

Minutes – State Board of Elections Advisory Review Workgroup

July 6, 2022

Attendance:

1. Katie Boyle
2. Jason Corwin
3. Wanda Taylor
4. Barry Condrey
5. Lisa Koteen Gerchick
6. Josette Bulova
7. Tammy Beard
8. Barbara Tabb
9. Walt Latham
10. Mary Grace Boyle (member of the public)

Chair Koteen Gerchick called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

Minutes from the April 13, 2022, meeting were approved unanimously.

Chair Koteen Gerchick introduced new Advisory Workgroup members, Wanda Taylor (replacing JoAnne Speiden) and Josette Bulova (replacing Jessica Ackerman).

Chair Koteen Gerchick called for introductions for members that were present.

The Workgroup approved moving to a second phase of the benchmarks to measure a well-run election.

Members discussed methods to prioritize elements for measurement, elections data currently available and the structure of the phase II work.

Presentations from two professors (Prof Lonna Atkeson & Prof Charles Stewart III) were discussed, they had emailed out their observations. It was noted that Professor Stewart's ranking of all 50 states could be useful by looking at the indicators. In discussing the audience for an evaluation in Virginia, it was noted that the intent was to inform broadly, the world, that the election was successful and to demonstrate that through data.

The ELECT post-election report was discussed, and it was noted that it doesn't evaluate two important things: Department performance and voter experience such as precinct problems, long lines, etc.

Discussion ensued regarding the metrics, what defines "successful" and the role the Code of Virginia plays in determining a successful election. Broad support for a survey was voiced, with the note that citizen satisfaction is different from a successful election. The data obtained through such a survey can be used to drive change with the General Assembly, to illustrate the unintended consequences of legislation.

It was mentioned that both qualitative and quantitative data is needed to gauge the success of the election. Quantitative data such as "time spent standing in line" is not difficult. Qualitative data and interpreting "feelings" about the election experience may be more nuanced but ultimately very important.

Chair Koteen Gerchick showed the book, "Evaluating Elections," which addresses the role of voter surveys, third party observers and focus groups. It was suggested that organizations building surveys for private sector organizations would be a good fit, that they may have fewer unintended biases than non-profit and academic organizations. The \$50M grant from the University of Virginia to help fund democracy was discussed, and that this Workgroup should have oversight on the questions in a survey. It was noted that policy questions have no place in surveys and should be scrutinized carefully.

Members related their review of post-election reports and the ELECT website. In discussing the need to determine what the Workgroup thinks is important to measure, Rachel Lawless (Confidential Policy Advisor, ELECT) was mentioned as someone who could assist.

General discussion of basic metrics ensued, particularly turnout percentage, as an example of an important metric that the general registrars have no control over. It was noted that this is a good example of the need for the data. Can use it to plan ballot orders for example. Reporting to the citizens should be done at the right level.

Timing of the effort was discussed with broad ranges of 2-3 years discussed with the need to narrow down priorities.

The Workgroup reviewed printouts titled “ELECTIONS PERFORMANCE INDEX INDICATORS FOR 2000 ELECTION APPLIED TO VIRGINIA AND NATIONWIDE”.

Voter turnout was ultimately decided to be among the most important because it sets context and is a focus after every election. It was suggested to change “Availability of Online Registrations” to Election systems, communications, applications, website. The next item, “Voting Information Lookup Tools” could be combined with that as well. It was noted that “Registration or Absentee Ballot Problems” should be two separate items. Example offered was college students and where they should vote. “Registrations Rejected” was mentioned as not being a sign of a well-run election, except that voter education influences it. “Residual Vote Rate”, aka under/over votes, were discussed and whether it is important to report.

In the interest of time, chair Koteen Gerchick asked the Workgroup to continue reviewing the list, and to email her comments and thoughts.

Chair Koteen Gerchick reviewed the proposed electronic meeting policy. Meetings must be either all virtual or all in-person if the Workgroup uses ELECT’s support. Two more meetings may be virtual. Benefits of virtual meetings include easier transportation and better public attendance. A motion was made (Wanda Taylor) and seconded (Barbara Tabb) to use two virtual meetings. Voting was unanimous. After discussion, it was decided to set the September 28 meeting as virtual, and the December 20 meeting as tentatively virtual.

During the public comment period, one question was asked regarding the name and author of the book that was referenced.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:11 PM by Chair Koteen Gerchick.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry Condrey

August 1, 2022

Next meeting: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, August 17, 2022

Richmond Police Training Academy, Room 202