site all day at each polling location.

Action Point 7: Provision of extra poll pads at each site. One of the biggest bottlenecks has been the time it takes to process voters. Sufficient staff is needed to process voters will help tremendously in moving lines more efficiently.

Action Point 8: Purchase more high-speed scanners especially for use in high-volume precincts in order to process ballots faster and maintain continuous flow for voters.

Action Point 9: Hire a technician manager/trainer to resolve on-site issues. This person can be someone other than the poll manager, which would free up the poll manager to focus on addressing pressing issues. This could also be an assistant poll manager.

Action Point 10: Seek state legislation to allow county-wide voting on Election Day so that voters confronted with long lines and long wait times can find alternative polling places.

CHALLENGE: INCREASE POLL WORKER STAFF

Action Point 1: Take advantage of organizations willing to recruit poll workers. Multiple civic organizations are and have been offering to help on Election Day. Churches, fraternities, sororities, county political parties are all currently organizing recruiting efforts. Staff needs to be prepared to manage this effort.

Action Point 2: Aggressively recruit more tech savvy poll workers. Tech companies around the county are willing to offer staff paid time off in order to serve as poll workers. Assign staff to coordinate this program.

CHALLENGE: IMPROVE POLL WORKER TRAINING

Action Point 1: Training, training, training! While Covid-19 does present challenges with face-to-face interactions, the department has to develop a uniformed training plan that includes a combination of face-to-face, on-line training, and video conferencing (i.e., zoom, Microsoft teams, and WebEx).

Action Point 2: There needs to be frequent hands-on training opportunities for poll workers to interface with the new voting equipment to ensure familiarity and build confidence before voting day.

Action Point 3: Add Customer Service Training to the Poll Worker Training Curriculum. All too often voters had issues with our poll workers not presenting the best customer service. While we did have some very hard working, customer service oriented poll workers, there needs to be a refresher course to help our staff.

CHALLENGE: COMMUNICATING WITH VOTERS

Action Point 1: Create a robust communication plan. Broaden communications to the public through other meaningful platforms beyond the Fulton County Government website (e.g., church networks, radio, civic organizations, grocery stores, etc.) on important voting/election information.

Action Point 2: Hire a “Communications Director” or “Community Relations Director” dedicated full-time to the Department of Registration and Elections. This person will be responsible for external communications including, but not limited to communicating to Fulton County residents, serving as a liaison to Fulton County elected officials, assuring updates on elections website/social media and serve as a point of contact for organizations, churches, business community, etc.

Action Point 3: Develop a process where residents can opt into a database (text/email/robocall) where information can be disbursed quickly and directly

CHALLENGE: VOTER EDUCATION

Action Point 1: Increase opportunities for voter education and outreach.

Action Point 2: Provide more simulations to allow voters to experience the new machines - use civic organizations, churches, grocery stores, and etc.

CHALLENGE: CHANGE THE DEPARTMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO MEET SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Action Point 1: Request that the County obtain a single physical facility adequate for training, technology, vote tabulation, equipment storage and call centers, with modern security and WIFI, so that all operations can be directed in one place.

Action Point 2: Upgrade WIFI specifications of the BRE warehouse to increase capacity to efficiently upload bulk file updates to poll pads.

Action Point 2: Hire management level staff to address on a full time basis Communications, ABM, and Training and Recruitment. Specific positions should include a Project Manager and a Deputy Elections Director.

CHALLENGE: REMEDIATE CORONAVIRUS-RELATED ISSUES

Action Point 1: Recruit and train poll workers suitable and willing to work during the pandemic, and ensure back-up and specialty help where needed.

Action Point 2: Secure polling places suitable and available for use during the pandemic, and secure agreements guaranteeing availability. Identify possible back-up locations prior to the start of early voting.

Action Point 3: (see above) Seek state legislation to allow county-wide voting on Election Day, so that voters can find places with shorter lines and convenient wait times when emergencies arise concerning venues and staffing.

Note: This action plan does not include important data that the SOS is currently analyzing to further examine hot spot areas.

Chairperson Cooney entertained a motion to approve the Action Plan presented by Dr. Ruth and Mr. Johnson. The motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Ms. Nuriddin and carried by a unanimous vote of 5-0.