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1976 - 1977

YOUR BOARD OF ELECTIONS

BIRTHPLACE OF GOVERNMENT

WHAT IS YOUR BOARD OF ELECTIONS?

The New York State Election Law is carried out by the New York State Board of Elections and the 57 Boards of Elections in each County of New York State; New York City has the 58th Board serving its five Boroughs. Your Board of Elections is an Administrative Department whose sole responsibility is to implement State and Federal Election Laws:

Each Board is administered by a minimum of two Commissioners, one Democrat and one Republican and various Deputies, Clerks and employees in equal proportion. Because of this bi-partisan nature, no one party controls your Board of Elections.

The Commissioners of Elections and all the employees of the Board of Elections have a sacred trust in the performing of their duties and insuring that every legal voter can cast his or her vote in a simple and convenient manner in accordance with the election law of the State of New York.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DOES YOUR BOARD OF ELECTIONS HAVE TO YOU THE VOTER?

Each Board of Elections is responsible for the supervision of every election held within the County. (With the exception of Village, School, Water and Sewer District Elections, however, a prepared list of registered voters is available and also voting machines are set up by the Board of Elections.)

Your Board of Elections is charged with the responsibility of good housekeeping as it relates to the numerous voters' records.

The Board is responsible for the certification of names of candidates for various offices, printing of official ballots, maintenance of voting machines used in elections, and locations of polling places.

Your Board of Elections is charged with processing absentee registrations and absentee ballot applications.

Teaching, training, processing and final qualifications of the numerous Election Inspectors is a primary responsibility of your Board of Elections.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PROSPECTIVE VOTER?

What qualifications must you meet to exercise your right to vote?

You must be:

- a. Citizen of the United States
- b. 18 years of age or older
- c. A resident of your County for at least 30 days before the election in November.
- d. A Naturalized Citizen must be naturalized at least 30 days prior to the preceding general election. A person naturalized subsequent to 30 days prior to the preceding general election, may register anytime after January 1st and before the thirtieth day before the next primary.

ARE YOU PRESENTLY REGISTERED TO VOTE? IF NOT, AMPLE OPPORTUNITY IS AFFORDED YOU.

CENTRAL REGISTRATION - WHAT IS IT?

Persons not registered but desiring to register at the office of the Board of Elections, 134 West Eagle Street, may do so annually beginning 30 days immediately after the General Election and continuing until 30 days before the Primary Election. Central Registration then resumes five days after the Primary Election and continues until 30 days before the first day of local Registration.

Any qualified person who changes his residence within the County following the last day of local Registration until 10 days before the General Election, may register Centrally at our office.

Any questions regarding Central, Local or Special Registration days may be answered by telephoning the Board of Elections.

LOCAL REGISTRATION - WHAT IS IT?

There are at least two days for Local Registration in the election district in which you reside.

Local Registration Days are set during the period between the 6th and 4th Saturdays before a General Election, the last day being set by the State Board of Elections.

REGISTRATION

Two registrars representing the two major parties (one Republican and one Democrat) make out two registration cards. They ask questions regarding your name, address, personal description, length of residence in State, County and Election District and whether you have voted in New York State, you answer further questions establishing your citizenship.

You then sign the face of each card and the two registrars sign the cards as witnesses. You also sign the registration poll record card on the back. This is your registration signature, which is used for comparison with your signature when you vote. At each succeeding election when you vote, you again sign this card.

All persons throughout Erie County, after registering, will be carried over each year so long as they vote at a General Election within a two year period and continue to reside at the same address. Primary, School, Village or Special Elections do not count.

This is known as Permanent Personal Registration and is abbreviated PPR.

NO PROOF OF LITERACY REQUIRED

An applicant for registration, otherwise qualified to vote, must be registered and no proof nor test of literacy shall be required. Election personnel conducting central registration and Inspectors of Election at local registration must register such applicants.

ABSENTEE REGISTRATION

All persons who have the necessary voting qualifications, may register, enroll with a party, or transfer their registration by mail by filing a Mail Registration Application no later than thirty days before an election.

ABSENTEE VOTING

Your Board of Elections also provides for absentee voting in the Primary and General Election for those confined due to illness or physical disability and those being absent from the County on business or because of attendance at school (including the spouse, parent or child of the voter). Absentee ballots are also available for those on vacation trips outside the County.

Applications for absentee ballots must be filed at the office of the Board of Elections on or before the 7th day before the Primary or General Election.

Special provisions are made under the law for persons who become ill or physically disabled after the deadline for receiving regular absentee ballot applications.

Voted ballots must be received not later than 9:00 p.m. on the day of Primary or General Election, to be counted for that election.

MILITARY VOTERS - INCLUDING THEIR SPOUSE, PARENT OR CHILD

Applications for Military Voters are furnished either by the Division for Servicemens' Voting in Albany or your Board of Elections, upon request.

Military Voters must notify their Board of Elections, in writing, of any change in Military Address once they have made application for a ballot.

Applications by mail must be received by the Division for Servicemens' Voting no later than the 3rd week in October, usually.

Deadlines are established each year through special legislation in reference to Military Voters.

All voted military ballots must be received by the Division for Servicemens' Voting in Albany not later than noon on the day of Primary or General Election.

Military applications made out in person at the Board of Elections must be executed by no later than 5:00 p.m. the Monday before a General Election or in the case of a Primary Election, not later than 5:00 p.m. on the day preceding a Primary Election.

Again, these dates are established annually by the State Legislature.

SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL VOTERS

Registered voters who move out of state or to the jurisdiction of another Board of Elections within thirty days of the general election, may vote for electors for President and Vice-President only, by applying to the Board of Elections of their previous residence not later than the seventh day before the election for a special presidential ballot.

SPECIAL FEDERAL VOTERS

Pursuant to the Overseas Citizens Voting Rights Act of 1975, all United States Citizens presently residing outside the United States, whose last domicile in the United States was in the State of New York, and who could have met all the present voting eligibility requirements of the Election Law, except age, at the time of their departure from the United States, may vote for electors for President and Vice-President, United States Senator, and Representative in Congress, by registering with the Board of Elections of their last domicile in New York State at least thirty days before the date of the general election, and may remain registered by voting in each biannual election for Representatives in Congress. Such voters who are duly enrolled may also vote in all primary elections for national convention delegates, United States Senator and Representative in Congress.

SAFEGUARDING AND MAINTAINING YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE

Under Permanent Personal Registration, you are required to register but once either centrally at the Board of Elections or in your home election district so long as you vote at least once within each two year span, in a General Election, and you do not change residence.

Should you fail to vote for two consecutive years, your Board of Elections is required, by law, to notify you of your failure to vote. This notification is extremely important to you, the voter, because it may result in the cancellation of your registration.

Upon receipt of this notification, you simply fill out the card mailed to you, providing you did not move, and return it to the Board of Elections. This card authorizes your registration to be carried on by your Board of Elections for two additional years.

However, when you move from one residence to another, within the County, even though your new residence is next door to your old registration residence, you must re-register from your new residence either in person at our office, at your local polling place during local registration or by mail. Applications for registration and enrollment by mail are available by calling your local Board of Elections.

THE PRIMARY ELECTION - ITS IMPORTANCE!

The first choice of candidates is accomplished, where contests exist, by an election called a Primary Election, which means selecting candidates by a prior election.

The Primary Election is a party selection of candidates, when contested. It is here that candidates contest each other for nomination as a candidate of their party for the General Election.

WHO MAY VOTE IN A PRIMARY ELECTION?

Only those voters enrolled with a recognized party may vote in a Primary Election.

In a Primary Election, a voter must vote with the party he is enrolled with.

Polling hours for the Primary Election in Erie County are 12 Noon to 9:00 p.m.

GENERAL ELECTION - YOU DO HAVE A CHOICE!

The day of ultimate decision by the voters is General Election Day. This day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November each year. In order to afford all registered voters an opportunity to make a free selection and choice for public office, the polling places in New York State are open for 15 hours, opening at 6:00 a.m. and closing at 9:00 p.m. that evening.

Your Board of Elections attempts to interest you to participate in each election by guaranteeing your secrecy of ballot through the use of the automatic voting machine.

When you pull the lever down over the name of the candidate of your choice for each office, it is done with the utmost secrecy.

Your franchise is registered on a counter on the back of the voting machine. There is a counter provided behind the name of each candidate whose name appears on the front of the machine.

The compartment in the rear of the machine where these counters are located is locked so that a curious person may not determine your choice for any given office.

At the end of a 15 hour voting day, you and your neighbors' selections for all candidates is determined by opening the back of the machine and counting the number of votes for each candidate for office.

Your Board of Elections, through the use of the voting machine and the strict enforcement of the election law, regarding conduct and supervision at the polls, provides you, the voter, with a system of fair, honest and secret elections. You DO have a choice!

ASSISTANCE TO ILLITERATE OR DISABLED VOTERS

Assistance may be given to a person who is illiterate (yet qualified to vote) blind, disabled to such an extent that he cannot pull a lever down, or needs assistance due to a physical handicap in entering a voting machine. Assistance may be given by a close relative or by two Election Inspectors (one Democrat and one Republican).

TIPS FOR THE VOTER BEFORE YOU CAST YOUR VOTE!

1. Be an informed voter, know the candidates and issues before you go to the polls. These are published in both daily newspapers.
2. Know the location of your polling place. Again, these are published in both daily newspapers.
3. Know the ballot, a sample of the face of the machine is posted in each polling place.
4. Don't delay other voters waiting in line. Under the law you are allowed only three minutes voting time to make your selection.
5. Vote early, avoid the rush after 5:00 p.m.
6. Be sure procedural questions are answered before you go to the voting machines.
7. To help the voters to make a selection beforehand, the Board of Elections is required to publish a candidates list of persons nominated by each party, at least six days before the Election.