



Elections Are Like--

What similes can we attach to elections? I like to say that an election is like a roller coaster ride. Once you get on and the bar comes down, you can scream all you want, but you can't get off until the ride is over and the vehicle has come to a complete stop.

Or how about a marathon? You can bail out in the middle, but you know you won't. And the closer you get to the finish, the more exhausted and stressed you become. Even that sports-drink splash in the face isn't going to do much to get you across the finish line.

I don't think road racing works too well as a simile. After all, in a road race, you're going around in circles and you're trying to best everybody else. That certainly isn't how elections work around here.

No, elections are not a competition, not from our perspective. We have teams, peers, support staff. We work with, not against, each other. All the off-year prep, all the tabletops and "what-ifs", all the changes and upgrades and tweaks, it all comes together across the state. Election staff work **together**.

So maybe a better simile would be that elections

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are like a highly complex organism. With many, many moving parts that rely on other parts that rely on other parts. Without



constant communication between parts (or LBEs, or election folk), strange, and usually not good, things can happen. There will always be stress, there will always be unexpected occurrences, but a healthy body is usually a happy body. Of course, there will still be the odd, unpleasant noise emanating from within. Just ignore it.

It's probably not realistic to expect that we'll keep our arms, legs and personal items within the vehicle at all times. Nor to remain seated until the end of the ride. But be assured that we're all going to try and make it to the end in one triumphant piece.




Ben Frey, Somerset County

Congressional District Seven Special Election...a look inside the numbers!

On October 17, 2019, the untimely death of Congressman Elijah Cummings sent a ripple through the elections communities of Baltimore City, and Baltimore and Howard Counties. Inside the aforementioned jurisdictions, or at least a very large chunk of them, reside the approximately five hundred ten thousand registered voters that make up Maryland's Congressional District Seven. By law, Governor Larry Hogan was required to fill the Congressman's seat in the United States House of Representatives by special election. The law also mandates that he announce the date of the election within ten days of the Congressman's death, and that it be held no later than sixty days after said announcement. Consequently, on October 28th, the governor proclaimed that a 'Special Election' would be held on February 4, 2020 in the nearly three hundred precincts that lie within the boundaries of District Seven...approximately one hundred eighty precincts in Baltimore City, encompassing just over half of the entire city; approximately sixty precincts in Baltimore County, representing a large portion of the western and northern parts of the county; and approximately sixty precincts in Howard County, constituting most of the entire county. Not quite "a day that will live in infamy", February 4th quickly became a date that will not soon be forgotten by these three LBE staffs!

A host of logistical challenges began surfacing at a




SPECIAL
Congressional District 7
ELECTION

Primary Election - February 4, 2020
***General Election - April 28, 2020**
 *Combined with the Presidential Primary



frenetic pace, as we began to define the process and the 'what ifs' of a special election in the middle of winter, at the BEGINNING of a busy Presidential Primary Election season. By the way, if frenetic is a word you don't often use, let me expound...a frenetic pace is defined as events that are taking place at a pace "that is fast and energetic, but rather uncontrolled"! Additionally, some descriptive synonyms that further describe our recent reality are "frantic, wild, excited, and crazy". (Google, Collins English Dictionary) That pretty much sums up the level of activity that consumed our office here in Baltimore County, and I can only surmise, in the other two LBEs as well. To name just a few special election adaptations...the accelerated training (we started on January 6th) of nearly nine hundred District Seven judges while adjusting and rescheduling the training of the remainder of our four thousand election day judges; absorbing the reality of, while explaining to those nine hundred judges, the differ-

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Congressional District Seven Special Election cont'd

ences between the District 7 Special Primary on February 4th and the Presidential Primary on April 28th, that oh by the way, is the same day as the District 7 Special General Election; educating those same nine hundred judges (again), and the majority of our own staff, that the Special Primary will determine who is running in the Special General to FINISH Congressman Cummings' current term...while the Presidential Primary will determine who will then WIN the 'permanent' two year seat decided in the Presidential General in November...is your head spinning yet? (mine is STILL!) And for good measure, let's add that many of the winners and the loser's names from the Special Primary will probably appear on BOTH of the ballots that only District Seven (and Early Voting judges) will see on (and before) April 28th!!! I could go on, but I'll spare you and simply say, "We did it!" "We survived...so far!"

and "Let's not do it again!" (All the while knowing, that should a special election be necessary in the future, we'll be ready, and we'll do it again...and again...and again!!) On we march towards April 28th!

P.S. If interested, Democrat Kweisi Mfume (who preceded Elijah Cummings as the District Seven representative) is now positioned to potentially replace Mr. Cummings, the winner of a "special election" himself in 1996...to replace Mr. Mfume...uh oh, my head is starting to spin again! Mr. Mfume received 43% of the 68,989 Democratic ballots cast, and will be opposed by Republican Kim Klacik who garnered 40% of the 10,880 Republican ballots cast, representing a rather lackluster 15.6% turnout of eligible District Seven voters.



Craig Booth, Baltimore County

Table-Top Exercise in Springfield Virginia!



The Golden Vote

2020 marks 100 years since a women's right to vote. Passed by Congress June 4, 1919, and ratified on August 18, 1920, the 19th amendment granted women the right to vote. The Woman's Suffrage Movement began in 1848 and lasted 72 years until the Amendment was granted. As we commemorate this special occasion, let's take a look at one of Cecil County's hidden treasures who has taken full advantage of this right her predecessors have fought so hard for.



Meet Becky A. Smith. I had the pleasure of meeting her to hear her story. She's 105 years and she's been voting since she first became eligible in 1936 and has every intention of casting her ballot in this year's 2020 Election.

Born on December 21, 1914, Ms. Smith has voted consistently since 1936, a year after she began teaching in Perryville. She has always believed strongly in the democratic process and has driven that into her students. She encourages them to "know their constitution to participate in government, and by all means, vote!" Her dedication to her students paid off as many of her students would go on to become elected officials including Mayor and Senator, most notably Walter M. Baker, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1979 to 2003.

Ms. Smith taught Social Studies for 41 years (last 10 as a guidance counselor) before retiring in 1976. Shortly after she ran for Judge of the Orphans Court, a position she held for 24 years.

We certainly appreciate Ms. Smith and her commitment. Her inspiring dedication remains strong as she serves as a shining example of exercising your right to speak and be heard.

Shawn Larson, Cecil County



Proud Pops

Congratulations to Mackenzie Jerscheid age 15, the daughter of Rich Jerscheid (Anne Arundel County Board of Elections) for being awarded a scholarship worth \$400,000. On January 18, 2020 she was inducted as a scholar at the Johns Hopkins Armstrong Medical Building. She immediately began her 2 ½ year intense internship which entails every Saturday and during the summer months Monday thru Friday paid internship shadowing nurses, doctors, and even shock trauma. She is aspiring to be a Dermatologist and to make a difference in the world.

Way to go Mackenzie!

Rich Jerscheid, Anne Arundel County



Democracy Fund Conference

I recently had an amazing opportunity to meet, mingle with, and have passionate discussions with a broad spectrum of election officials. The event was a (much too short) 2-day conference held in the Washington DC offices of Democracy Fund (democracyfund.org), a bipartisan foundation focused on elections and the voter experience. Attending were folks from around the country representing their state election associations (17 states in all). Alysoun McLaughlin from Montgomery County and myself held up the MAEO/Maryland banner. We also had people from the Center for Technology and Civic Life (CTCL), Electionline.org, the Center for Civic Design, and Vote at Home (Amber McReynolds).

Man, we covered a lot of ground. 2020 was obviously the elephant (and donkey) in the room. We spent quite some time looking at Hopes (best possible outcomes) and Fears (what gives us sleepless nights) for the next year. We looked at our priorities and critical topics for the election – elder voting, ballot accounting, expected turnout, outreach and education, a lot more. Each of these topics then morphed into 5-minute ‘conference’ presentations. Another theme that informed many of our discussions - the risks and differences between ‘misinformation’ and ‘disinformation’.

Towards the end of the first day, energy in the room was starting to lag. Until the topic of cybersecurity



was casually broached. Then we all lit up like triple shots of espresso. It’s safe to say that cybersecurity is one of our sleep-killers. 100% of those at the conference desperately crave better tools and abundantly more hands-on support from the experts *and* our state and county governments.

The other remarkable feature of the conference was the ability to compare and contrast our state associations. MAEO is organized and managed quite differently than, say, the Colorado County Clerks Association, with a paid, contractual, Executive Director, or other states where a Board President must first serve as a Treasurer, then a Vice-President, then, finally President. These associations know three years ahead who will serve as president. In some associations, only Election Directors (or Registrars or Chief Clerks) are full association members, while other office staff have the status of associate members. Two things we all have in common – Legislative Committees, and Conferences.

The conference was managed by Tammy Patrick, Democracy Fund’s Senior Advisor for Elections. At her right hand was Roshanda (Roe) Cummings, the conference Facilitator, who led us through many of the exercises and discussions and could rightly be called a source of endlessly renewable energy. Towards the end of the conference,

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Democracy Fund Conference cont'd

I chatted with Tammy about these semi-annual gatherings. Every one of these conferences has “exceeded my expectations” she says. And every conference “provides new and additional content for other conferences”. Although the attendance at these meetings is small in number, Tammy hopes that those who attend will “gain another level of expertise and will return to their states to inform the greater membership.”

It certainly is exhilarating to meet peers from around the country. The one thing we *all* have in common is a passion to do this work right.

Ben Frey, Somerset County



L to R: Election Directors Gwen Dales, Stuart Harvey and Ruie Lavoie enjoy the festivities at the 2019 MACO Conference.

Save the Date 

THE 2020 MAEO CONFERENCE

JUNE 2-JUNE 5, 2020

THE CLARION HOTEL – OCEAN CITY, MD

Sherrie Bonebrake's Retirement

Sherrie Bonebrake retired on December 1, 2019 after 24 years with the Washington County Board of Elections. Sherrie began her career with the Election Board on November 27, 1995. Sherrie was no stranger to Elections as she was an Election Judge for many years prior to joining our team. Sherrie was a CERA Graduate and brought her positive attitude and determination to her position and wasn't afraid to tackle any task. She was responsible for everything NVRA and was our star election judge recruiter. Sherrie experienced a lot of change during her tenure with the Board of Elections: Voter Registration went from 52,000 to 97,000; the implementation of Continuous Registration, Early Voting, Same Day Registration, 3 voting systems, 2 statewide registration systems; she survived 2 Recounts and 32 Election Days! There was also a lot of fun too: MAEO Conference skits, Biennials (who can forget Sherrie dressed as Laverne DeFazio), office picnics, Christmas Parties and 32 Election Days!

We miss Sherrie very much and wish her the best in her retirement. She will now have time to enjoy her hobbies of travel, cross stitch and the best – her great-granddaughter, Miley.

Barry Jackson, Washington County



L to R: Washington County Board of Elections Director Kaye Robucci, Washington County Commissioners President Jeff Cline, Sherrie Bonebrake



Welcoming Reception

and Trade Show



Get a head start on the

2020 MAEO Scavenger Hunt!
1st & 2nd Floor

Conference Area Lobbies

Tuesday Night

6pm - 8pm

RSVP at Registration!

Cash Bar Available!
Complimentary appetizers & soft drinks!



Around the State



We asked around inquiring about the upcoming Election and who would be responsible for some of the new features being implemented in 2020. There were two main questions we wanted to know:

1. **Who will have custody of your yellow Absentee ballot bag and form at the polling places?**
2. **Who is doing SDR on Election Day at each of your places?**

The following are some of the responses we received:

1. The Chief Judge(s) are in control of the absentee ballot bag.
2. SDR was done by the check-in judges under the auspices of the chief judges; however, we are training the Chief Judges entirely on it before the Primary Election again.

Abigail Goldman, Baltimore City



1. Our Provisional/SDR Judges will be handling the Absentee ballot bag who will in turn hand it over to the Chief Judge to bring back to the office on Election Night.
2. Our Provisional/SDR Judge will be handling those duties.

Karen Perry, Cecil County



1. The Chief Judges [will be handling the Absentee ballot bag].
2. I am having one judge doing SDR with the Provisional Judge. They will back each other up.

Tracy Dickerson, Charles County



1. Our Provisional judges will have custody of the absentee bag.
2. Most of our polling places will have one Provisional/SDR judge, 5 of our biggest polling places will have a separate provisional judge and a separate SDR judge.

Jessica Noranbrock, Dorchester County



1. Chief Judges will have control of the ABS bag.
2. Chief Judges will process SDR transactions in the polling places on Election Day. (At Early Voting, provisional judges handle this, but since there's no same-day address change on Election Day, we felt having only chiefs perform the task may reduce errors involving having a voter end up in the provisional flow when they should have been updated via the voter update form.)

Marc Welch, Frederick County





Around the State



1. The Chief Judges and Floater Judges will have custody of the yellow absentee bag and form at the polling place.
2. The Chief Judges and Floater Judges will also be doing SDR on Election Day.

Cathy Quesenberry, Queen Anne's County



1. The Chief Judges
2. The Chief Judges will handle the SDR. We are also cross-training our Check-in Judges so they'll be able to step in if necessary.

Ben Frey, Somerset County



1. The Provisional/SDR judges will be in charge of the Absentee ballot bag and form.
2. We will have two provisional judges at most precincts that will take care of SDR on Election Day.

Brandi Underwood, St. Mary's County



1. The Chief Judges will have custody of the yellow bag and will complete the forms.
2. The provisional will work in tandem with the Chiefs to take care of SDR on Election Day.

Jeri Cook, Talbot County



1. Chief Judges will have custody of the yellow absentee ballot bags.
2. Our Provisional Judges will be doing SDR. We're referring to them as Provisional/Same Day Registration Judges.

Barry Jackson, Washington County



1. The Chief Judges.
2. Right now, we are trying to hire a separate SDR Judge but since we are not able to fill all slots, some places will have their Provisional Judge do it, since some of the smaller, more rural locations probably won't have very many, if any.

Anthony Gutierrez, Wicomico County



New Facility in Hagerstown (Update)

Just an update on the progress of the new facility. The builders began framing the inside walls on January 13, 2020, and as of February 20, 2020, all drywall has been hung and prepped for painting. Everything is on track to have the Early Voting room ready by April 1st!



January 13, 2020 – Framing begins on interior walls.



February 20, 2020 – Walls are completed and prepped for painting.

When the County Commissioners purchased the facility, they put just enough funding in the budget to finish out the Early Voting room and nothing else. But through our negotiations with the commissioners and their staff, we were able to secure the funding needed to completely finish the project with FY20 funds!

So while the elections are going on this year, the county will be preparing our new home in time to completely move in after the elections are over.

Barry Jackson, Washington County



**Be a part of the Innovations in Elections session at the
2020 MAEO Conference, June 2-5
PARTICIPATE – SHARE – CONTRIBUTE
Connect with your peers
Looking for 3-4 more presenters
What is your office doing to make elections better –
Training, Tech, Registration, Logistics
Improvements, New processes, INNOVATIONS
We need 10-15 minute presentations to *Enlighten and Entertain*
Contact Ben Frey at 410-651-5913
ben.frey@maryland.gov**



Complimentary

Soft Drinks



Pepsi Products

Juice



Bottled Water

More from MACO & TTX



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