

## After Action Report – Board Overview

### **Redistricting**

The DC Board of Elections (DCBOE) team was able to execute a successful General Election. Many of the challenges we faced were foreseeable and anticipated. For instance, all elections jurisdictions received late 2020 Census Data due to the Global Pandemic. Therefore, DCBOE suggested that the District of Columbia wait until 2024 to designate new Ward and ANC boundaries through the redistricting process. Current legislation allows us to delay the process when information is not received timely because of the complexities of the redistricting process. Despite the strong recommendation from DCBOE, the decision was made to go forward with the redistricting process ahead of the 2022 Election Cycle instead of waiting until 2024. This shortened timeline did not allow proper verification.

After the Ward/ANC/SMD boundary lines were completed and approved, we were responsible for making the necessary changes to bring the precinct and SMDs into alignment with the new ward boundaries. DCBOE had to adjust and readjust boundaries during the election cycle to ensure accuracy. For instance, it was discovered that when streets were moved in bulk in Voter Focus (the voter registration database), the incorrect precinct was used, resulting in voters being assigned to the incorrect SMD. As a corrective measure, DCBOE identified the voters who had been assigned to the incorrect SMD and worked to move them to the correct precinct split. There were approximately 1,000 streets that had to be reviewed and corrected. Fortunately, we are able to make all necessary adjustments without jeopardizing any election results.

### **Vote Centers**

As we did in 2020, DCBOE operated Vote Centers instead of traditional precinct-based polling places. Vote centers allowed voters to vote at any location, regardless of residence. We had to provide a traditional paper ballot option at each Vote Center for voters who did not want to vote on the electronic ballot marking device. Our Ballot-On-Demand (BOD) process allowed us to print any ballot at Vote Centers. Upon enactment of the Elections Modernization Amendment Act of 2022, DCBOE will be required to operate Voter Centers instead of precincts.

For the November General Election, DCBOE operated 25 Early Vote Centers and 90 Election Day Vote Centers. Voters could vote at any location through Election Day. Each Vote Center was also equipped with a drop box that gave voters the option to drop off their mail-in ballots and avoid in-person lines.

### **Mail Ballots**

DCBOE mailed a ballot to every registered voter for the 2022 General Election. We procured a mail house that facilitated the mail process and implemented a ballot tracker that allowed voters to track the status of their ballots using an intelligent mail bar code.

In addition to securing the mail house, we placed 55 Mail Ballot Drop Boxes throughout the District of Columbia so that voters had an alternative to using the US Postal Service. The

locations for the drop boxes were determined with input from Council Members and were placed on the DCBOE website for public comment. Based on feedback received, the locations for the Mail Ballot Drop Boxes were finalized. Ballots were retrieved from the Mail Ballot Drop Boxes twice a day. The drop boxes were so popular with voters that more voters used them than any other method of voting for this election.

### **Communications**

A massive communications plan was developed to inform voters about mail ballots, Mail Ballot Drop Boxes, Early Voting, and Election Day operations. The communications plan was administered in-house and included radio, TV, print, and digital ads, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), multiple post card mailings, email notifications, and other forms of continuous outreach to members of the public. The information provided in these communications was intended to inform voters of their options for voting and changes to voting operations. Our “Ready, Set, Vote Campaign” allowed us to communicate directly with voters and make sure DC residents were aware of election processes and procedures as well as how to access any needed information. We also mailed a Voter Guide to every household, and distributed door hangers and yard signs with scan-able QR codes to provide election information to voters. Specifically, DCBOE:

- Ran 1,265 television ads and 239,402 streaming TV and Video ads between October 4 and November 8;
- Utilized 25 Metro live boards and advertised in 19 bus shelters;
- Aired 833 radio spots across 5 different radio stations; and
- Distributed 1,500 yard signs and 5,000 door hangers.

### **Observations and Recommendations**

Vote Centers and mail-in ballots have been embraced in the District of Columbia. Vote Centers allow voters to cast their ballot at any location. Requiring voting at assigned polling places was fundamental when voter records were all paper and virtually all voting occurred on Election Day in person using pre-printed ballots. These records are now housed on electronic poll pads which can carry the identity of all voters on every poll pad. We also have voting equipment –Ballot Marking Devices and BOD printers – that provide flexibility to in person voters and thus greater enfranchisement.

Automatically mailing ballots to all registered voters was an effective practice during the November 2022 Election Cycle. Voting by mail-in ballot was the most popular means of voting during the General Election. Only 36% of voters chose to vote in-person. Over 60% of voters opted to vote by mail. Enactment of the Elections Modernization Amendment Act of 2022 will require DCBOE to mail ballots for all elections that we administer.

An online ballot tracking system is extremely helpful for voters to track their mail-in ballots. The ballot tracking system used during the 2022 election cycle was generally effective. DCBOE will improve communications so that voters are aware of tracker updates and procedures. For

instance, many voters were looking for updates before we started scanning returned ballots and updating the tracker.

Now that we are required to operate Vote Centers and send mail ballots for all elections, we will need to be properly resourced to expand Ballot on Demand voting and adequately staffed to address all aspect of mail ballot processing.

### Election Cycle Challenges

**Voter Focus:** In September 2021, DCBOE migrated from Integrity to the Voter Focus registration database. Voter Focus does not have the same reporting functionality we experienced with Integrity. Ahead of the 2024 Election Cycle, we will work with our vendor to modify the reports that are generated from Voter Focus. We will engage in additional staff training to make sure voter records and address updates are captured timely.

**Early Voting Day 1:** Shortly after the Early Vote Centers opened on October 31, 2022, the Board's staff determined that there was an error in the formatting of the ballots generated through the Ballot on Demand system. At 10:24 am, a broadcast text was sent to all Early Vote Center Site Coordinators advising them to stop using Ballot on Demand and to provide for voting through Ballot Marking Devices only. That text alert was promptly followed by calls to each site coordinator to insure that they were aware of the directive to cease use of the Ballot on Demand system. The Board staff quickly determined that the formatting error was caused by the Ballot on Demand vendor incorrectly accessing an old data file and using that old data to program the ballot printers. Unlike the old file used by the Ballot on Demand vendor, the new file was developed to include a new precinct designated as 52.1 to reflect a new SMD which was formed through redistricting. The use of the old data file caused ballots for precinct 52 and higher to reflect incorrectly the next SMD in the data file. The formatting issue was resolved just after 9:00 pm on October 31 and use of the Ballot on Demand system resumed the following day.

**Ballot-On-Demand Printers:** On Election Day, 12 of our 90 Vote Centers experienced technical difficulties with the Ballot-On-Demand printers. Our vendor was onsite to respond to issues as they were identified. We were told the issues were related to older printer models and vendor programming. Unfortunately, the issues were recurring with our older model OKI printers. We had no issues with the newer Lexmark printers. We will continue to dissect the issues with our vendor to determine if the problem was with the printer or with the software's interaction with the printer.

**Election Results Transmittal:** We were unable to establish adequate connectivity to modem election night results from nine of our 90 Vote Centers. Therefore, election results had to be manually uploaded at our headquarters location. We will work with OCTO to identify solutions. We will also examine our Vote Center locations to determine if we are able to reassign Vote Centers to areas with better connectivity.

Election Worker Training: Site Coordinators reported several issues on Election Day. Those issues are detailed in the Site Coordinator Feedback Section. However, we will review our staffing rubric to make sure adequate election workers are trained and that Vote Centers are properly staffed. We will cover identified issues in future Election Worker Training Classes. We will also develop Trouble-Shooting Protocols to be used at Vote Centers.

External Partners: DCBOE will continue to cultivate relationships and work with external partners to address issues during the election cycle. Parking enforcement is an issue with curbside voting at Vote Centers. We will also engage in additional communications to ensure timely equipment delivery and timely reporting of security details.

Undelivered Mail Ballots: The District of Columbia will likely continue to see large numbers of undelivered ballots due to its unique posture. DC is a transient city. Many voters within, to and from DC during any given election cycle. We also have a large college population. College students often register to vote, but do not provide notification regarding changes to their residence status. Finally, DC has same-day registration. Therefore, residents often register to vote on Election Day, but fail to provide the necessary updates to keep our registration database accurate.