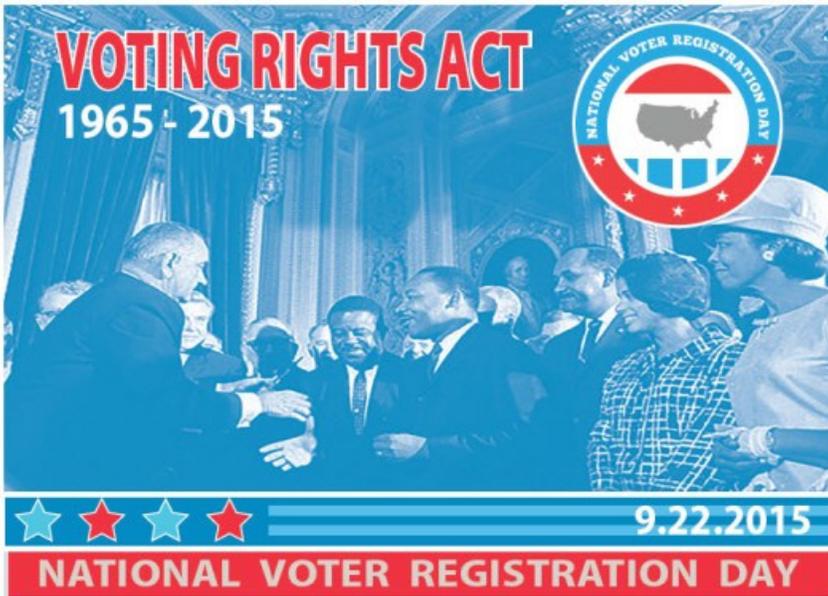


DECEMBER 2015

The Voting Rights Act 50 years later: A celebration and call to action on National Voter Registration Day



This year marked a momentous anniversary for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which celebrated its 50th birthday on Aug. 6. In honor of this occasion, Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services participated with other community partners in Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon's Council to Celebrate the Voting Rights Act to plan and engage in a series of events throughout the year. These activities culminated in a special event at Minneapolis City Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 22, a date also notable for being National Voter Registration Day.

Council Member Jacob Frey, Third Ward representative and chair of the Elections & Rules Committee, emceed the event and captured its essence in his opening remarks, saying:



"We're a little more than a year out from the 2016 Presidential election, and while the campaign season gears up across the country, the City has already been planning to ensure every voter who chooses to participate is ready and

able to do so. Being election-ready starts with being registered to vote—one of the reasons we're gathered today.

This event not only recognizes our shared victories to expand the franchise, but also reminds us we are called on to continue that important work in the face of increasing pressure to restrict, cut back, and in some cases outright deny the fundamental right of citizenship."

Secretary Simon also spoke to those gathered about the essential role of voter registration, noting:

"We have 800,000 people in Minnesota who are eligible to vote, but who are not registered ... We really have to stay restless as Minnesotans to



make sure that we don't let those folks fall through the cracks and to make sure that they have the opportunity to exercise their voice and their vote.

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Job number one of Secretary of State is to protect and defend and always strengthen the right to vote ... that's my passion. It's about access, and voting and participation and that's important."

Former Minneapolis Mayor and U.S. Representative Don Fraser was a member of congress at the time of the passage of the Voting Rights Act, and offered remarks focused on the importance of taking advantage of the right to vote. He noted several striking figures, including the fact that fully 40% of unmarried women in the U.S. today are not registered to vote, and the abysmal turnout in many elections, particularly at the local level. He urged listeners to participate in the electoral process, saying, "Democracy is complex. If you don't vote, you let others make decisions for you ... If you do that, you don't have much right to complain about government."



Also participating in the event was national elections expert Tammy Patrick, who served on the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA). The PCEA issued a report in 2014 encapsulating multiple recommendations to improve the experiences of voters. Ms. Patrick discussed some of the Commission's recommendations, including providing more information for voters and expanding opportunities to cast a ballot outside of Election Day Tuesday, and noted, "The Voting Rights Act was not a partisan issue when it was passed in many places, nor should it be now. In the same way, the ability to register unimpeded is not a partisan issue. The ability to cast a ballot in a timely manner should not be a partisan issue either."

All in attendance that afternoon would agree the special musical performances by Robert Robinson and a joint gospel choir from First Covenant Church in downtown Minneapolis and Community Covenant Church in North Minneapolis were a truly amazing highlight as well.

Video of the full event is available [online](#) and is linked to the Elections & Voter Services website.

Keep an eye on preparations underway for 2016

Hiring for seasonal staff starts soon

In anticipation of the rapidly approaching 2016 election season, the Elections & Voter Services Division will soon be hiring temporary staff to assist the core full-time staff. A variety of positions will need to be filled, including:

- Absentee voting staffers to help with both in-person and absentee voting by mail;
- Election judge scheduling staff;
- Community specialists to assist in voter outreach and education work;
- Warehouse staff; and
- Election judge training assistants.

All of these positions play vital roles in ensuring the success of every election. If you are interested in joining the team, or know someone who may be, watch our website and social media channels for more information to come.

Polling place additions and changes

Staff is identifying potential new polling places, both to add more precincts and to make some changes to existing sites. (Some of these changes will be permanent, while others will be for one year due to construction, etc.) No changes will take effect until May of 2016, and will be communicated through multiple channels, including in future editions of this newsletter.

Absentee voting

After the record-breaking levels of absentee voting that occurred in 2014 when "no-excuse" absentee voting became the law in Minnesota, staff is gearing up for the likelihood those new records will be broken in 2016. One area of planning underway is considering options to further increase access for in-person absentee voters. Currently, in-person absentee voting has been available only at City Hall. For 2016, staff is exploring the feasibility of establishing two other satellite sites in the city for in-person voters.

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Voter outreach & education

Staff is planning a robust outreach and education program for 2016 to build electoral engagement throughout the city. This includes support for residents to make a commitment to vote part of being involved in the community and the city. The goal of the outreach and education work is to ensure all Minneapolis residents are “election-ready,” prepared to confidently cast ballots in 2016.

Helping renters register to vote

The City Council enacted a new ordinance in September which requires all landlords to provide information about registering votes to new tenants when they move into a property in Minneapolis. The Division is working with stakeholders now to develop procedures to get this information into the hands of landlords and property managers in an easy to use format. The ordinance takes effect March 1, 2016.

A new election management system

Elections & Voter Services is working to tailor and prepare a new election management system (EMS) for deployment. The EMS is crucial software that allows Elections staff to efficiently manage virtually all aspects of administering elections, including polling places, election judges, supplies and warehouse needs, and coordinating other Election Day activities like running headquarters

Election judges also always needed

In addition to seasonal positions, Elections & Voter Services will also be hiring approximately 2,500 election judges to help voters by serving in the city’s polling places on Election Day. All election judges must meet the minimum qualifications outlined in state law, as well as attend a three-hour mandatory training course.

The rate of pay for election judges is slated to increase to a minimum of \$13.30 per hour on Aug. 1, 2016, making this a rewarding opportunity on many levels. Anyone interested in serving as an election judge can apply [online](#) anytime.

and its call center.

In response to the increased services the Division desires to provide to both voters and election judges, ensuring a new EMS is in place before the 2016 election season has been a primary goal for Elections & Voter Services in 2015. Proudly, things are on track to meet this goal through the close collaboration and intensive work being done with the selected vendor for the EMS, Konnech, an election software company based in Michigan.

Particularly exciting to Elections staff is the way the new EMS will improve both how the Division is able to manage election judges and how judges can manage their own information. The system will make it easier to communicate with judges, and will make scheduling and determining work assignments more efficient while also streamlining the processes for judges to initially apply and receive payment for their service. The high level of manual work and manipulation previously required for many of these tasks will be minimized, saving both time and money in the process.

Election judges should find it easier to connect directly with Elections staff through the EMS’s new election judge portal. Each election judge will have a personal account through this portal, enabling them to update any personal information, easily view work assignments, select training times, download materials, and even complete online training.

More positive impacts of the new EMS should also be noticeable to election judges on Election Day. Elections staff will use its functionality to more effectively track and respond to calls from election judges throughout the city. This will help reduce the response time for any questions or issues that arise in polling places, and provide instructive data to evaluate following the election for future improvements.

After extensive review and testing, the new EMS will go live in the spring of 2016, just in time for preparations for the 2016 election season to get into full swing.

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More to look for in 2016

Key 2016 election dates

In 2016, Minneapolis residents will vote for U.S. President, U.S. Representative, Minnesota State Senator, and Minnesota State Representative. In addition, some Minnesota Supreme Court Justices, District Court Judges, and Minneapolis School Board Directors will also be on the ballot.



Calendar

Party Caucuses* - Tuesday, March 1

**Caucuses are hosted and held by political parties, not Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services.*

Candidate filing period - May 17-31

Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services handles filing for Minneapolis School Board. These candidates file at City Hall.

Primary - Tuesday, Aug. 9

Absentee voting begins - June 24

Pre-registration deadline - July 19

Presidential General Election - Tuesday, Nov. 8

Absentee voting begins - Sept. 23

Pre-registration deadline - Oct. 18

For more details on all upcoming dates and events, visit vote.minneapolismn.gov

A new ride

Elections & Voter Services has obtained a new (to the Division) cargo van. The opportunity to get a van that was being surplused after being previously used by another City department gives Elections staff new mobility and options in expanding the services being offered out in the community to both voters and election judges.

The Elections Division looks forward to using the van to more efficiently participate in a range of voter outreach and education activities at locations throughout the city, as well as for holding election judge trainings at different sites.



Connecting with Elections & Voter Services

On the web: vote.minneapolismn.gov

By phone: For all elections related questions, 311 is available weekdays from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Outside the Minneapolis city limits, dial 612-673-3000.

By email: elections@minneapolismn.gov

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Facebook: [Facebook.com/votempls](https://www.facebook.com/votempls)