

The Blog

Managing Polling Location Changes in Richmond: A Message from the General Registrar

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As the Elections Director for Richmond, Virginia, I am committed to ensuring that our election processes run smoothly and efficiently. However, unforeseen circumstances sometimes necessitate the relocation of polling sites, which can create confusion among voters. I want to take this opportunity to address the upcoming changes for the primary election on June 18th, and explain the reasons behind these changes, and outline our plan to minimize confusion and ensure a seamless voting experience.

June Primary Election Polling Site Changes

The Office of Elections has announced several polling site changes ahead of the June primary election. These changes are essential due to a variety of reasons including summer school schedules, renovations, and other logistical issues. The affected voters have been notified through a letter, and we have also issued a press release to inform the public.

Here is a summary of the changes:

- **Precinct 105:** Mary Munford Elementary will move to First Presbyterian Church (Precinct 104)
- **Precinct 308:** Linwood Holton Elementary will move to Imperial Plaza (Precinct 309)
- **Precinct 409:** JB Fisher Elementary will move to Christ the King Lutheran Church (Precinct 415)
- **Precinct 410:** Huguenot High School will move to Southampton Elementary (Precinct 414)
- **Precinct 606:** Hotchkiss Community Center will move to Overby Sheppard Elementary
- **Precinct 705:** Henry Marsh Elementary will move to Main Street Station (Precincts 708 and 709)

- **Precinct 810:** Liberation Church will move to Metropolitan African American Baptist Church
- **Precinct 908:** Miles Jones Elementary will move to Elizabeth Redd Elementary (Precinct 909)
- **Precinct 911:** Community Building on Old Whitehead Road will move to GH Reid Elementary (Precinct 910)

Challenges of Conducting Elections in Schools

Conducting elections at schools presents numerous challenges, especially when schools are in session. These include:

1. **Security Concerns:** Ensuring the safety of students and voters.
2. **Disruption of Activities:** Avoiding interruptions to the school day and maintaining the use of facilities.
3. **Parking and Traffic:** Managing increased traffic and limited parking spaces.
4. **Health and Safety:** Preventing the spread of illnesses and maintaining sanitation.
5. **Logistical Challenges:** Managing setup and teardown and allocating resources effectively.
6. **Voter Accessibility:** Ensuring ADA compliance and clear signage.
7. **Scheduling Conflicts:** Coordinating with school events and schedules.
8. **Noise and Distraction:** Minimizing noise and distractions for students.
9. **Privacy Concerns:** Protecting the confidentiality of voting and student activities.

Why the Changes Are Necessary

In 2021 the General Assembly moved the June primary election from the second Tuesday in June to the third Tuesday in June, which often coincides with summer school sessions here in Richmond. This overlap creates a conflict, as several schools serving as polling locations also host summer schools. In response to requests from Richmond Public Schools, we have temporarily relocated voting from these schools to alternative sites. These changes are temporary and will revert for the November General Election, except for a few which were moved due to renovations.

Addressing Voter Confusion

To mitigate confusion, my office will take the following steps:

- **Notification Letters:** Voters affected by these changes have already received a standard letter. In the future they will receive an additional letter crafted by me that explains the reasons for the change.
- **Coordination with Officials:** Informing City Council, the City Attorney's Office, and the media about these changes.
- **Public Communication:** Issuing press releases and utilizing social media to keep the public informed.
- **Clear Signage:** Signage at the former polling locations that will direct voters to their new polling locations.

Looking Forward

Our goal is to ensure that every voter has the information they need to cast their ballot without confusion or inconvenience. By implementing these measures and improving our communication strategies, we hope to make the transition as smooth as possible. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.