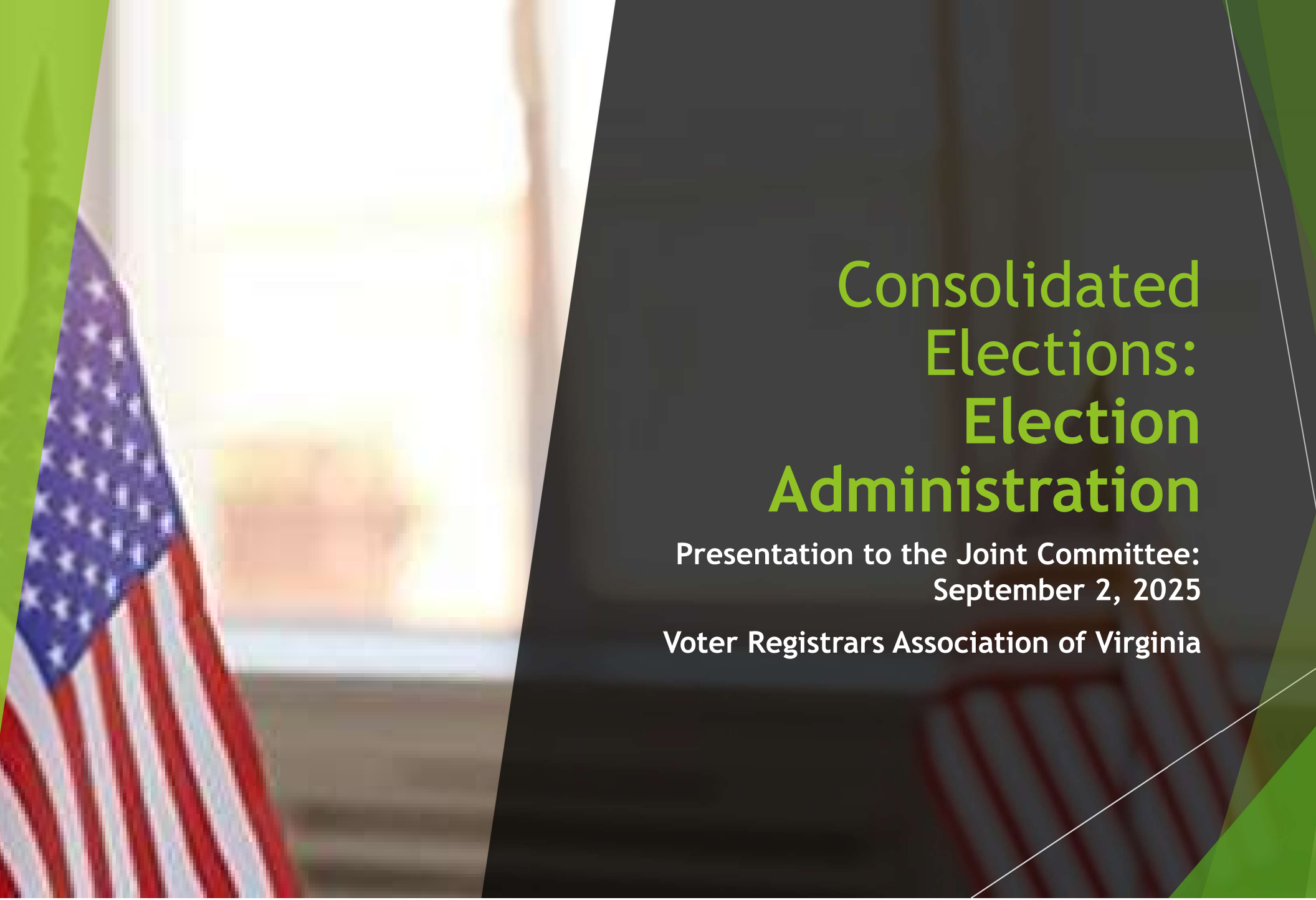


Consolidated Elections: **Election Administration**

Presentation to the Joint Committee: September 2, 2025

Voter Registrars Association of Virginia

VOTER REGISTRARS ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA

- Membership association for general registrars and staff of 133 localities
- Mission: Promote integrity, transparency, accessibility, and impartiality in running Virginia elections

MY BACKGROUND

Eric Olsen
Director of Elections
Prince William County

- Worked with localities across the country
- Licensed Attorney
- Representing VRAV in this forum

Any election schedule is going to have some positive and negative characteristics, but consolidated elections would mostly change how we work, not whether elections themselves would work.

OVERVIEW

- Review all functional areas of election administration
- Cover ways in which consolidation would change our work and the potential opportunities and costs from a management perspective
- Examine specific Code areas that will require change or where change would be advisable

The examination of this topic intersects with a wide range of election administration duties, regulations, and laws that (1) should be considered to make any change as effective as possible and (2) may warrant review regardless of the ultimate decision on election schedules.

GENERAL ADMIN

Consolidated Elections:
Election Administration

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Impact Level: High

+ Provides time for compliance, strategic planning, and implementation
+ Incremental improvements
+ Time to recuperate
- Concerns about local funding decline
- Potential institutional knowledge loss

CHANGES TO ADMIN STRUCTURE

Election Year

Run elections

Non-Election Year

Equipment/Facility Upgrades
LESS/ADA Compliance
COOP/Emergency Plans
Implementing New Laws*
Updating Training/Forms
Redistricting/Polling Place Changes
Professional Development
List Maintenance Processes
Voter Education/Transparency
State Guidance Improvement

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Compliance Schedules

- § 24.2-109.1: GR Performance Review – complete only in odd years
- § 24.2-625.1: Voting equipment security plan could be moved to odd years
- § 24.2-671.2: Risk Limiting Audits – modify the 5-year timeframe

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Office Hours/Specials

- § 24.2-411: Office "shall be open a minimum of five days each week"
- § 24.2-682: Times for special elections
  - Modification to better fit schedules
  - Potential solutions that preserve voter intent but do not interrupt continuity of government

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Redistricting

- § 24.2-311: Consider how the decennial Census fits into potential consolidation
- § 24.2-304.6: Reapportionment impact on terms/completion of local offices

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Minimum Staffing Requirements

- VRAV supports proposed legislation that would ensure all election offices have at least two FTEs and minimum salaries for chief deputies
- 20+ localities with less than 2 FTEs
- Ensures leadership redundancy and continuity of operations

VOTER REGISTRATION

Consolidated Elections:
Election Administration

VOTER REGISTRATION

Impact Level: Low

+ Fewer elections provides potential opportunities for list maintenance programs in off years

- More elections provides more interactions for voter updates

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Pre-Registration

- § 24.2-403: "Any person who is otherwise qualified and will be 18 years of age on or before the day of the next general election shall be permitted to register in advance and also vote in any intervening primary or special election."

MAIL VOTING

Consolidated Elections:
Election Administration

MAIL VOTING

Impact Level: Low

+ More focus on outreach/education

- Possible postage and envelope issues with longer and/or multi-page ballots

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

- None, functionally works the same regardless of the number or timing of elections

EARLY VOTING

Consolidated Elections:
Election Administration

EARLY VOTING

Impact Level: Medium/High

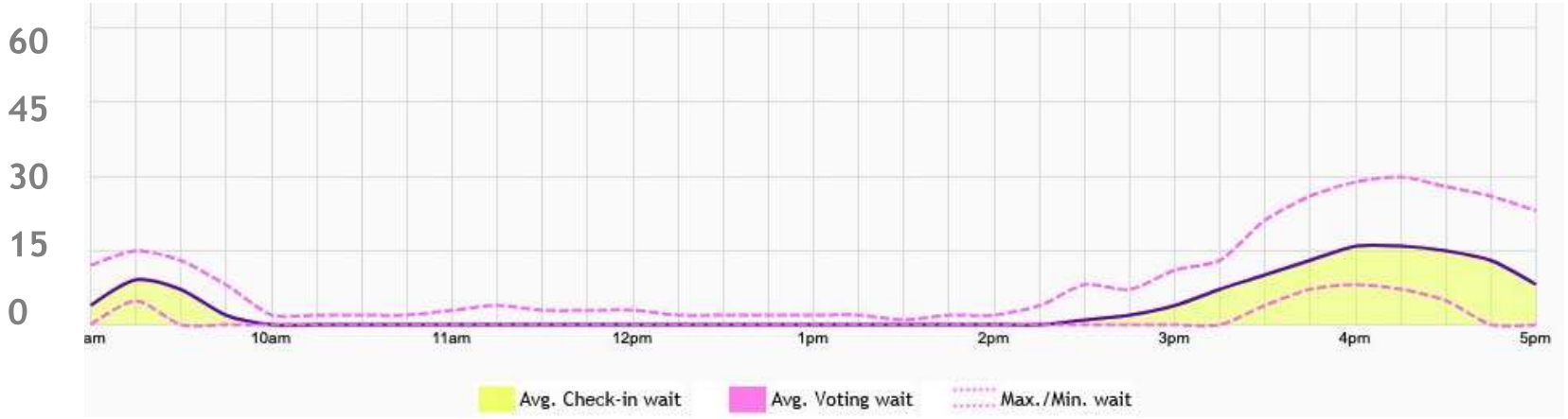
+ Extensive early voting period that exists

- More candidates/referenda and longer ballots could create significant wait time issues and challenges to existing facilities without Code changes and resource$

CROWDING EXAMPLE

1400 Voters, 3 Check In Stations, 10 Voting Booths

2 minutes to vote a ballot



CROWDING EXAMPLE

1400 Voters, 3 Check In Stations, 10 Voting Booths

4 minutes to vote a ballot

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Early Voting Sites

- § 24.2-701.1: "each county and city shall provide for absentee voting in person in the office of the general registrar or a voter satellite office"
  - Office requirement is restrictive
  - Uneven application across localities
  - Modification could mitigate or eliminate most issues

PROBLEMS

- Office may not be in the best location or may be too small
- Satellites in larger localities may need to be re-examined or expanded to accommodate changes
- Challenges for both high density regions and large area counties

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

- Remove the “office” requirement
- Use minimum voting site numbers based on population and geography
- Resources to support this
- Timeline modifications

ELECTION DAY

Consolidated Elections:
Election Administration

ELECTION DAY

Impact Level: Medium

+ Less likely to have logistical issues with the popularity of mail/early voting
+ Less pressure on election officers
- Election officers may not be in practice
- May lose some election officers without routine elections

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Voter Number Requirements

- § 24.2-307: Notify governing body if voters exceed 4,000 in a presidential
- § 24.2-627: Voting equipment
  - Voting booths for every 425 voters
  - Two scanners for over 4,000 voters
  - Threshold changes?

CODE CONSIDERATIONS

Election Officers

- § 24.2-115 – Appointment of Election Officers
  - Recruitment challenges
  - Party parity limitations, impossible to accomplish in some localities
  - Non-partisan officers are a large and growing group

ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES

Consolidated Elections:
Election Administration

ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULES

- Move state elections to even years but retain odd years for localities
- Move state elections to even years and consolidate local elections
  - Challenges with 2-year terms and staggered elected positions
  - Potential for 3 years on/1 year off

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

Current State/Local Funding Model

- State covers GR/EB Salary
- Locality covers all other costs
- *Exception*: Presidential Primary

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

Potential State/Local Funding Model

- Locality covers baseline admin costs
- State reimburses for the now reduced election cost in even years

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

Potential Benefits

- Prevents budget concerns and provides consistency in formulation
- Mitigates unfunded mandates
- Could enable uniformity to voter services and special programs
- Localities could pick their option

CONCLUSION

Consolidated Elections:
Election Administration

Challenges and benefits to election administration are important factors to consider, but how this impacts voters regarding turnout and their experience is obviously the most critical factor. We work to support their experience in everything we do.

OVERALL ADMIN FACTORS

+ Opportunity to improve compliance
+ Outreach and voter education potential
+ Reduced pressure on election officials
- Something to be said for steady practice
- Combination of higher turnout with longer ballots could create some challenges

Consolidated elections can be implemented effectively if the necessary Code and regulatory changes are considered, if resources are not undercut, and with proper timing and planning.

Thank you for including VRAV in this process.