



★ VIRGINIA ★
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

the Handbook

Chapter I

General Registrar/ Director of Elections

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I. GENERAL REGISTRAR/DIRECTOR OF ELECTIONS

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I.1 CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

This chapter discusses the role of the general registrar. §1.2 outlines general registrars' duties; discusses how local electoral boards appoint, remove, compensate, and support their general registrars; addresses the role of chief deputy registrars and other staff; offers suggestions on building relationships with other local government officials; and notes activities considered inappropriate for the position. §1.3 discusses requirements for the voter registration office. §1.4 briefly addresses how localities are to maintain their records and documents. §1.5 focuses on the process for reimbursing localities for their compensation of general registrars and electoral boards.



I.2 THE GENERAL REGISTRAR

Virginia has 133 independent cities and counties, ranging in population from under 3,000 to over 1 million. Each independent city or county has one general registrar and a three-member electoral board.¹ These four individuals are responsible for virtually all aspects of voter registration and election administration in their respective locality. As an appointed official, the general registrar is typically the public face of the local electoral process.

I.2.1 Duties

I.2.1.1 Duties in General

The Code of Virginia prescribes the duties of the general registrar and the electoral board. The most comprehensive, though not exhaustive, list of duties can be found in §24.2-114. The responsibilities listed in the Code are summarized below. General registrars are to:

- Maintain the office of the general registrar and establish and maintain additional public places for voter registration.²
- Participate in programs to educate the general public and encourage registration.³
 - Registrars cannot actively solicit applications for registration in a selective manner or offer anything of value for an application.⁴



Law Note Regarding General Registrars and Public Speaking Engagements

Pursuant to Virginia Office of the Attorney General [Opinion 23-005](#), a general registrar may speak about voter registration and voting at a meeting of a private, non-profit, non-partisan civic organization. However, the general registrar may not solicit, accept, use, or dispose of any money, grants, property, or services of the private host or party to fund election-related expenses.

- Perform duties within the county or city they are appointed to serve.⁵
 - There are two exceptions to this: registrars may, in order to register voters of their own county or city, go into a county or city within the Commonwealth that borders their own and conduct registration jointly with the registrar of that county or city; and registrars may participate in multijurisdictional staffing for voter registration offices, approved by the State Board, that are located at facilities of the Department of Motor Vehicles.⁶
- Provide voter registration forms.⁷

¹ See §§24.2-106 and 24.2-110.

² See §24.2-114(1).

³ *Id.*, at (2).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*, at (2).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*, at (4).



- Indicate, when appropriate, that the registrant has registered by mail.⁸
 - People who register by mail must be identified as such on the registration records, lists of registered voters, lists of people who voted, and pollbooks used for the election.⁹
- Accept voter registration applications and requests for a transfer or change of address from residents of any county or city in the Commonwealth. For residents of another registrar's county or city, process in VERIS their completed applications or requests and forward them to the registrar of that county or city.
- Determine the applicant's eligibility to register, including checking for felony conviction and restoration of rights for residents of the registrar's own county or city.
- The registrar must notify the applicant of approval or denial.¹⁰
 - Within five (5) days of any voter registration or absentee application denial, the registrar must provide written notification to the applicant of the denial and the specific reason for the denial.¹¹
- Preserve order at, and in the vicinity of, the place of registration. To that end, registrars may:
 - Exclude people whose presence disturbs the registration process from the place of registration;
 - Appoint special officers for the place of registration (no more than three); and
 - Summon people in the vicinity to assist whenever, in the registrar's opinion, it becomes necessary to preserve order.¹²
- Maintain the official registration records for their county or city in the voter registration system. This includes:
 - Preserving the written applications of all people whose registrations were approved, and;
 - Preserving the written applications of all people whose registrations were denied or cancelled, for a period of four years.¹³
 - Once the application is uploaded into VERIS, the paper application may be disposed of.
- Immediately notify ELECT and the electoral board secretary if experiencing trouble processing applications for voter registration or absentee ballots in a timely manner.¹⁴
- Make the pollbooks available to the precincts and provide a copy of the pollbook data to ELECT after each election for voting credit purposes.¹⁵ For more information, refer to Chapter 4 (Voting Equipment).

⁸ *Id.*, at (5).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*, at (6).

¹¹ *Id.* at (9). See Virginia Admin. Code [1VAC20-20-70](#).

¹² *Id.*, at (7).

¹³ *Id.*, at (8).

¹⁴ See Virginia Admin. Code [1VAC20-20-70](#).

¹⁵ See [§24.2-114\(10\)](#).



- Retain the pollbooks in their principal office for **two years from the date of the election**.¹⁶
- Maintain accurate and current registration records and comply with all Code requirements for the transfer, inactivation, and cancellation of voter registrations.¹⁷
- Update the voter registration system to reflect changes to election districts, precincts, or polling places, and notify each affected voter of these changes by mail.¹⁸
 - If part of the registrar's county or city becomes part of another locality, transfer registration records of affected voters to the appropriate general registrar.
 - The general registrar of the voter's *new* locality is to notify the voter, by mail, of the change.¹⁹
- After processing a voter who registers in Virginia from another state, the Department of Elections will notify the voter's previous state electronically.²⁰
 - The program's efficacy is seamless when sourced from online voter registration applications.
 - The state abbreviation from a paper Virginia Voter Registration Application must be manually entered into VERIS for ELECT's notice to be provided.*
- Inquire if an individual is suspected of being registered and/or voting simultaneously in more than one state and/or territory of the United States at the same time, inquire about that individual's registration and voting history from authorities of other states. Cooperate when authorities of other states conduct such inquiries, by providing information from the voter's registration and voting records.²¹
- Review nominating petitions at the request of political party chairs, but only if the political party is nominating a candidate for a state legislative, constitutional, or local office, through a method other than a primary. Determine whether the signatures are from registered voters with an active status.²²
- Attend the annual training program provided by ELECT.
 - If a general registrar is unable to attend because of a personal or family emergency, the individual may designate one staff member to attend.²³
- Process returned absentee ballots by mail before polls close on Election Day.²⁴

¹⁶ *Id.*, at (11).

¹⁷ *Id.*, at (12). See also GREB Handbook Chapter 6 Voter Registration.

¹⁸ See [§24.2-114\(13\)](#).

¹⁹ *Id.*, at (14).

²⁰ *Id.*, at (15).

²¹ *Id.*, at (16).

²² *Id.*, at (17).

²³ *Id.*, at (19).

²⁴ See [§24.2-709.1](#).



- Carry out other such duties prescribed by the local electoral board.²⁵

1.2.1.2 Duties Delegated by Electoral Boards

The statutory responsibilities of general registrars and electoral board members are enumerated throughout the Code of Virginia.²⁶

Electoral boards have the authority to assign a range of their duties to the general registrar, yet certain core supervisory functions, **such as safeguarding ballots, assessing the registrar's performance, selecting officers of election representing political parties, adjudicating provisional ballots, and certifying election results, cannot be delegated.**

Electoral boards should be mindful of the many duties that the general registrar is legally required to perform and should have an awareness of the resources available to the registrar. If the general registrar needs additional staff to perform additional duties, particularly if those duties are delegated by the electoral board, the board should work with the local governing body to obtain adequate staffing. Virginia Code §24.2-112 authorizes the general registrar, at their discretion, to hire additional temporary, part-time employees when necessary. The governing body of that locality must compensate those employees as provided for by law.²⁷

The general registrar and electoral board should meet and develop a list of duties that are delegated to the registrar. The general registrar and electoral board should review this list annually and determine if changes are needed. For any duties delegated to the general registrar (and any changes to delegated duties thereafter), the following steps shall be taken:

- 1) The delegation should be explicitly outlined in the meeting minutes or incorporated into the general registrar's job description.
- 2) The decision to delegate should only be made after a discussion with the general registrar.
- 3) The delegation should be formally adopted during an electoral board meeting, and this decision should be documented in the minutes of that meeting for transparency.

Delegation to the general registrar does not absolve the electoral board of legal responsibility for the management of elections.

1.2.1.3 Duties Related to Officers of Elections²⁸

The general registrar will submit a plan to the electoral board that ensures that an adequate number of trained officers of election are available to serve in each election.²⁹

- The representation of the two parties shall be equal at each precinct having an even number of officers and shall vary by no more than one at each precinct having an odd number of officers.³⁰

²⁵ See [§24.2-114\(18\)](#).

²⁶ See [§§24.2-106](#), [24.2-106.01](#), [24.2-106.1](#), [24.2-107](#), [24.2-108](#), [24.2-109](#), [24.2-109.1](#), and [24.2-114](#) (this is a non-exhaustive list).

²⁷ See § 24.2-111.

²⁸ For electoral board duties related to officers of elections, see Chapter 2 Local Electoral Boards.

²⁹ See [§§24.2-115](#) and [24.2-115.2](#).

³⁰ See [§24.2-115](#).



- The electoral board may appoint additional citizens who do not represent any political party to serve as officers. If practicable, no more than one-third of the total number of officers appointed for each precinct may be citizens who do not represent any political party.”³¹
 - For a primary election involving only one political party, persons representing the party holding the primary shall serve as the officers of election, if possible.
- If the electoral board appoints a chief or assistant chief officer not affiliated with a political party, the general registrar must notify political parties at least 10 days prior to the election to allow for additional nominations.³²
- If an electronic voting machine is taken outside the polling place to assist a voter and the required information is not recorded or it is later proven the information recorded was intentionally falsified, the electoral board or general registrar must dismiss, at a minimum:
 - the chief officer or the assistant chief officer or both
 - any other officer of election shown to have caused the failure to record or intentional falsification³³
- The electoral board must ensure that the general registrar certifies to ELECT that training of the officers of election has been conducted consistent with training standards passed by the State Board of Elections.³⁴
- Providing instructions to any election officer who hasn't been previously instructed on the precinct's voting equipment lies with **either the electoral board or the general registrar**. If this responsibility is delegated to the general registrar, it must be expressed in writing as outlined in 1.2.1.2.
 - Instruction should take place no fewer than three and no more than 30 days before the upcoming election.³⁵
 - Each officer of election must receive additional training or instruction whenever Title 24.2 is changed or when an ELECT regulation is changed that alters the duties or conduct of the officers of elections. The additional training shall be provided promptly after the law or regulation has taken effect, but not less than three days prior to the first election occurring in the locality after the law or regulation has taken effect³⁶
- An electoral board member, the general registrar, or designated officer of election must administer an oath to each officer of election before the polls open.³⁷

³¹ *Id.*

³² See [§24.2-115\(C\)](#).

³³ See [§24.2-649.1](#).

³⁴ See [§§24.2-115.2\(C\)](#) (requiring certification), and [24.2-103\(B\)](#) (training standards).

³⁵ See [§24.2-636](#).

³⁶ See [§§24.2-115.2\(B\)](#)

³⁷ See [§24.2-611](#).



- The secretary of the electoral board or the general registrar must post a list of all appointed officers of election in the office of the general registrar. Whenever substitute or additional officers are appointed, the secretary or the general registrar must promptly add the name of the appointee to the public list.³⁸ This list is open to public inspection in the general registrar's office. The secretary of the electoral board or the general registrar must provide a copy of this list to any requesting political party or candidate, at a reasonable charge.³⁹

1.2.1.4 Duties Related to Polling Places

The local governing body is responsible for establishing and relocating polling places; this must be done by passing an ordinance. General registrars and local electoral boards should nonetheless be directly involved in the process to make sure that any proposed change or creation of a precinct adheres to state and federal law. In addition to administering the locality polling places and precincts, the general registrar must also take steps in an emergency to change the polling place. In the event of an emergency, the general registrar is obligated to promptly initiate actions to relocate the polling place. For further guidance on the management of polling places, refer to Chapter 3 "Precincts and Polling Places" and Chapter 5 "Accessibility."

If an emergency makes a normal polling place unusable or inaccessible less than 60-days before a general election, the electoral board or the general registrar must **request emergency approval from ELECT for a replacement polling place, which must be fully compliant with ADA guidelines:**



Submit a System Support ticket to complete an "Emergency Polling Place Change":

- Upon receipt of ELECT approval, give notice of the change to all candidates or the candidates' campaign whose name is on the ballot to be voted on in that polling place.
- Provide notice to the affected voters as appropriate to the emergency.⁴⁰
- The electoral board or the general registrar must provide and have posted at each polling place signs directing voters with disabilities and elderly voters to accessible entrances.⁴¹
- The electoral board or the general registrar must provide for curbside voting at every polling place for any voter with a disability or who is age 65 or older.⁴²
- The electoral board or the general registrar must provide voting booths at each polling place, including at minimum one (1) designed for voting by printed ballot. Voting booths must be well-lit and must permit a voter to cast their ballot in secret.⁴³

³⁸ See §24.2-115.

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ See §24.2-310(D).

⁴¹ See §24.2-604.1.

⁴² See §24.2-649.1. See also GREB Handbook Chapter 5 (Accessibility).

⁴³ See §24.2-609. See also GREB Handbook Chapter 4 (Voting Equipment).



- If a polling place has changed, notice must be posted at the old polling place, to the extent practicable, with information on how voters can find the new polling place. The notice must be posted at the old polling place for the first primary and general election conducted at the new polling place.⁴⁴

1.2.1.5 Duties Related to Candidates

After the filing deadline for each elections, the general registrar must enter all candidates who have filed for each local office into VERIS, including the names of any candidates who failed to qualify or voluntarily withdrew.⁴⁵

- The general registrar must notify each disqualified candidate and enter the reason for their disqualification into VERIS.⁴⁶ If you have additional questions, please submit a System Support ticket.
- A general registrar must also accept Statements of Economic Interests from candidates for a **constitutional office**.

Frequently Asked Candidate Ballot Access Questions

*Q: What is a **constitutional office**?*

A: Each county and city elects constitutional officers. These offices are:

Treasurer

Sheriff

Commonwealth's Attorney

Clerk of Court

Commissioner of Revenue

The Constitution of Virginia, Art. VII, Section 4 states that qualified voters of each county and city shall elect "a treasurer, a sheriff, an attorney for the Commonwealth, a clerk, who shall be clerk of the court in the office of which deeds are recorded, and a commissioner of revenue."

Q: What if the date of notarization is before the signatures are dated? A: If all the petition's signatures were signed after it was notarized, the entire petition is invalid; similarly, if an individual signature is dated after the notarization, that signature is invalid.

1.2.1.5.1 Duties Related to the Withdraw of a Primary Candidate (Effective January 1, 2025)

Pursuant to §24.2-538.1, a person who is a candidate for nomination by a political party primary and has qualified for the primary may submit on or after the 44th day before but before the immediate Tuesday before the primary election a notice of intent to withdraw.⁴⁷ Such notice must be signed and notarized.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See [§24.2-306](#).

⁴⁵ See [§24.2-612](#).

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ See [§24.2-538.1](#).

⁴⁸ See [§24.2-612.2](#).



Upon receipt of the notice of intent to withdraw, the general registrar must immediately send the notice to ELECT. Within one calendar day of receiving such notice, the State Board of Elections will declare the remaining candidate as the nominee. Afterwards, as soon as possible, the local electoral board must petition the circuit court for the cancellation of the primary election.

1.2.1.5.2 *Duties Related to Removal of Certain Appointed or Elected Officers*

Constituents of an elected officer or an appointed officer may petition for that officer's removal from office for good reason specified under §24.2-233, using the petition form approved by the State Board of Elections.⁴⁹ Before a circuit court can begin the process of removing an officer, the Commonwealth's Attorney and the general registrar of the jurisdiction where the petition was filed must review the document.⁵⁰ A petition to remove elected officers or certain officers who have been appointed to fill an elective office must be reviewed by the general registrar to determine its petition signature sufficiency in accordance with the uniform standards approved by the State Board of Elections.⁵¹ The petition will be given to the general registrar by the clerk of the circuit court where the petition was filed.⁵²

The Department of Elections has provided a checklist for general registrars to use in their review of removal petitions.⁵³ The checklist covers all material and nonmaterial omissions as outlined in 1VAC20-60-90.⁵⁴

The general registrar shall certify the petition within 10 business days and promptly file such certification with the clerk of the circuit court.⁵⁵

The general registrar may seek an extension of time from the circuit court for good cause.⁵⁶

The certification shall state:⁵⁷

- The number of signatures required,⁵⁸
- "The petition must be signed by a number of registered voters who reside within the jurisdiction of the officer equal to 10% of the total number of votes cast at the last election for the office that the officer holds."⁵⁹
- The number of signatures on the petition⁶⁰
- The number of valid registered voter signatures.⁶¹
- The signatures found to be invalid must be identified on the certification.⁶²

⁴⁹ See §§[24.2-233](#) and [24.2-235](#). See Virginia Admin. Code, [1VAC20-60-90](#). See also ELECT, [ELECT 233 Petition for the Removal of an Officer](#).

⁵⁰ See §[24.2-235](#).

⁵¹ See §§[24.2-235\(B\)](#); See Virginia Admin. Code [1VAC20-60-90](#).

⁵² See §[24.2-235\(A\)](#).

⁵³ See ELECT, [Review of Officer Removal Petition Pages Checklist](#). See also Virginia Admin. Code, [1VAC20-60-90](#).

⁵⁴ See Virginia Admin. Code, [1VAC20-60-90](#).

⁵⁵ See §[24.2-235\(B\)](#).

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ See §[24.2-233\(4\)](#).

⁶⁰ See §[24.2-235\(B\)](#).

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² *Id.*



- The certification will also identify any material omissions in the petition.⁶³

1.2.1.6 Duties Related to Special Elections

The general registrar must provide public notice of each special election as soon as a copy of the writ of special election is received. The general registrar should post notice:⁶⁴

- On the official website for the county or city, or
- In at least 10 public places, or
- In a newspaper of general circulation in their locality, at least 10 days before the election.

If the special election is held in more than one locality, the general registrars may act jointly to provide notice.

As with other elections, “The general registrar shall give notice of the date, hours, and locations for registration on the final day of registration at least 10 days before each final day.”⁶⁵ This notice is to be posted on the official county or city website and published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the county or city, if available.⁶⁶ At least three days advance notice must be given for other times and locations for voter registration, e.g., a general registrar attends a public event on a Saturday where s\he offers and accepts voter registration applications. This notice is to be posted on the official website of the county or city and published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation or announced at least twice on a television station serving the county or city, if available.⁶⁷

1.2.1.7 Duties Related to Town Elections⁶⁸

The electoral board, along with the general registrar, must conduct elections for any town within its county.

For town office elections in any town split between two counties, the electoral board of the county in which the lesser part of the town is located shall (i) include town offices on the ballot for the county, and (ii) report the results ascertained for those town offices to the electoral board of the county in which the greatest part of the town is located for inclusion in the results of that county pursuant to §24.2-671.

For more information on election results ascertainment for a town split between two counties, refer to the Enhanced Results training materials found in the LMS course: Enhanced Results Training Materials.⁶⁹

⁶³ *Id.* See Virginia Admin. Code [1VAC20-60-90](#).

⁶⁴ See [§24.2-683](#).

⁶⁵ See [§24.2-415\(A\)](#).

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ *Id.*

⁶⁸ See [§24.2-601](#).

⁶⁹ See [Town Split Results Procedures](#).



1.2.1.8 Duties Related to Ballots

The general registrar must order the printing of a sufficient number of ballots for each election. This number is subject to the approval of both the local electoral board and ELECT. This determination should be based on the number of active registered voters and historical election data such as past voter turnout.⁷⁰ Reference GR/EB Chapter 7 and Chapter 10 for more detailed information on requirements.

The general registrar must send absentee ballots to requestors no later than 45 days before any election. Once the absentee voting period opens, the general registrar must send absentee ballots to requestors within three business days of receiving a completed absentee ballot application. In the case of a nonfederal special election, if time is insufficient to meet the deadline, the registrar must send the ballots as soon after the deadline as possible.⁷¹

The general registrar must certify to ELECT the locality's compliance with the Absentee Ballot deadline and report the number of ballots ordered.⁷² ELECT issues electronic surveys for this purpose and may direct the printing of additional ballots as per the Code of Virginia §24.2-612.

The general registrar must send ELECT proofs of each ballot style for verification and copies of each final ballot in the manner directed by ELECT.⁷³

Representative of electoral board to be present at printing. The electoral board or the general registrar must designate one person to be continuously present in the room where and when the ballots are being printed. If not an electoral board member, the designee must be paid at least \$20 per day.⁷⁴

Delivery of ballots to electoral board; checking and recording number. The electoral board or the general registrar must designate one of its members, the general registrar, or an employee, to receive the ballots after they are printed and certify the number received. The certificate must be filed with other election materials.⁷⁵

Sealing ballots. The electoral board or the general registrar must designate a person to affix the electoral board seal to each ballot and to sign a statement witnessing such. This statement must be filed with the board's minutes. If not an electoral board member, the person must be paid at least \$20 per day.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ See [§24.2-612](#).

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ See [§24.2-617](#).

⁷⁵ See [§24.2-618](#).

⁷⁶ See [§24.2-619](#).



Dividing ballots into packages for each precinct; delivery of absentee ballots. The electoral board or the general registrar must have the printed ballots sorted into one or more packages for each precinct while at least one electoral board member or designee of the board is present. The packages must remain in the exclusive possession of the general registrar until delivered to the officers of election of each precinct.⁷⁷ Any unused ballots at the close of the polls on Election Day should be sent by the general registrar to the clerk of the circuit court.

Delivery of packages to officers; opening packages. The secretary of the electoral board, a deputy registrar, or a staff member designated by the board, must deliver the packages of ballots to an officer of election of each precinct. The designee must obtain a receipt for each package and a certificate that the seals are unbroken.⁷⁸

1.2.1.9 Duties Related to Voting Equipment

Voting equipment custodians. The board and general registrar must employ a person or persons (called “custodians”) to program, maintain, test, calibrate, and deliver each voting machine before each election. **Custodians must be appointed and instructed at least 30 days before each election.**

A board member or a deputy registrar may be appointed by the board or general registrar to serve as custodian without pay for that service. However, whenever the law requires the presence of both a board member or registrar and a custodian, the same person cannot fulfill both roles.⁷⁹

With the approval of ELECT, the electoral board or general registrar may contract with the voting equipment vendor or another contractor to program, prepare, and maintain the voting machines. If this is done, the custodian’s role will be to instruct and supervise the vendor or contractor technicians and oversee the programming, testing, calibrating, and delivering of the equipment.⁸⁰ For more information, see Chapter 4, Voting Equipment.

A board member, an authorized representative of the electoral board, or the general registrar must be present at the final testing of each machine before each election. If a board member is serving as custodian, another board member must be present. The electoral board or general registrar may only authorize a representative to be present in their place if it is impracticable for a board member or general registrar to attend.⁸¹

Notice of final testing of voting system. The general registrar must notify appropriate local party chairs (or independent candidates for a city or town election if there are no party nominees on the ballot for any office) of the time and place of the final testing and sealing of the voting equipment. The notice must be in writing and sent by mail. Each political party or candidate notified must be allowed to have one representative present to witness the testing and sealing.⁸²

⁷⁷ See [§24.2-620](#).

⁷⁸ See [§24.2-621](#).

⁷⁹ See [§24.2-632](#).

⁸⁰ *Id.*, at (A).

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² See [§24.2-633](#).



Locking and securing after preparation. The general registrar must retain custody of all voting machine keys after the machines have been sealed.⁸³ The board or the general registrar must deliver the keys in sealed packages to designated officers of election in each precinct before the polls open.⁸⁴ The board or the general registrar may designate times and places for demonstrating and instructing the public on the proper use of the machines--however, no equipment shall be used for such instruction after being prepared and sealed for use in any election.⁸⁵ The general registrar must “provide ample protection against tampering with or damage to the equipment” after the voting equipment has been delivered to the polling places.⁸⁶

1.2.1.10 Duties Related to Election Day⁸⁷

Materials at polling places. The local electoral board is responsible for ensuring that the general registrar has all ballots, voting equipment, voting equipment keys, electronic pollbooks (if applicable) and emergency paper pollbooks, paper pollbooks (if applicable), furniture, and materials at all polling places before 6:00 a.m. on the day of the election.⁸⁸ The general registrar must furnish a copy of the Virginia Election Laws to each precinct for use by the officers of election on Election Day.⁸⁹ Copies of the election law books are distributed by and additional copies can be ordered from ELECT.

Sample ballots. The board or general registrar must furnish two sample ballots to each precinct. These must be posted for public inspection at each polling place on Election Day.⁹⁰ The general registrar must provide instructions available to voters on Election Day on how to use the voting system and properly vote.⁹¹ More detailed information can be found in GR/EB Chapter 10 and Chapter 11.

1.2.1.11 Duties Following the Election, Primary, or Referendum



The board or general registrar may direct that all materials from the precincts be returned to the office of the general registrar instead of to the Clerk of the Circuit Court. The general registrar must secure and retain these materials in their office and must convey them to the Clerk of the Circuit Court **by noon on the day following the electoral board’s ascertainment of the results.**⁹² The general registrar must retain one copy of the statement of results for public inspection.⁹³

⁸³ See [§24.2-634](#).

⁸⁴ See [§24.2-639](#).

⁸⁵ See [§24.2-635](#).

⁸⁶ See [§24.2-634](#).

⁸⁷ For electoral board duties related to Election Day, see GREB Handbook Chapter 2, Local Electoral Boards.

⁸⁸ See [§§24.2-610](#) and [24.2-637](#).

⁸⁹ See [§24.2-610](#).

⁹⁰ See [§24.2-641](#).

⁹¹ See [§24.2-647](#).

⁹² See [§24.2-668\(B\)](#).

⁹³ *Id.*



1.2.1.12 Duties Related to Absentee and Provisional Balloting⁹⁴

The general registrar must provide a ballot and other absentee materials to each registered applicant who properly submits a timely and complete application form no later than 45 days before any election. After the absentee voting commencement deadline, the general registrar must send absentee ballots to requestors within three business days of receiving a completed absentee ballot application.⁹⁵ Refer to GR/EB Chapters 7, 12, and 13 for more detailed requirements.



A **five-day waiting period** is required for persons who concurrently **apply to register in-person and apply to vote absentee**, with limited exceptions for military and overseas citizens.⁹⁶

General registrars must:

- Certify to ELECT that absentee ballots were sent to applicants by the date required by law and must provide certain information required to ensure compliance with absentee voting deadlines.⁹⁷
- Make applications for absentee ballots available and accept them electronically.⁹⁸
 - The general registrar must send absentee ballots electronically to eligible absent military, overseas voters, and designated print disabled voters.⁹⁹
- Provide a voting assistance form to any voters who indicate that they need assistance due to blindness, disability, or inability to read and write.¹⁰⁰
- Note, and preserve, any absentee ballot returned unused.¹⁰¹
- Provide a provisional ballot to anyone who lost, returned unused, did not receive, or accidentally spoiled his or her absentee ballot.¹⁰²



Due to the timeliness of the applicant's emergency request, the general registrar must rule on whether to accept or deny the request for an emergency absentee ballot from a voter where the cause of the voter's emergency is not one of the reasons specified in the Code.¹⁰³

⁹⁴ For more information on absentee voting, see Chapter 7 Absentee Voting and Chapter 12 Central Absentee Precinct (CAP). For more information on provisional ballots, see Chapter 13 Provisional Ballots.

⁹⁵ See [§24.2-706](#).

⁹⁶ See [§24.2-701\(A\)](#).

⁹⁷ See [§24.2-612](#).

⁹⁸ See [§24.2-701](#).

⁹⁹ See §§[24.2-704](#) and [24.2-706](#).

¹⁰⁰ See [§24.2-704](#).

¹⁰¹ See [§24.2-708\(A\)](#).

¹⁰² See [§24.2-708](#). See also Virginia Admin. Code [1VAC20-60-60](#).

¹⁰³ See [§24.2-705](#).



The general registrar must review all properly returned absentee ballots for statement of voter or VA-VBM Envelope B deficiencies that would render the returned ballot a rejected ballot and, within three days of finding such deficiencies, must notify the voter in writing or by email of the deficiency and how the deficiency may be corrected.¹⁰⁴

The common phrase for this deficiency resolution is the “absentee ballot curing process.”

- The notified voter may either correct his or her by mail deficiency before noon on the third day after the election or abandon his or her deficient by mail ballot for an in person absentee ballot by 5 pm on the Saturday before the election.
- Notification of absentee ballot deficiencies is not required for any by mail ballot received by the general registrar from the Saturday before the election through noon on the Friday after the election.¹⁰⁵

The board, or the general registrar, must mark the date of receipt of any absentee ballot and deposit it in an appropriate, secure container.¹⁰⁶

On the day before the election, the general registrar must compose a list (in triplicate) of the names of everyone who applied for an absentee ballot through the third day before the election.

- By noon on the day before the election, the general registrar must deliver two copies of the list to the electoral board.¹⁰⁷
 - The general registrar keeps one copy for their records.
- The general registrar must compose a supplementary list of everyone who voted absentee in person, and/or who applied for an emergency absentee ballot. The general registrar must deliver this list to the chief officer of election for every precinct by 5pm on the day before the election.¹⁰⁸

The general registrar must deliver all applications for absentee ballots, under seal, to the Clerk of the Circuit Court before noon on the day following the election.¹⁰⁹

The general registrar must report in-person absentee ballots cast during early voting separately from absentee ballots returned by mail. Both are to be reported by precinct pursuant to §24.2-667.1(A).¹¹⁰

The general registrar must also report the number of provisional ballots cast, the number of those provisional ballots determined to be valid by the electoral board, and the results of such valid provisional ballots by voters assigned to such precinct. Results from provisional voting and voting at the precinct on election day shall be reported separately, pursuant §24.2-667.1(B).

¹⁰⁴ See [§24.2-709.1](#). See Virginia Admin. Code [IVAC20-70.20](#).

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ See [§24.2-710](#).

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ See [§24.2-711](#).

¹¹⁰ See [§24.2-667.1](#).



- The results from absentee and provisional ballots must be submitted to ELECT no later than 5:00 pm on the tenth calendar day following an election, as ELECT must post these results on its website, pursuant to §24.2-667.1.
- For additional information on the counting and reporting of results from a Central Absentee Precinct (CAP), please reference Chapter 12 of the GREB and the State Board of Election's policy 2023-001 in the Election Law section of ELECT's website for further information.¹¹¹

Any person who fails to discharge their duty as provided in this section through willful neglect of duty and with malicious intent shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor as provided in the Code of Virginia §24.2-1001(A).

For more information on how to process returned by mail ballots for true "undeliverable" or cure ballots in VERIS, see ELECT's 2021-09-09 IS UPDATE – September 8, 2021 VERIS Deployment, Fifth Action Item.¹¹²

I.2.2 Appointment

The electoral board for each county and city meets every four years (starting from the month of May or June) to appoint the general registrar. The appointment is for a four-year term to begin the first of July of the year of appointment. The electoral board fills any general registrar vacancy for the remainder of an unexpired term.¹¹³ The appointment is for this specific term and is not subject to grievance procedures. Immediately after the meeting to appoint the general registrar, the secretary of the electoral board must certify the appointment to ELECT using the [General Registrar Certification of Appointment form](#) (SBE-110).

I.2.2.1 Job Qualifications

The general registrar should fit the following roles and have the following qualifications:

- A planner capable of assessing the current and future needs of citizens, establishing a schedule to meet those needs, and managing all phases of the registration process.
- An administrator able to manage all phases of the registration process, and the employees and volunteers responsible for its accomplishment.
- A budget analyst with the ability to determine the financing required for an effective registration program, and to obtain necessary funds by providing justification to the local governing body and working with local officials.
- A human resources officer capable of assessing the qualifications of prospective paid or volunteer deputy registrars, and clerical employees who may be needed.
- A trainer capable of training all deputy registrars, clerical employees, and, if delegated to do so, election officials, in the proper and efficient performance of their duties.
- A writer with the skills to compose press releases, legal notices, correspondence, and manuals.
- A public relations expert skilled at (or, at minimum, capable of appropriate and non-partisan) dealing with citizens, the press, the local government, the state government, and the federal government.

¹¹¹ See ELECT, [State Board of Elections Policy](#).

¹¹² See ELECT, Official Advisory 2021-09-09 > [2021 Advisories Archive](#).

¹¹³ See [§24.2-110](#).



- A public speaker willing to speak before the public about the election process.
- A person with technical ability able to understand and manage the technical aspects of the position such as creating mail merge documents (e.g., for correspondence with voters), using spreadsheets (e.g., for budget preparation) and using presentation software (e.g., for training officers of election).
- A monitor able to track and analyze federal and state legislative initiatives and voting trends to project the potential future impact on the locality, and to provide meaningful information to legislators when appropriate.
- An individual capable of quickly familiarizing herself\himself with the locality and its citizens to establish a registration and voter education plan that best meets the needs of the locality.

The person appointed general registrar may not be all these things when appointed but must become all of them or the registration and election processes may suffer.

The general registrar is instrumental in disseminating information to the public about the voting process. Press releases, public service announcements, and informational speeches are essential tools for public education. Application and voter guide displays can be arranged in highly visible locations that are frequented by citizens of the locality. In-person registration schedules can be arranged so that the registrar is available to the public at popular events and places. Visits to local high schools once or twice each year provide excellent opportunities to educate students. If general registrar staff will be accepting registration applications, the location must be open to the general public (unless it is in a school or at a naturalization ceremony), accessible to people with disabilities and the elderly, and the hours must be preannounced.¹¹⁴ The general registrar must know the county or city and the habits of its citizens in order to establish a registration plan that is responsive to the locality.



Case Note

On June 25, 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court held invalid Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act that outlines the formula for determining what jurisdictions are covered under the Section 5 Preclearance processes. This ruling makes Section 5 dormant until such time as Congress enacts another formula for coverage that is consistent with the Constitution. The practical effect is that it is no longer necessary to preclear changes affecting voting with the Department of Justice. For more information, see *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 2 (2013).

¹¹⁴ See [§24.2-412](#); see also [§24.2-413](#). But see [§24.2-412\(B\)](#) (detailing no need for public announcement if ongoing agreement in place).



I.2.3 Oath of Office

With a July 1st appointment date, each general registrar must, as soon as possible and not later than June 30, take and sign the oath of office prescribed in Va. Const. Art. II, § 7.¹¹⁵ Note that the Code provides more limited options for administering the registrar's oath than for administering the oath for the registrar's staff. A local judge or the Circuit Court Clerk will normally need to be called on to administer the registrar's oath. In contrast, the registrar may administer the oath for the registrar's staff.¹¹⁶

The general registrar must file the signed oath with the Circuit Court Clerk. This document is available from the Clerk. A copy of the signed oath also must be filed with the secretary of the electoral board.¹¹⁷

The secretary of the electoral board must ensure that the oath is taken and filed by the general registrar appointed by the Board. Failure to take it before acting as general registrar is punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 or more than \$1,000.¹¹⁸

I.2.4 The General Registrar and Political Activity

As per the Code of Virginia §24.2-110, "No general registrar shall serve as a paid or volunteer worker in the campaign of a candidate for nomination or election to an office filled by election in whole or in part by the qualified voters of their locality." The statute does not define "volunteer worker," so the plain and ordinary meaning is used (i.e., a person who, of their own free will, provides services, without any financial gain).¹¹⁹ There has been some question over the years as to whether §24.2-110 prohibits contributing to candidates, placing bumper stickers on private vehicles, and the like. Being in a job involving politics, it is natural that a registrar will have political leanings and may have come from a campaign background. While the law does not require a registrar to be apolitical, **registrars must perform their duties in a nonpartisan manner**.¹²⁰ In particular, registrars should do nothing that might cause the public to perceive favoritism for one candidate or party over another. The Code expressly prohibits the general registrar from selectively soliciting registration or offering incentives for applications.¹²¹

I.2.5 Notary Services

Any person appointed as a member of an electoral board or a general registrar shall be **prohibited from collecting any fee as a notary** during the time of such appointment.¹²²

Any person appointed as a deputy registrar or officer of election shall be prohibited from collecting any fee as a notary for services relating to the administration of elections or the election laws.¹²³

¹¹⁵ See Va. Const. [art. II §7](#).

¹¹⁶ See [§24.2-120](#).

¹¹⁷ *Id.*

¹¹⁸ See [§49-11](#).

¹¹⁹ See [§2.2-3601](#).

¹²⁰ See 2003 Op. Va. Att'y Gen. 68 ([Oct. 17, 2003](#)).

¹²¹ See [§24.2-114\(2\)](#).

¹²² See [§47.1-19\(C\)](#).

¹²³ *Id.*



I.2.6 Removal

The local electoral board may, by a recorded majority vote and on notice, petition the circuit court where a general registrar serves for removal from office.¹²⁴ Likewise, the State Board of Elections, by a majority vote and on notice, may petition the circuit court where a general registrar serves for removal from office.¹²⁵

If a petition for removal has been filed against a general registrar, they may apply to the Virginia Division of Risk Management to assign counsel to their defense and any subsequent appeal. The website for the Virginia Division of Risk Management can be found [the Division of Risk Management website](#).



Law Note on Reappointment or Removal of a General Registrar

The Attorney General's 2023 opinion stated, "...[A]n electoral board may choose not to reappoint an incumbent general registrar, provided the decision to not reappoint an incumbent general registrar does not rest on impermissible grounds, including political motivations, and provided the process for appointing a new general registrar is objective and apolitical." For more information, see [2023 Op. Va. Att'y Gen. 23 \(May 15, 2023\)](#).

If a vacancy occurs in the office of general registrar, or the incumbent general registrar becomes unable to perform the duties of the office for an extended period, the electoral board may appoint an acting general registrar.¹²⁶ The electoral board and ELECT may arrange for the acting general registrar to receive the compensation designated for the general registrar. However, ELECT will only reimburse the locality for the salary of one incumbent of the position. The locality may still be liable for the salary of a temporarily incapacitated general registrar, under the normal personnel and compensation policies of the locality. The local government attorney or personnel officer should be able to advise the electoral board and the registrar of the appropriate interim compensation policies.

I.2.7 Compensation

The General Assembly sets the salary of general registrars in the annual Appropriations Act. The current plan is based on factors such as population and a cost-of-living adjustment in certain urban localities.

To determine the appropriate salary, ELECT uses the most recent official population estimate from the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia.¹²⁷ The annual compensation of an incumbent may not be decreased due to declining population during her\his term.

¹²⁴ See [§24.2-109](#).

¹²⁵ *Id.* (Referencing [§24.2-234.1](#)).

¹²⁶ See [§24.2-110](#).

¹²⁷ See [State Budget](#). This is determined every July 1.



The general registrar must receive the annual compensation set by the General Assembly and may not be paid less¹²⁸ unless when taking an unpaid leave of absence brought about by extenuating circumstances. During any unpaid leave, the chief deputy or another appropriately qualified individual is appointed the acting general registrar by the electoral board.¹²⁹

Any local governing body may choose to pay the general registrar a salary supplement.¹³⁰ The general registrar who believes such a supplement is warranted should approach the local governing body with a proposal and justification for the supplement.

The registrar's salary must be paid by the local governing body. The salary amount (not including any supplement) is generally reimbursed to the locality by ELECT on an annual basis.

The locality must provide the same benefits to the general and deputy registrars and staff as provided to other employees of the locality.¹³¹ The local governing body has discretion to determine which benefit programs it can provide (e.g., retirement, medical, dental). Costs of these programs are borne entirely by the locality and/or the registrar, with no reimbursement from the Virginia Treasury.

The local governing body shall reimburse the general registrar and electoral board member for reasonable expenses and for mileage at the rate paid to members of the General Assembly when these are incurred while on official business. In the case of a dispute, ELECT will approve or disapprove the reimbursement.¹³² These expenses are not reimbursed from the Virginia Treasury. "Reasonable expenses" include, but are not limited to, costs for:

- Adequately training the registrar's staff. This includes the costs of training in the use of computers and other technology, and the cost of the general registrar to participate in the General Registrar Certification Program.
- Adequately training the officers of election.
- Conducting elections as required by the Code.
- Conducting voter education.¹³³

I.2.8 Certification

Virginia Code §24.2-103 requires the State Board of Elections, through the Department of Elections, to conduct a certification program for general registrars. General registrars have 12 months from their initial appointment and any subsequent reappointment to receive certification from the Department of Elections by completing at least the minimum number of course credits. An electoral board may ask the Board for an extension of three (3) months if the general registrar is unable to complete the certification program within the required timeframe. The Board will consider any request for an extension on a case-by-case basis.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ See [§24.2-111](#).

¹²⁹ See [§24.2-110](#).

¹³⁰ See [§24.2-111](#).

¹³¹ *Id.*

¹³² *Id.*

¹³³ *Id.*

¹³⁴ See [§24.2-103\(C\)](#).



The electoral board is required to provide proper notice and may, by a majority vote, institute proceedings for the removal of any general registrar who fails to receive or maintain certification as required by the Board in the circuit court where the general registrar serves.¹³⁵

I.2.9 Attendance/Absences

Any general registrar who will be out of the office for any reason for *more than* two weeks should provide written or email notice to their ERS liaison. (Emphasis added.) The Department of Elections will need to know who to contact in the office during the general registrar's extended absence.

Each locality's general registrar and electoral board secretary are individually responsible for ensuring that ELECT s receives the required notification. If an electoral board member or general registrar is absent due to unforeseen circumstances, the responsible person present, or staff, must send this notification. Notification should be in advance for any foreseeable absence.

General registrars should expect to work considerable overtime (evenings and weekends) during the busy election season and at other times throughout the year. The electoral board and general registrar should discuss expectations for whether compensatory time will be granted or if the registrar has scheduling flexibility. The general registrar and electoral board may consult the locality's human resource office for guidelines on overtime.

I.2.9.1 Jury Duty Exemption

General registrars, electoral board members, and the staff of either may request exemption from jury service starting 90 days before an election through 10 days after certification or the conclusion of any recount or contest.¹³⁶ Your local government attorney can assist you with communicating an exemption request to the court.

I.2.10 Deputy registrars

In localities with a population of over 15,500, the law requires at least one deputy registrar who serves at least one day a week. In localities with a population under 15,500, the law requires only one substitute registrar who can assume the duties of the general registrar in an emergency and who shall assist the general registrar upon request.¹³⁷ ELECT requests that if there are multiple deputies in a locality that the locality designates and communicates a "chief" deputy registrar to ensure there is a backup contact for the locality in the event the general registrars is not able to perform their duties.

A specific provision for Russell County requires at least one full-time deputy registrar who shall serve in the office of the general registrar.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ See [§24.2-109\(A\)](#).

¹³⁶ See [§8.01-341.1\(15\)](#).

¹³⁷ See [§24.2-112](#).

¹³⁸ *Id.*



No legal requirement can guarantee the availability of a well-trained deputy able to assume the registrar's duties in the registrar's absence and assist with the daily work of the office. The locality must provide funds to enable the general registrar to obtain the authorized staffing.¹³⁹ The electoral board sets the number of deputy registrars based on the statutory formula and the local governing body must fund them in a manner consistent with federal minimum wage requirements and applicable state and local compensation standards.

The general registrar has hiring and supervisory authority over the deputy registrars and establishes their duties. The electoral board has no authority to dictate whom the general registrar hires as assistants or deputy.¹⁴⁰ Like ELECT staff and the general registrar, the general registrar's staff must remain nonpartisan and is subject to a prohibition on volunteer campaign activity.¹⁴¹ The electoral board has ultimate responsibility for administering elections according to law and ensuring that the general registrar staff is competent and qualified to carry out their tasks.¹⁴²

1.2.10.1 Qualifications

Although a deputy registrar must be a registered voter of the Commonwealth, he or she does not have to be registered in the locality served. However, candidates who **are** residents of the locality may be given preference in hiring.¹⁴³

Localities may mutually agree to share a deputy registrar among two or more localities.¹⁴⁴ The localities must work out the details of when and where the deputy will work and how the deputy will be compensated. This arrangement may be ongoing, used for special short-term needs, or as part of a "backup plan" for emergencies. A paid deputy registrar cannot have a family relationship with the general registrar (i.e. cannot be the spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling, child, or grandchild of the general registrar).¹⁴⁵

1.2.10.2 Hiring, Compensation, and Benefits

Deputy registrars are normally hired as employees of the locality,¹⁴⁶ unless they are unpaid (in which case they are not considered state or local employees).¹⁴⁷ As such, hiring should be conducted under the personnel policies of the locality.

1.2.10.3 Term of Office

The electoral board sets the terms for deputy registrars. However, their terms may not extend beyond the term of the general registrar.¹⁴⁸ The general registrar should be familiar with local personnel policies that could affect their deputies, such as restrictions on termination without cause. The personnel director and/or attorney for the locality can provide information and guidance.

¹³⁹ See 2014 Op. Va. Att'y Gen. 46 ([Oct. 1, 2014](#)).

¹⁴⁰ See [§24.2-112](#).

¹⁴¹ See [§§24.2-103\(E\), 24.2-110, 24.2-112](#). See also 2003 Op. Va. Att'y Gen. 68 ([Oct. 17, 2003](#)).

¹⁴² See Va. Const. [art. II, § 8](#). See also [§24.2-109](#).

¹⁴³ See [§24.2-112](#).

¹⁴⁴ *Id.*

¹⁴⁵ *Id.*

¹⁴⁶ *Id.*

¹⁴⁷ See [§24.2-122](#).

¹⁴⁸ See [§24.2-112](#).



1.2.10.4 Unpaid Deputy Registrar

The general registrar may appoint deputy registrars who agree to serve without pay.¹⁴⁹ These volunteer deputies were used extensively before implementation of the National Voter Registration Act, for example, to staff registration sites at libraries and other public locations. As per §24.2-122, “deputy registrars who agree to serve without pay are not state or local employees for any purpose.” Due to the increased complexity and security required for automated processes, appointment of unpaid deputy registrars should be reserved for highly qualified and experienced persons such as retired elections personnel.

1.2.11 Other Staff and Volunteers

The general registrar may decide to use other staff in the office on an ongoing or occasional basis.¹⁵⁰ Such staff may not exercise the powers of the general or a deputy registrar.¹⁵¹ For example, they may not decide on whether to accept or deny a voter registration application. Localities may have restrictions on hiring or compensating family members. Please keep in mind that pursuant to §24.2-124.1, each general registrar, local electoral boards and all officers of the general registrar are prohibited from soliciting, accepting, using, or disposing of any money, grants, property, or services given by a private individual or non-governmental entity for the purposes of funding voter education and outreach programs, voter registration programs, or any other expense incurred in the conduct of an election. While the use of existing permitted volunteer activities in Code is allowed, under the well-established rules of statutory construction, any other volunteer activities that are not enumerated in Code may be construed as impermissible. Specific questions regarding compliance of §24.2-124.1 should be directed to a locality’s counsel to remain in compliance.¹⁵² Consulting the local administration before adding staff can prevent potentially serious problems for the electoral board and general registrar.

1.2.12 Prohibited Activities

Registrars are prohibited by law from engaging in certain activities (note that paid deputy registrars are subject to the same restrictions as the general registrar, with limited exception):¹⁵³

- A general registrar may not hold any other elected or appointed office while serving as general registrar. However, with the consent of the electoral board, they may undertake other duties that do not conflict with their duties as general registrar.¹⁵⁴
- A general registrar may not run for any elected office filled by the voters of their locality, either during the term of their appointment, or for six months after their term ends.¹⁵⁵
- A general registrar may not serve as an officer of election (note the exception for deputy registrars provided in [§24.2-112](#)).¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*

¹⁵⁰ *Id.*

¹⁵¹ See [§24.2-114](#).

¹⁵² See [§24.2-124.1](#).

¹⁵³ See [§24.2-112](#).

¹⁵⁴ See [§24.2-110](#).

¹⁵⁵ *Id.*

¹⁵⁶ *Id.*



A general registrar cannot collect fees from notarization during their appointment. (See 1.2.5). A general registrar may not offer legal, financial, or other advice. Voter registration applicants sometimes will ask questions that present issues outside the scope of the official responsibilities of the general registrar (e.g., the tax, financial aid, insurance, or other legal consequences of declaring a voting residence in a particular locality). Complex questions that may present nonelection issues should be referred to your county or city attorney for guidance.

The law provides that no private business enterprise may be conducted in the office of the general registrar.¹⁵⁷

The general registrar is prohibited by law from serving as the chair or other officer of any political party committee, at the state, local, or district level.¹⁵⁸ A general registrar may not serve as a worker (paid or volunteer) in the campaign of any candidate running for an office elected in whole or part by the voters the general registrar serves.¹⁵⁹ Deputy registrars also cannot serve as a paid or volunteer worker for a campaign for an office elected by the voters served, or serve as the chair or other officer of any political party. Unpaid deputies are not subject to these restrictions,¹⁶⁰ but any campaign work may not interfere with nonpartisan service to the public.

General registrars and staff must avoid any activity that can be construed as a conflict with the nonpartisan nature required of every registrar's office (i.e., the optics of anything that might cause the public to question whether the registrar's duties are carried out in a nonpartisan, fair, and legal manner). For example, registrars and their staff should decline invitations from political parties to offer registration applications to voters at partisan events.¹⁶¹

Absolutely no political campaigning, including collecting petition signatures or distributing referenda information, is allowed in the office of the registrar. Electoral board members and staff are expressly prohibited from collecting candidate petition signatures in any public building owned or leased by the locality served.¹⁶²

A general registrar is often asked to express an opinion on an issue or candidate. Registrars must refrain from making any comment that can be construed as partisan.¹⁶³ Registrars should express the facts in an unbiased way if compelled to answer.

General registrars should immediately call law enforcement when an individual threatens or uses force to disrupt the discharge of his\her duty. Further, any complaint or allegation of unlawful conduct covered under Title 24.2 that election officials are witness to or hear reported by citizens must be reported to the attorney for the Commonwealth of the county or city in which the alleged violation occurred.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁷ See [§24.2-411](#).

¹⁵⁸ See [§24.2-110](#).

¹⁵⁹ *Id.*

¹⁶⁰ *Id.*

¹⁶¹ See [§24.2-114\(4\)](#). See also 2003 Op. Va. Att'y Gen. 68 ([Oct. 17, 2003](#)), and 2005 Op. Va. Att'y Gen. 30 ([Apr. 5, 2005](#)).

¹⁶² See [§24.2-106.1](#).

¹⁶³ See 2003 Op. Va. Att'y Gen. 68 ([Oct. 17, 2003](#)).

¹⁶⁴ See [§§24.2-1002](#) and [24.2-1019](#).



In making speeches to groups or lectures to students, general registrars should never express opinions regarding candidates, officeholders, or issues.¹⁶⁵

A general registrar may not selectively solicit voter registration or offer anything of value in exchange for a voter registration application.¹⁶⁶ A registrar may only conduct voter registration in public places open to all citizens and at hours announced prior to holding the registration.¹⁶⁷

A general registrar must provide at least three days' advance notice for other times and locations for voter registration outside of those established in §§ 24.2-411, 24.2-411.2, 24.2-411.3, and 24.2-412, e.g., a general registrar's voter registration booth at a local farmer's market on a Saturday.¹⁶⁸

Registrars may provide nonpartisan education to any interested group about the need or process used to register and vote. If a registrar addresses one party's function, that registrar must also be available to any other party, independent candidate, or organization.

The registrar's duty to educate and encourage registration generally supports a variety of activities:

- Preparing posters and fliers encouraging voter registration.
- Posting signs encouraging registration.
- Purchasing media advertisements encouraging registration.
- Placing application and voter guide displays in state designated voter registration agencies and other public locations.
- Offering extended hours and additional locations for voter registration.

Registrars are prohibited from soliciting, accepting, using, or disposing of any money, grants, property, or services given by a private individual or nongovernmental entity for the purpose of funding voter education and outreach programs, voter registration programs, or any other expense incurred in the conduct of elections.¹⁶⁹ However, it is important to note the prohibition does not apply to: (i) the operation of polling places or voter satellite offices in a facility furnished by a prohibited entity; or (ii) the acceptance of federal government grants that are funded in whole or part by donations from a prohibited entity.

1.2.13 Working Alongside Local Government

The general registrar must often work closely with the city or county's local governing body and other local government officials. Good relationships with local government officials are important to ensuring that adequate resources and support are provided to the general registrar and electoral board.



Best Practice

The general registrar and electoral board should discuss the amount of time and resources that should be directed to locality-specific activities, such as participation in leadership teams and study committees.

¹⁶⁵ See 2003 Op. Va. Att'y Gen. 68 ([Oct. 17, 2003](#)).

¹⁶⁶ See [§24.2-114\(2\)](#).

¹⁶⁷ See [§24.2-412\(B\)](#).

¹⁶⁸ See [§24.2-415](#).

¹⁶⁹ See [§24.2-124.1](#).



However, the voter registration and election administration processes must remain separated from the local political structure to avoid the appearance of undue influence or bias. Expectations should be communicated to the locality to avoid misunderstandings and potential unintended consequences.

Registrars may find it helpful to identify key individuals in a locality with whom to consult on a variety of issues, including human resource and payroll management, information technology support, budgeting and purchasing, legal and legislative support, the locality's ADA Coordinator, mapping and street-file maintenance, i.e., a GIS resource, public information dissemination, public safety and traffic management, and school division support. The general registrar should also develop a working relationship with the local Circuit Court Clerk.

I.2.14 Management of the VERIS Directory and Local Contact Information

The Department of Elections will communicate with general registrars, electoral board members, general registrar staff, and other local government officials according to the data stored and maintained in VERIS. Beyond issuing Official ELECT Advisories to the broader elections community, ELECT uses email and direct telephone contact as its main communication vehicles when engaging with elections officials at the local level. ELECT relies heavily on fast and accurate acquisition of contact information from the VERIS Directory. It is imperative that the VERIS Directory be accurately maintained at all times and especially as the transition of local personnel occurs. For more information on maintaining the VERIS Directory, review ELECT's VERIS Directory Step by Step Instructions.

Furthermore, the general registrar is responsible for keeping the Department of Elections informed of the names, residence, mailing addresses, and home and business telephone numbers for each electoral board member.¹⁷⁰ It is also important to inform the Department of Elections of the email address, party affiliation, term start and end dates, and office held for each member.

Form: The Electoral Board Information Form (SBE-106) found in the FormsWarehouse should be used to provide this updated information. This form should now be uploaded using the designated GR/EB Onboard/Offboard/Update option found in Jira.

¹⁷⁰ See [§24.2-106](#).



I.3 THE VOTER REGISTRATION OFFICE

The local governing body is required by the Code of Virginia to provide the general registrar with clearly marked and adequately furnished public office space within the locality, including postage, stationery, equipment, office supplies, and necessary communications services (e.g. phone, fax, and internet).¹⁷¹ In addition, the locality must provide adequate funding for computers and support, supplies, and computer training for the general registrar and the staff, as well as sufficient funding for the general registrar to participate in the Board Certification Program.¹⁷² The Commonwealth of Virginia does not reimburse the locality for training expenses for general registrars, deputy registrars or officers of election.¹⁷³

The general registrar and local electoral board are responsible for securing sufficient funding from the local governing body for the conduct of elections. The locality must pay the entire "cost of conducting elections,"¹⁷⁴ but the Commonwealth pays or reimburses some or all these expenses:

- the general registrar's base salary¹⁷⁵
- electoral board salaries¹⁷⁶
- electoral board expenses (to the extent possible)¹⁷⁷
- the VERIS system and related expenses
- registration and absentee related forms

I.3.1 Contact Information and Public Access

The general registrar must ensure that the public can easily find contact information for the local voter registration office. For example, it is the general registrar's responsibility to list the office telephone number in the telephone directory under "Voter Registration" or "Elections."¹⁷⁸

The general registrar's office must be clearly marked.¹⁷⁹ Both exterior and interior signs should make the registration office easy for citizens to locate. All voter registration offices must be accessible to persons with disabilities and the elderly.¹⁸⁰ A statement of accessibility, a TTY number (it can be the locality's TTY number), and a number to call to request special accommodations are to be included in all advertising.

Pursuant to §24.2-418, current or past members of the electoral boards, the general registrar, deputy registrars, employees of the general registrar, and officers of election may provide a PO Box located in the Commonwealth, in addition to their residential address, which will be provided in lieu of their residential address on lists provided under §24.2-405, 24.2-406, 24.2-444, 24.2-706, or 24.2-710.¹⁸¹

¹⁷¹ See [§24.2-411](#).

¹⁷² See [§24.2-111](#).

¹⁷³ *Id.*

¹⁷⁴ See [§24.2-600](#).

¹⁷⁵ See [§24.2-111](#).

¹⁷⁶ See [§24.2-108](#).

¹⁷⁷ *Id.*

¹⁷⁸ See [§24.2-411](#).

¹⁷⁹ *Id.*

¹⁸⁰ See [§24.2-413](#).

¹⁸¹ See [§§24.2-110](#) and [24.2-418](#).



I.3.2 Operating Hours

All general registrar offices shall be open a minimum of five days each week.¹⁸²

For voter registration conducted outside regular office hours, the general registrar must give at least three days advance notice by posting it on the official website of the locality and publishing it at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in that locality, if one is available, or announcing it at least twice on a television station serving that locality.¹⁸³

If the office has at least one full-time deputy, lunch hours should be staggered so that the office is open continuously during the operating hours for each locality. A person working alone who must leave the office locked and unoccupied should put a note on the door giving the time of return. For example, "Back at 1:15 P.M.," and *not* "Back in 10 minutes."

In addition to normal office hours, each office *must* be open during the following times:

- On any day that has a 7:00 P.M. filing deadline with the local election office¹⁸⁴
 - Closing time for the office on that day shall be 7:00 P.M.
- On the final day of registration before any election¹⁸⁵
 - The registration books will close to in person registration at the office's normal closing time, but no earlier than 5:00 P.M.¹⁸⁶
 - The office must be open a minimum of eight hours that day.¹⁸⁷
 - If the last day falls on an official holiday, the next day the office is open for business must be considered the final day for registration.
 - The general registrar must give notice of the date, hours, and locations for registering on this final day of registration, at least 10 days in advance.¹⁸⁸
 - Such notice must be posted on the official website of the county or city and published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the county or city, if one is available.¹⁸⁹
- On the first *and* second Saturdays immediately preceding all elections.
 - The office must be open a minimum of eight hours *between* the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. to provide in-person absentee voting; however, the office must be open until 5:00 P.M. on the last Saturday before the election.¹⁹⁰



¹⁸² See [§24.2-411](#).

¹⁸³ See [§24.2-415](#).

¹⁸⁴ See [§§24.2-503](#), [24.2-507](#), and [24.2-510](#).

¹⁸⁵ See [§§24.2-416](#) and [24.2-414](#).

¹⁸⁶ See [§24.2-414.1](#).

¹⁸⁷ See [§24.2-414](#).

¹⁸⁸ See [§24.2-415\(A\)](#).

¹⁸⁹ *Id.*

¹⁹⁰ See [§24.2-701](#).



The registrar's office is both an official registration site and a polling place with publicly advertised authorized hours. There may be occasions when the registrar is working in the office on a day or time when the office is closed, particularly during the pre-election period. If a citizen comes to the office during this time, you cannot allow them to apply to register to vote, apply for an absentee ballot, or cast an absentee ballot,¹⁹¹ although you may offer them an application to complete and return by mail or when the office is open. Please suggest a pleasant reminder to the 24/7 availability of registering online through the Department of Elections' Citizen Portal as another option. These restrictions are necessary to ensure that all voters are treated fairly and uniformly.

I.3.3 Closings for Training

- The general registrar may close the office for off-site training purposes, provided that:
 - The office is closed for off-site training for no more than four days each year.
 - **Notice of the closure is posted at least 72 hours in advance and is posted on the official website of the locality and at least two public places.**¹⁹²
- The general registrar may close the office for training in the office, provided that:
 - This is done no more than once a quarter.
 - The period of closure does not exceed four hours.
 - In this situation, no advance notice need be provided.
- The general registrar **cannot** close the office for either off-site or in-office training:
 - Within the 7 days immediately before and immediately after an election.¹⁹³
 - During the 45-day period for in-person absentee voting.¹⁹⁴
 - On the final registration day.¹⁹⁵
 - On a Candidate filing deadline specified in Chapter 9.3 of the Code of Virginia.¹⁹⁶

I.3.4 Holidays

The general registrar's office follows the same holiday schedule as that observed by the local governing body – unless that holiday schedule conflicts with one of the mandated open dates specified by law.

¹⁹¹ See [§§24.2-415](#) and [24.2-412\(A\)](#).

¹⁹² See [§24.2-411\(C\)](#).

¹⁹³ *Id.*

¹⁹⁴ *Id.* See also [§24.2-701](#).

¹⁹⁵ *Id.* See also [§§24.2-414](#) and [24.2-414.1](#).

¹⁹⁶ *Id.* See also [§ 24.2-945](#) et seq.



State Holidays and Election Deadlines

Q: What happens when a major election deadline falls on a state holiday?

A: Outside of §24.2, ELECT may reference §1-210 Computation of time in Virginia subparagraph C to provide localities with direction. C states that “when an act of the General Assembly specifies a maximum period of time in which a legal action may be brought and the last day or part of a day on which the clerk’s office is closed as authorized by an act of the General Assembly, the act may be performed on the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or day or part of a day on which the clerk’s office is closed as authorized by an act of the General Assembly.”

I.4 RECORDS RETENTION AND MAINTENANCE

Record retention is a critical step in office management. General registrars and staff must manage a multitude of records, all of which are critical to the operation of the office and the locality’s elections. In all cases, localities are to maintain detailed records of all receipts, invoices, and documents related to expenditures for a period as specified by the Library of Virginia and make them available to ELECT or to state or federal auditors when requested. The Library of Virginia (LVA) has the authority to issue regulations governing the retention and disposition of state and local public records.¹⁹⁷ LVA has developed Records Retention & Disposition Schedules outlining the disposition of public records.¹⁹⁸ Please also see Chapter 9 (Records Access and Retention) for additional information.

Consult this schedule before a major shift in record keeping procedures to guarantee that record filing and storage is in accordance with law. Following the retention schedule and record maintenance best practices as outlined by LVA provides a safeguard against records deteriorating due to environmental factors or aging. Further, following best practices assists registrars and staff in finding records quickly to fulfill FOIA requests or any other requests for information.

I.5 GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATION ACT (STATE BUDGET)

ELECT is required to reimburse local governments for compensation of the general registrar and the three electoral board members, as appropriated by the General Assembly.¹⁹⁹ The annual compensation for the registrars and the board members is set in the Appropriations Act.²⁰⁰

ELECT’s Business Manager²⁰¹ annually establishes the authorized salaries of all general registrars and local electoral board members based on the local population salary levels and criteria stated in the Appropriations Act.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ See [§42.1-85](#).

¹⁹⁸ See [Library of Virginia](#).

¹⁹⁹ See [§§24.2-111](#) and [24.2-108](#).

²⁰⁰ See [State Budget](#).

²⁰¹ Contact fiscal@elections.virginia.gov.

²⁰² See [State Budget](#).



At the beginning of each fiscal year, authorized salary levels for the upcoming fiscal year are communicated to local finance offices and general registrars by way of a formal letter from ELECT Business Manager. To initiate the reimbursement process, ELECT's Business Manager sends an application for reimbursement form to each county/city fiscal department. The appropriate Local Fiscal Official completes and submits the completed application to ELECT's Fiscal Office. To this end, it is imperative that the registrar maintain and accurately update local fiscal contact information in VERIS.

As funding opportunities are released, general registrars and electoral board members are encouraged to follow the instructions provided by ELECT to ensure a timely and complete application for reimbursement.

Any material variances are investigated and resolved. Once resolved, ELECT Business Manager approves the application for processing. Any funds not needed for reimbursement at the end of the year revert to the General Fund for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

