

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Absentee Ballot Work Group**  
**June 30, 2021**

The Absentee Ballot Work Group meeting was held on June 30, 2021. The meeting was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Members Present:** Jim Nix, Allison Robbins, Frank Leone, Janet Riddick, Greg Riddlemoser, Walt Latham, Brenda Cabrera, Angela Turner, Stephanie Iles, Diana Dutton, Jackie Britt, Roger Omwake, Susan Cobb

**ELECT Staff Present:** Rachel Lawless, Confidential Policy Assistant, Daniel Davenport, ELECT Policy Analyst, Javon Davis, ELECT Legal Intern, and Maxfield Daley-Watson, ELECT Legal Intern.

**Welcome and Introductions**

At 1:02 P.M., Rachel Lawless opened the meeting, welcomed everyone in attendance, and read the open meeting statement aloud. Rachel also introduced Maxfield Daley-Watson and Javon Davis, who would later present during the meeting.

**Options for Reporting Absentee Ballots by Precinct Presentation**

Maxfield Daley-Watson, ELECT Intern, began his presentation with a discussion about Central Absentee Precincts and the current absentee vote reporting method implemented in the Commonwealth. He then went on to discuss the primary reason for the presentation, which was to offer options for how the Commonwealth can report absentee votes by precinct as opposed to reporting them separate from votes cast at Election Day polling locations. Maxfield then began speaking about absentee voting trends in Virginia, which has been growing in popularity in recent years. He then discussed two potential options for how absentee ballots can be counted by precinct: hand counting, or marking each ballot with a unique precinct-specific code. The hand counting approach was quickly dismissed as an impractical use of time and money. The analysis of the second approach was more extensive. Maxfield explained how precinct specific ballot styles could be implemented throughout the Commonwealth. The discussion then shifted to the consequences and drawbacks of this plan. After this Max spoke about how some localities may choose a ballot on-demand system to avoid some consequences of reporting absentee ballots by precinct. At this point, the formal presentation ended and Max opened the floor to questions, also a general discussion took place among the workgroup about ballots on demand, ballot styles, split jurisdictions, and related issues, and the costs to implement a change in how ballots are reported.

The presentation closed with general discussion between the work group members about which options are workable, how to enhance the options, and further research needed to better understand the possibilities for the Commonwealth.

### **Witness Signature Alternatives Presentation**

Javon Davis, ELECT Intern, started his presentation by discussing the directive by the General Assembly to find an alternative to witness signatures previously required on all absentee ballots. Next, he discussed national trends and prevalent methods used by states around the country to verify the identity of absentee voters. He then discussed three options for Virginia to consider: voters signing an affidavit, sending in a copy of a valid ID with their ballot, and Virginia changing to a signature matching system. For each approach, work group members were given a list of states that currently use the approach and advantages and disadvantages of the approach.

The presentation closed with general discussion between the work group members about which options are workable, how to enhance the options, and further research needed to better understand the possibilities for the Commonwealth.

### **Public Comment**

There were no comments made by members of the general public.

### **Discussion of Next Steps**

Rachel Lawless outlined the timeline and next steps for the work group. Work group members should expect to receive a written draft memo for each project around July 8, 2021. Work group members will then be put into groups to provide written comments on the memos to inform a second presentation incorporating feedback from the work group. This meeting will likely take place in late July or early August.

### **Meeting Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:46 P.M.