

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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November 13, 2019

Via U.S. Mail and E-mail (to Counsel)

Jim Shalleck, Chairman
Montgomery County Board of Elections
P.O. Box 4333
Rockville MD 20849-4333

Re: Election Day Network for Electronic Pollbooks

Dear Mr. Shalleck:

Thank you for your letter requesting reconsideration of the proposed election day network. Although the Montgomery County Board of Elections is not "persuaded" of the need for this network, I am and believe that this network is required to ensure the integrity and proper conduct of the upcoming elections.

This network is required to conduct the 2020 elections in accordance with State law and past practice and current expectations of candidates and the voting public. Without this network, voter registration transactions performed in the electronic pollbook will not be received and processed in time for the impacted local boards of elections to prepare for and conduct the first absentee canvass. Changing batch processing times, as you suggest in your letter, is not an option, as there are multiple processes that must run in order and these processes are dependent on processes external to SBE.

We are cognizant of the cost of this network and have determined that the hardware cost can be financed over three years. This will reduce the budget impact in the current fiscal year and allow each of the local boards of elections establishing the network to budget accordingly in future fiscal years. This is a prudent approach as this equipment is not dependent on the pollbook solution; that is, we will use this solution with any pollbook solution we implement.

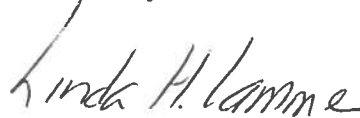
Securing election networks is of the utmost importance, and I am confident that the proposed election day network will be as secure and reliable as possible. It will be a closed, private network, and all data will be encrypted during transfer. Your letter includes a series of "what if" questions about data corruption, but your letter also provides the answer – the upload of log files election night. This election night process is the process by which we verify the encrypted data transferred during election day. This is similar to other processes performed for an election. For example, the upload of log files after early voting verifies the data transferred during early voting and the process of uploading thumb drives the day after the election confirms the data uploaded election night.

While uniformity is, as you noted, the long standing tradition in Maryland, there are circumstances where the goal of uniformity is outweighed by practical considerations. For example, Montgomery County and two other counties use regional collection centers and establish networks in these centers to collect election results and other supplies election night. To apply the principle of uniformity in this case would lead to illogical results – either all counties would need to establish multiple centers and networks even if they are not necessary or Montgomery County and the two other counties could only have one collection center (located at a local board of elections' facility) and the return of election supplies and the release of election results would be delayed.

Similarly, the practical considerations of implementing same day registration outweigh the goal of uniformity. Since the six counties in Maryland with the largest populations will have the largest number of same day registration transactions, it is practical to require only those counties to establish the election day network. The local boards in these counties are also typically unable to upload log files in time for voting history to be entered into the statewide voter registration, candidacy, and election management system.

We will continue to be fiscally responsible and cognizant of information security issues related to this network and look forward to working with the staff of the Montgomery County Board of Elections to implement this necessary election day network.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda H. Lamone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Linda" being the most prominent part.

Linda H. Lamone
State Administrator

cc: Members, State Board of Elections