



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS**

802 LEHUA AVENUE
PEARL CITY, HAWAII 96782
www.hawaii.gov/elections

SCOTT T. NAGO
CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

January 7, 2016

To: Elections Commission

From: Scott T. Nago
Chief Election Officer

Re: Status of Operations

Since our last meeting, the Office of Elections has been focused on legislation, online voter registration, and preparations for the 2016 Elections.

Legislation

As indicated at our last meeting, on November 3, 2015, we attended a legislative informational briefing on voter convenience reforms that was held by the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor and the House Committee on Judiciary.

At this informational briefing, we noted that Hawaii has always had a history of being progressive in removing barriers to voting (i.e., moving away from in-person registration to registering by mail, the movement from requiring an excuse to vote absentee to no-excuse absentee voting, permanent absentee voting, online voter registration, and election day registration). We presented additional tools to streamline the administration of elections including all-mail elections, electronic voting for remote and overseas voters, and automatic voter registration. We subsequently submitted the following five bills to the Legislature for its consideration.

1. OE Package Bill No. 1 – Relating to Elections

This bill introduces elections by mail by transitioning voters to permanent absentee status and expanding the procedures used for absentee voting. Elections by mail would be implemented beginning in 2018, with the County of Kauai, followed by the County of Maui and County of Hawaii in 2020, and finally the City and County of Honolulu in 2022.

2. OE Package Bill No. 2 – Relating to Absentee Ballots

The purpose of this bill is to authorize the electronic transmission and return of absentee ballots by voters, within five days of an election. This allows voters who have not received a ballot, or need a replacement ballot sufficient time to vote, and return it to election officials by the close of polls on election day.

3. OE Package Bill No. 3 – Relating to Voter Registration

This bill implements an automatic voter registration program for driver's license and state identification card applicants. The program would require applicants to either register to vote, or affirmatively decline to register. Additionally, to the extent an applicant is already registered to vote, the driver's license or state identification application would serve to automatically update their voter registration record to reflect any changes to their residence address, mailing address, or name. Finally, the bill provides for the electronic transmission of the voter registration data from these driver's license and state identification card applications to the statewide voter registration system, to ensure the timely updating of the system.

4. OE Package Bill No. 4 – Relating to Elections

In order to address the increase in absentee mail voting, this bill allow preprocessing of returned mail ballots prior to an election. Election officials will be able to slice open the return ballot envelope, in addition to validating signatures, as soon as ballots are returned. The ballots would be removed and scanned no early than the fifteenth day prior to an election.

5. OE Package Bill No. 5 – Relating to Class C Felonies

This is a housekeeping bill to increase the fine associated with providing false information in relation to a same day voter registration application from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Specifically, the law states such conduct may constitute a class C felony. A class C felony is normally associated with a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or imprisonment not exceeding five years. HRS §§ 706-640 & 706-660. However, when the language regarding a class C felony was added in conference committee to Act 166, SLH 2014, it stated that the fine was \$1,000. In order to be consistent with the traditional fine of \$10,000 associated with a class C felony, the bill seeks to amend the fine.

Voter Registration Data

On December 28, 2015, there were reports that information from over 191 millions voter records across the country had been exposed. We quickly determined that our data was secure and that there had been no breach.

Hawaii law allows public information to be released (i.e. name, district/precinct, and voter status) or information that has been released for election purposes (e.g. voter addresses that are used by campaigns and service bureaus that support campaigns). Our laws do not permit social security numbers or dates of birth to be released for an election purpose.

Preparations for the 2016 Elections

Our office is continuing to prepare for the 2016 Elections.

1. Precincting and Polling Places

Each election cycle, we review the population size of each precinct, and determine a suitable polling place by size, accessibility, and location for voters. A total of 233 polling places have been reserved for the 2016 Elections including schools, county community centers, and some private facilities.

2. Volunteer Recruitment

We recruit over 4,600 volunteers to work on election day. We begin by issuing a letter to volunteers who have served in previous elections asking for their assistance for the upcoming election cycle. This letter will be mailed in the middle of February. Volunteers will be able to sign-up online or by contacting our office.

3. Candidate Filing

The first day a candidate can file for office is February 1, 2016. There are five political parties. The deadline to form a new political party is February 25, 2016. Candidates have until June 7, 2016 to file a nomination paper.

4. Media Campaign

We will also be kicking off our media campaign in February by highlighting online voter registration. Additionally, our advertisements will focus on recruiting precinct officials, dates and deadlines, voting instructions, as well as available services such as late registration.

The Office of Elections is on track to conduct the 2016 Election. We are gradually onboarding seasonal staff, meeting with the counties, and planning with the voting system vendor.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (808) 453-VOTE (8683) or 1-800-442-VOTE (8683).