



ELECTIONS BULLETIN

To: Town and City Clerks
From: Kathy DeWolfe

Re: THANK YOU!!!! , Updates & Computer Survey
Date: December 19, 2005

As the year draws to a close and we approach the final deadline for HAVA compliance, I want to THANK all of the Town and City Clerks and your Assistants for the incredible cooperation you have displayed over the last three years in working with us to accomplish meeting the requirements of HAVA while continuing to provide excellent services to your constituents. You are truly an amazing group and you should be very proud of all that you have accomplished. Vermont will be one of the few states that will be able to certify that we have met the requirements of HAVA on a timely basis. This is possible because of the efforts of each and every town clerk.

I understand that all is not perfect and we will continue to work with you to improve the statewide checklist and other services that our office provides for you. But we do want you to know that we understand many of the stresses that you have and that we do try and will continue to try to do whatever we can to improve the services we provide to you.

Our staff member, Melanie, has decided to return to her maiden name following her divorce so her name is now Melanie Hodge, and her email address is mhodge@sec.state.vt.us.

Statewide Checklist:

The HAVA statewide checklist is now loading for use at a faster speed. The report section of the statewide checklist now has an Entrance Checklist and mailing labels that you can print. You can now do a "batch" of challenge letters by selecting a reason and checking voter names on one page instead of going into each individual voter. We are continuing to work on additional reports that will be added for your use.

The IT staff is continuing to work on Absentee ballot maintenance and we plan to have this feature functioning by mid-January. We will need to make the checklist application temporarily unavailable to upload changes around January 13 to 16. We will post a notice at least 1 week in advance for any planned upgrades or maintenance. (If there is a crash or unknown problem that appears, we will not be able to give notice.)

The IT staff is working to include a summary report that you can print at the end of each session for your files that will summarize the voter additions, edits, challenges, etc completed during that session for the January upgrade. We are also working to make a download to Excel or Access available as soon as possible.

Please try to print a copy of your entrance checklist and a set of mailing labels during December or early January so that we can find out if some clerks continue to experience difficulty with print drivers.

We will be sending out an updated User Guide for the statewide checklist as soon as possible. We continue to need your feedback and we will continue to make improvements based upon your needs. Please email Melanie with any suggestions at mhodge@sec.state.vt.us.

Office of the VT Secretary of State – Elections Division

Phone: (802) 828-2464 or Toll-Free (800) 439-VOTE

Fax: (802) 828-5171 On the web: <http://www.sec.state.vt.us>

Kathy DeWolfe, Director of Elections and Campaign Finance 828-2304 (kdewolfe@sec.state.vt.us)

Melanie Hodge, Elections Administrator 828-0175 (mhodge@sec.state.vt.us)

David Crossman, Elections Administrator 828-0771 (dcrossman@sec.state.vt.us)

Miscellaneous Updates

Blind & Visually Impaired Voting System:

We will be installing telephone lines here in our office to take the 800# calls from polling places to allow the blind and visually impaired to vote privately and independently for the Primary and General Elections.

We are also contacting Verizon to see if we can pressure the company to seek a special tariff for phone lines needed only for the Primary and General Elections. We will let you know as soon as possible if we meet with any success.

TELEPHONE LINE: Each polling place will need to have a regular analog telephone line available for the September Primary and November General Election. This telephone line must also allow a caller ID number to be displayed when a poll worker calls into our central system. We found in the demonstration we did on October 5th that some towns and school districts have a policy of having all telephone numbers blocked from caller ID. If you are in one of these towns, please inquire whether the town or school can remove the caller ID block from the telephone that you want to use in the polling place for the two elections, or from September until mid November. If this is not possible, then you will need to arrange for another telephone line that allows Caller ID to be displayed to be available for the elections.

TELEPHONE: We will be meeting with our Advisory working committee for Persons with Disabilities to determine what telephone will be used in each polling place. We will purchase and supply each town clerk with a telephone for each polling place. The telephone will be provided in time for the September Primary. (If possible, we will distribute the telephones at our Elections Training Workshops next spring and summer.)

Election Supplies for Town Meeting, Primary and General Election:

As most of you know, we are changing our method of distribution of election supplies. In late January or early February, each town clerk will receive a shipment of envelopes directly from the supplier. We will be sending quantities equal to 120% of your total active/inactive checklist for Town Meeting/General Election envelopes and a quantity equal to 25% of your checklist for Primary Envelopes (lowest voter turnout).

If you believe that you will have more than 60% of your checklist request absentee ballots for Town Meeting and/or for the General Election, please contact David Crossman at dcrossman@sec.state.vt.us immediately to let him know how many more envelopes you will need.

The one page “notices” or forms for ballot boxes etc., are all on the Town Clerks page of our website, <http://www.sec.state.vt.us> for you to download and copy.

BALLOT BAGS & SEALS: Most of you received new ballot bags and seals at the trainings throughout the year. If you have not received your new ballot bags and seals, please send an email to Melanie at mhodge@sec.state.vt.us and she will make arrangements with you.

Voting Booths:

We placed a very large order for accessible voting booths. The manufacturer is trying to ship us 100 booths before March Town Meeting and the remainder of the order will be shipped in June and July for delivery this summer.

If you have a particular need for your booths prior to Town Meeting, please email Melanie at mhodge@sec.state.vt.us and we will try to handle all requests. If the requests exceed the booths available, we will deliver them on a first request, first serve basis.

Computers:

First, there has been much confusion about the need for a computer at each polling place. **There is NOTHING in HAVA or any other law that REQUIRES that you have a computer at each polling place.** You can make arrangements for someone to be available in your office to “look up” voters for you or you can call our office with questions if you are concerned that someone is registered in another town who wants to do a sworn affidavit and vote in your town.

That said, we are continuing to try to determine the best way to make one laptop, office computer, or printer available to each town that needs one or the other to improve the administration of federal elections. (There may be some towns or cities that do not need any additional computers.) This may be done through a grant or we may make equipment available. I have enclosed a survey to assist us in trying to determine the needs and the best way to provide this assistance to you. Please complete the attached survey and fax or mail it back to us by January 13, 2006 even if you do not need a computer. We expect to make a decision this spring.

We understand that the Health Department may be putting out some new requirements for Printers that will be required for use for printing Birth and Death Certificates. For some towns or cities replacing your printer to be able to print the Entrance Checklist, mailing labels, and other Reports from the statewide checklist may be a more pressing need than a new computer. We want to assess needs before we make any purchasing decisions.

Challenge Letter Envelopes:

Later in 2006, we will provide No. 10 window envelopes in a quantity equal to 25% of your checklist to all clerks for both sending challenge letters and for the return of the response letter.

We met with the USPS to see if we could use “Postage Paid Reply” in order to pay the cost of mailing for you. However, that is not allowed if the envelopes are returned to individual town clerks. Do you think it would discourage responses if the response letter was mailed to our office (so we could pay the return postage for you) and then we would collect and mail the responses to you with the motor voter registration forms and notices?

If you want us to try this approach—the response to the challenge letter on the statewide checklist would be preaddressed to the Office of the Secretary of State instead of your Town Clerks Office—we can have the return envelopes printed with “No Postage Necessary if mailed in US” and our office would pay the return postage. Please check Yes or No to this question on the bottom of the attached computer survey.

We are also trying to see if there is a way to pay the postage for the mailing out of challenge letters, but the USPS has not yet been able to suggest anything except distributing stamps—which we do not think is good public policy.

If any of you have any suggestions on how we might be able to assist you with the costs of mailing challenge letters please email kdewolfe@sec.state.vt.us or dcrossman@sec.state.vt.us.

Election Year Workshops:

Deb and I will be scheduling a number of Election Year workshops around the state for Town Clerks and Board of Civil Authority members. Two years ago, we had a very positive response to scheduling the workshops from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm (and then staying later for additional questions if necessary). If you would be interested in hosting one of the workshops in your area, please email kdewolfe@sec.state.vt.us.

Computer Needs Survey

Response from: _____ (Town or City Name)

Town Clerk: _____

By January 13, 2006, please complete and return by fax (802) 828-5171 or by mail to: Elections Division,
Office of the Secretary of State, 26 Terrace Street, Montpelier, VT 05609-1101

Thank you but our Town or City does not need an additional computer or printer. (If you check this box, go directly to the question at the bottom of the page re: postage for Challenge Letter Responses.)

The following is intended to give you a choice of what type of computer or possibly printer would be most helpful if we could provide **ONLY ONE** to your town from HAVA funds to improve the administration of federal elections. Many of you have already been thinking about this. As we've worked on implementing the statewide checklist, we have discovered "printer driver" issues with some older and/or dot matrix printers. We need to get a more detailed "inventory" of the needs of towns and then determine the best way to try to address the needs.

PLEASE ONLY CHECK YES TO ONLY ONE (1) "YES" in the entire list below (In other words, you cannot request a laptop, an office computer and a printer—you can only indicate the need for one item):

Need A Laptop:

Yes I cannot conveniently have someone in the office look up voters on the statewide checklist before adding names by sworn affidavit so I would like to have a Laptop Computer. I understand that I will need to have an ISP and a phone line or other internet connection available at the polling place in order to use the laptop.

No I can either have someone at my office lookup names for me or I can call the Secretary of State to look up names on Election Day if necessary.

Need an Office/Desktop Computer:

Yes I now share a computer with the listers or other town officers or my computer is old and uses Windows 98 or older so it would be very helpful to have a desktop computer to maintain the statewide checklist.

No My office computer is adequate.

Need a printer to be able to print checklist and mailing labels:

Yes The town clerk printer needs to be replaced to print a clear Entrance Checklist, mailing labels and Reports from the statewide checklist.

No The town printer is adequate.

If you need more than one of the above, list it here: _____.

Or if you need something we did not ask about to improve federal elections, list it here:

Challenge Letter Return Response Question in Elections Bulletin:

YES Please pay return postage for Responses from challenged voters by mailing to Sec of State address and the Secretary of State then forwarding Responses to clerks with other motor voter applications.

NO I want the return response to come directly to my town even if town must pay the postage.