

**COUNTY OF JEFFERSON**  
**BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

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To: Jefferson County legislators and County Administrator Robert Hagemann

From: Commissioners Hall and Seymour

Date: Dec. 31, 2016

Re: 2016 Annual Report to the County Legislature in compliance with NYS Election Law §3-212(4)

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The Board of Elections was quite occupied this year by voters looking to participate in the presidential election.

We end this year with 3,860 more active voters than we started it with, which is a result of several initiatives:

- Our office held registration drives on two separate days in three different towns.
- We visited nursing homes, registering individuals and providing many of them with absentee ballot applications.
- We made presentations in schools, where we invited those who would be 18 years old by Election Day to register with us.
- We worked with 911 addressing and the U.S. Post Office to ensure that we had deliverable addresses for our voters.
- We tracked down many voters who had moved with the assistance of the DMV and a few of our candidates who canvassed door-to-door this year.
- And, obviously, many residents came to register with us for the first time!

Two of our three elections were well attended. We saw 5,240 Democrats and 9,415 Republicans during the April presidential primary. In September, we received votes from 2,376 Republicans,

21 Democrats and 2 Conservatives. Then we saw almost 70 percent of our registered voters – 38,612 to be exact – in November.

Both commissioners did several media interviews, during which we reminded readers and viewers of registration deadlines and upcoming elections. We also started a Facebook page this year to further spread our message to our voting population. (Commissioner Seymour and Stephen DeWitt, a Democratic colleague from Tompkins County, gave a presentation on county boards’ websites and social media outreach during the Elections Commissioners Association summer conference.)

While we anticipated conducting four separate elections in 2016, that did not materialize. That helped commissioners rein in spending. We take our budget seriously, so we’re proud that we’ll be returning money to the county this year. In fact, it’s the eighth consecutive year our office has spent less than it was allotted.

	Total Budget		
	Adopted	Actual	Difference
2006	437,252	460,108	(22,856)
2007	480,446	465,116	15,330
2008	508,737	593,865	(85,128)
2009	654,757	611,937	42,820
2010	758,574	714,768	43,806
2011	794,501	701,675	92,826
2012	830,894	763,349	67,545
2013	789,892	653,927	135,965
2014	824,367	755,362	69,005
2015	782,503	766,002	16,501
2016	774,649	705,687	68,962

We feel strongly - as taxpayers to our county, town and school district – that we should help share services whenever feasible. To that end, we collaborated with five school districts and helped them comply with a state-ordered transition away from lever machines. We were able to program the machines for their elections within the framework of a normal workday. The schools bore all other costs, including the printing of ballots, hiring of inspectors and transportation of machines. They also signed legal agreements promising to pay for any damages that occurred while the machines were in their possession. This partnership allowed districts to avoid the expense of purchasing machines, hiring machine technicians to program the machines and buying software that we already own.

We were encouraged by the feedback we received from Carthage, General Brown, Indian River, Thousand Islands and Watertown. Our intention is to hold another informational session in January to see if there are other school districts within Jefferson County that are interested in sharing services.

## LOOKING AHEAD

After the chaos of the presidential election, the upcoming year is shaping up to be pretty \*knocks on wood\* quiet. We'll have a Sept. 12 primary and a Nov. 7 general election featuring a county clerk's race, all 15 Legislature seats and two Watertown City Council seats. We'll also have hundreds of town and village seats up for election.

This next year will provide us a great opportunity to review our registration records and work to eliminate everyone who is moved on, whether it be from this county or from this Earth.

We're also planning some significant changes to the way we approach training. As you may recall, we had an instance of voter fraud this year. While the individual did not vote twice for malicious reasons, the fact remains her votes counted more than anyone else's. We take the integrity of our elections very seriously. We had an opportunity to prevent this fraud and our inspectors did not follow their training. Now we have a real life scenario in which to learn from, and we hope that smaller class sizes and more attention to detail will help our inspectors avoid major mistakes.

Commissioner Seymour will be presenting our fraud cause and offering recommendations for improved inspector training at our association's January conference in Albany. The commissioners and our deputies will also be attending the June conference in Lake Placid. We find these biennial meetings to be a great opportunity to learn best practices and network with other counties' elections officials.

We also look forward to the dialogue among those in elections regarding Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's proposal to reform and modernize voting practices. While we support making the registration and voting process easier for our county residents, we're concerned that many of Schneiderman's suggestions would result in yet another unfunded mandate passed from the state to the counties. And while we support "one stop shopping," we're very concerned about Schneiderman's recommendation that the DMV assume one of our core missions: The proper registration of voters.

At this point, the attorney general's proposals are just that – they've not gone through the state Legislature. We feel confident that there is plenty of time to sit down with our locally elected state representatives and share our concerns, which is our intention if this bill gains traction.