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NEW YORK STATE | Board of Elections

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February 21, 2024

Government Transparency Initiative

The New York State Board of Elections received and reviewed the Executive Chamber's Government Transparency Memo issued September 20, 2021.   We assessed our agency's processes surrounding the transparency of public information, including the nine steps highlighted in the memorandum.

The State Board of Elections has been on the forefront of making public information transparent for some time now and has implemented the majority of the steps outlined.   Specifically, the State Board of Elections:

- Ensures the timely preparation of legally required reporting and continues to identify ways to make information available to the public;
- Requires staff to report pertinent information to the Project Sunlight database in accordance with the PIRA Act of 2011;
- Posts a subject matter list, proactively posts frequently requested election information, and tracks FOIL requests;
- Provides our campaign financial reporting data to Open Data NY on a scheduled basis;
- Does not charge for FOIL requests, including the voter registration data; and
- Adheres to record retention policies and transfers timely records to the State Archives.

In accordance with the Chamber's Transparency Memo, the State Board enhanced our processes to increase transparency by:

- Posting documents required for meetings open to the public at the same time the agenda is posted, to the extent practicable; and by
- Utilizing social media handles (Twitter) more regularly and on a pre-planned, routine schedule to ensure that upcoming election deadlines and events are more widely shared.

The Board continues to implement language access and accessibility into new initiatives such as the Online Voter Registration/Automatic Voter Registration Project and the Public Campaign Finance Software to adhere to the State's commitment to language access. The State Board of Election also maintains a fully accessible website to increase transparency and hires ASL interpreters for our Board meetings, when requested.

Updated December 14, 2021

1. We implemented posting materials prior to our Board Meetings. In addition to the Meeting Agenda, our November and December 2021 Board Meeting postings included resolutions and related materials.
2. Twitter/Social Media. In November, we onboarded our new Deputy Director of Public Information. She will be working with the Director and Public Information Staff to increase our social media presence.
3. We are working on increasing our language access in advance of Online and Automatic Voter Registration.

Deliverables Achieved Since 2021

1. By December 2021, the State Board implemented posting materials prior to our Board Meetings. In addition to the Meeting Agenda, our postings include resolutions and related materials. Beginning in 2022, the State Board increased the scope of supporting materials posted to the website, particularly related to areas generating significant public interest such as voting machine certification and ballot access. Materials are also posted earlier; voting machine certification testing materials and reports were posted one month in advance of our August 2023 meeting.
2. The State Board of Elections has increased social media postings on X (@nysboe) (formerly Twitter) and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/NYSBOE). In 2023, we launched Fun Fact Friday. These weekly postings provide information on elections in New York State, from becoming an election inspector to the 50th Anniversary of the State Board. In December 2023, the State Board launched 10 Days of Election Security. This series used graphics to introduce information about the security and integrity of New York State Election. Topics included list maintenance, voting equipment certification, and logic and accuracy testing of voting machines prior to each use. The State Board launched this series in conjunction with #TrustedInfo2024, The National Association of Secretaries of State's (NASS) public education effort to promote election officials as the trusted sources of election information during the 2024 election cycle and beyond. NASS, along with other state and local election officials, are continuously working to inform eligible

Americans about voter registration, voting methods, security, post-election procedures, and much more.

3. On January 23, 2024, the State Board of Election's redesigned website went live. The homepage URL is https://elections.ny.gov. The new site provides New Yorkers with complete, updated, fully accessible information within a high-quality interface to greatly improve the user experience for voters, members of the public, candidates, elected officials, and media alike. The website has been optimized for peak performance across desktop, mobile, and tablet devices.

4. In September 2023, the State Board launched GovQA, an online system that modernized our FOIL processes, allowing for easier tracking, automated acknowledgements, and more accessible responsive documents that can be easily delivered to recipients.

Initiatives to be Implemented in 2024

1. The Board's Public Information Unit will continue to increase outreach on social media and will take a more proactive role interacting with reporters. Traditionally, the agency has been more passive in handling media requests. The rise of mis-, dis-, and mal- information requires an active role. The State Board of Elections, along with our county partners, is the trusted source for election information. Education and transparency are critical. Most New York residents lack exposure to the policies, procedures, and safeguards in place to ensure the integrity of elections. More active outreach and voter education will increase trust and combat inaccurate and damaging narrative seeking to undermine our democracy.

2. The 2024 Presidential Election year marks the State Board's 50th anniversary. Election administration in New York has changed dramatically over the past half century. Interest in elections and related data has increased, as have questions related to the security and integrity of our systems. In recent years, the State Board has been directed to establish, administer, and maintain several statewide systems, which all counties and voters are able to benefit from. These include, but are not limited to, the statewide voter registration list (NYSVoter), a voter portal for election information, a ballot delivery system for military and overseas voters, an accessible absentee ballot portal, and a statewide absentee ballot tracker. Similarly, the implementation of Online and Automatic Voter Registration will revolve around a centralized clearinghouse system to be developed by ITS and housed at the State Board. Taking this more centralized approach allows for efficiencies of scale to be achieved in development, procurement and/or maintenance costs, alleviating some of the burden shouldered by already under resourced county boards.

In 2021, we began the procurement process seeking a software solution for the Public Campaign Finance public matching program. The process quickly illuminated the importance of an agencywide approach. Any software solution, to be effective, needed to encompass all election applications and systems. The procurement's scope was expanded to ensure all applications and systems would work together and all candidates, filers, and stakeholders would utilize the same State Board of Elections tools and resources. This agencywide software solution, initially sought for the Public Campaign Finance Board, must incorporate our existing candidate management, financial applications, and public reporting systems. In February 2022, the State Board formalized the decision to broaden this procurement, seeking a one-time software acquisition that would also update the Compliance Unit's Financial Disclosure Administration System (FIDAS), electronic filing software and case management systems and the Operations Unit's Candidate Petition Administration System (CAPAS). These stand-alone systems must be fully integrated with the PCFB audit and payment system. During the development of business requirements and the RFP process for the Public Campaign Finance Board, it was determined that any redesign must utilize more sophisticated business tools and incorporate automatic processes and business intelligence. As such, the CAPAS and FIDAS redesign has been merged into one integrated software solution with the PCFB software. This system will also incorporate campaign finance filing, compliance reviews, and public reporting.

This will be an unprecedented and significant investment in the Board's infrastructure. The Public Campaign Finance Program will benefit from the software solution but is no longer the focus. We worked with our OGS partners to craft a request for proposal that reflects the agency's growth and addresses the needs of our broader mission. We are confident the tentative awardee has the expertise and ability to usher the State Board of Elections into the next fifty years of growth. We also believe this software may assist with future endeavors related to data standardization, Online Voter Registration/Automatic Voter Registration (OVR/AVR), and more uniformity across voter registration platforms. This investment will aid in county oversight and sound management of agency projects, which themselves can have a significant impact on the coordination of information and processes with the 58 local boards of elections. The software will improve our public reporting tools and allow us to provide more transparency for voters, interested parties, candidates, political committees, and advocacy groups.