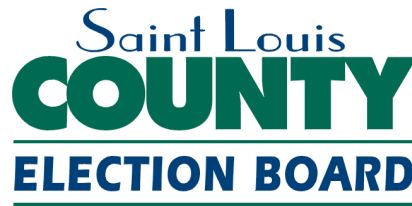


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Chair

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Commissioner

RICK STREAM  
Director of Elections



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Secretary

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ERIC FEY  
Director of Elections

Testimony before the United States Senate Rules and Administration Committee  
Presented by Rick Stream – July 22, 2020

Good Morning Senators. It is an honor to be here this morning. Thank you Senator Blunt for inviting me to testify. I am happy to be before you because the St. Louis County Board of Elections is proud of the work we have accomplished providing secure, accurate and fair elections during this unprecedented time.

The St. Louis County Board of Elections, as well as all 116 election authorities in the State of Missouri, is authorized by state statute. St. Louis County staffing is bi-partisan with equal members of both major parties working side-by-side to ensure accurate, efficient and fair elections. The Board is governed by four commissioners (two of each party nominated by the governor and confirmed by the State Senate). Two bi-partisan directors run the day-to-day operations. St. Louis County has one million residents and 750,000 registered voters. It is, by far, the largest election authority in the state of Missouri.

The St. Louis County Board of Elections has taken the following measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the safety of voters and poll workers while providing an opportunity for all voters to cast their ballots.

1. The Election Board has remained open to meet our statutory responsibilities to voters and candidates. Using St. Louis County Health Department guidelines, the office established protocols to continue working while keeping our employees safe and the election process moving forward: employee temperatures are taken immediately in the morning; employees socially distance with barriers in place where necessary; employees wear masks continuously and gloves when handling paper. All office surfaces are wiped down twice a day and employees have wipes for their work areas. These safety measures are also taken with any public interaction.
2. In a normal county-wide election, St. Louis County employs approximately 3,200 poll workers to fully staff the polls. These workers are trained so that they are current on the latest procedures and laws. Because of the pandemic, the Board established new procedures for in person training and developed online training courses which allowed many of our workers to take the class without leaving their home. We have recently moved exclusively to online training.
3. At the polling places, all poll workers wear masks and gloves and are instructed to wipe down surfaces with alcohol disinfectant. Hand sanitizer will be placed at each polling place for the voters to use and social distancing strips will be placed on the floors.

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

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4. Because of the hesitancy of poll workers to work - 71% of our poll workers are over the age of 60 - and numerous cancellations of private polling places, the Board reduced the number of polling locations for the June election to 160 from the March 10 Presidential Preference Primary level of 360. We were able to adequately staff at the reduced level and avoid long lines that plagued other election authorities around the country. Our plan is to increase the number of polling places to 200 for the August statewide primary and then a larger number for the November Presidential election. Nearly all polling places are in public buildings within a seven minute drive from the nearest polling place or public transportation stop.
5. Last year, after a rigorous Request for Proposal process managed by our staff, our Board of Commissioners purchased new voting equipment. We determined that the ballot on demand system is the most secure method available. That decision has had an immediate effect on our ability to protect voters during the pandemic. There are no pre-printed ballots. The paper ballot is generated at the polling place based on the voter's name and address. Except for a brief initialing by two gloved pollworkers, the only person touching the ballot is the voter. The system was purchased for \$3 million less than the touch screen predecessor purchased 13 years earlier.
6. This year, Governor Mike Parson signed a new voting law into effect for the remainder of 2020. It provides a specific absentee voting option related to Covid-19 and adds a mail-in ballot option. Our Commissioners have sent a letter to voters explaining their voting options. To date, our office has experienced a five-fold increase in the number of absentee ballot requests.
7. Because of the rapidly changing circumstances and our desire to communicate those changes to our voters, we are incurring unprecedented costs. We hope to be reimbursed from the CARES Act. The Missouri Secretary of State's Office has provided resources for COVID-19 related expenses for personal protective equipment and supplies. While our expenses are going up and are unpredictable for the remainder of the year based on the trajectory of the pandemic, income and sales tax resources coming into the state and county have plummeted. Additional federal help might be necessary to meet these demands.

The St. Louis County Board of Elections continues to look for ways to be fiscally responsible and nimble while trying to improve our service to our voters and protect the election process during this unprecedented time.