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Activists involved in the battle for election integrity need to develop a sophisticated understanding of the key players in the administration of elections in their states. Michigan is notorious for having one of the most decentralized election systems in our country. Broken down, the three upper-level election positions are the Secretary of State, Board of State Canvassers, and Bureau of Elections. From there, the state is broken into county, city, and township segments. Michigan’s Secretary of State is Jocelyn Benson. “Michigan election law designates the Secretary of State as Michigan’s ‘chief election officer’ with supervisory control over local election officials in the performance of their election related duties.” This position is an elected position that holds a 4-year term, and is limited to 2 terms per officeholder. Essentially, the Secretary of State oversees the election process at the state and local level.

After the Secretary of State, there is a Board of Canvassers that work to screen “petitions filed by candidates seeking federal and state offices, minor parties, and groups that wish to place proposals on the statewide ballot. The Board members also arrange the ballot wording of the proposals, approve voting equipment for use in the state and certify the result of elections held statewide and in districts that cross county lines.” This board holds two Republican and two Democrat seats. Michigan’s official website clarifies that this position is appointed by the Governor and approved by the state Senate.

The last of the upper-level positions in Michigan’s electoral system is the Bureau of Elections. This department is directly underneath both the Secretary of State and the Board of Canvassers. The Bureau “accepts and reviews petition filings, conducts statewide instructional programs on elections, assists local election officials with their administrative duties, oversees the operation of Michigan’s Qualified Voter File system, publishes manuals and newsletters, and monitors legislation affecting the administration of elections.” Within this Bureau, there is a Director who, according to Michigan Law, is “appointed by the Secretary of State under civil service regulations.”

It is important to note that these three upper-level departments only have jurisdiction over election results and applications if the matters cross over multiple counties—like in a legislative or congressional seat that includes parts of multiple jurisdictions.

At the local level, Michigan breaks its jurisdiction down by county, city, and township. Starting with the county, there are 83 county clerks for the 83 counties statewide. These clerks “receive and canvass petitions for countywide and district offices which do not cross county lines and accept campaign finance disclosure reports from local candidates. In addition, the county clerks are responsible for training precinct inspectors and assisting with the administration of Michigan’s Qualified Voter File System.” County clerks are elected for a four-year term and on a partisan basis. Because of the decentralization of local election systems in Michigan, there is a Michigan Association of County Clerks that promotes communication between the 83 different clerks. Visit Michigan’s website for all information regarding County Clerk elections and applications.
Mirroring the upper-level positions, each county has a County Election Commission and a Boards of County Canvassers. The Election Commission is made up of the county clerk (see above), the chief judge of probate, and the county treasurer. The Commission is responsible for “furnishing specified election supplies (including ballots) for statewide August primaries, statewide November general elections and special primaries and elections held to fill vacancies.” Michigan Law explains that each member must be elected, and the eligibility for potential electors is laid out in the Michigan Constitution, Article IV, Section VI. The Boards of County Canvassers also hold two Republican and two Democrat seats, and they hold the responsibility of certifying “elections for local, countywide and district offices that are wholly contained within the county they serve.” To become one of these four members, you must be appointed through the recommendation of your party chairs.

Lastly, the City and Township level mirrors the county level structure, as it too has City and Township Clerks, City and Township Election Commissions, and a City and Township Board of Canvassers. All these positions are elected or appointed in the same fashion as the county, the only difference being strictly within their city or township jurisdiction.

The city and township clerks are “responsible for administering all federal, state, county and local elections.” The City and Township Election Commission is “composed of a city clerk, the city attorney, and the city assessor,” and then within the township, “composed of the township clerk and two township trustees.” These Commission members are “responsible for establishing precincts, assessing voting equipment needs, providing election supplies (including ballots), appointing precinct inspectors and carrying out other election related duties for their respective jurisdictions.” Finally, the City and Township Boards of Canvassers are, yet again, “composed of two Republican members and two Democratic members.” This Board is responsible for “canvassing elections conducted by the local jurisdiction.”

With a deeply decentralized election system in the state of Michigan, and nearly all positions being elected or appointed, it is best to visit either your county website for information regarding all applicatory needs, and the official Michigan website for this system breakdown and information regarding all upper-level positions. There are always applications to be made—even a week before an election—for election observers and poll watchers which can also be found on the official Michigan website.

Each Election Day, officers of elections answer questions and make decisions that matter.

Questions like:
- Why is the voter not on the list?
- Does this voter need to cast a provisional ballot?
- Are multiple election workers attending to those who are voting curbside?
The outcomes of situations like these not only can affect the results of close elections, but also can determine whether voters themselves have confidence in the system. This sentiment is at the heart of the democratic process and election integrity.

Although disputed elections sometimes generate headlines for ending up in the courts or the Secretary of State’s office, most disagreements over election processes do not rise to that level. Instead, the people who staff the polling places on Election Day and in the weeks leading up to Election Day handle these situations in early voting and mail-in ballots. Elections officers play a crucial role in ensuring the validity of each vote and the integrity of elections. Many do not know that when someone casts a ballot, it is counted—period. By the time problems reach beyond the walls of the polling place, it is often too late. The advantage of well-trained election officers is that they can handle problems before they become problems.

The move towards mass mail-in and early voting has boosted the need for well-trained and dedicated election officers. Even as we teach the value of voting in person on Election Day, we still need activists to play a role in running the process at early voting locations, processing absentee ballots, and reviewing and examining the late-arriving absentee ballots.

We at FreedomWorks have consistently heard that our activists who serve as election officers need a support network. As the leading conservative grassroots organization, our job is to ensure our activists have the resources and networks they need to succeed as election officers. As we train activists to become election officers, we will also build this network.

Believe it or not, election administration is an area that has historically been understaffed and underfunded. The left is familiar with this game; we need our people on the inside—all the more reason to get involved today.
You can take steps right now to play a part in our elections from the inside. With many elections offices seeking new people to apply, activists have the opportunity to get involved in this process—right now—to improve the future of our country and the integrity of the election system. Let’s not wake up in October of 2022 frantically trying to fill the few election administration spots available before the 2022 midterms. **Let’s Act Now.**

1. **Reach out to your County Party chairs**
   a. Initiate a conversation with them. Form a friendship.
   b. Express an interest in getting involved in elections and applying to be an election official or poll worker. It is likely that the political parties in your jurisdiction provide lists of those who want to be elections officers. Ask to be included on this list.
   c. Ask where the most help is needed, and where any problems are. County Party chairs will have a good sense of these issues.
   d. Get to know the members of your local Election Boards. Become acquainted with others who have served as elections officers.

2. **Find the application to be an election officer or election observer on your county’s website and fill it out!** We need independent-minded people as officers of elections.

3. **Even if you talk with your County Party chair and are included in your County Party’s list of potential elections officers, you still should apply on the website.**

4. **After you apply, if you do not hear anything, continue to follow up with the County Board of Elections. Make the occasional phone call and email. Offer to come in for an interview, if you like. Keep yourself on their minds.**

5. **Recruit your friends and family do the same thing. The more, the merrier! Everyone has something to contribute, and we can learn from each other.**

6. **Stay in touch with FreedomWorks. Keep us updated on everything. (See Part III for more)**
   a. Let us know how your progress towards becoming an election officer or election observer is going.
   b. What are you hearing from others?
   c. What changes could be made to improve the election administration process in your area?
For many conservatives, this is new territory. As you get involved in the process of election administration, here is a partial list of things to think about, both in and out of election season:

1. **What are your state’s election laws that govern:**
   a. Emergency extensions of voting hours (Ex. if there is a power outage)
   b. The prompt counting and security of ballots—machine or paper—during and after the polls close
   c. Procedures for ensuring that all elections officials are in compliance with state law
   d. What to do when a problem is identified the day of voting

2. **What nonprofit organizations are active in registering voters and performing other election-related activities in your community? Are conservatives well represented in these organizations?**

3. **What problems have occurred in past elections in your state? What have you learned from your conversations with others who have worked to administer elections?**

4. **What is the process for documenting all hotline calls and written reports that identify potential issues as voting is on-going?**

5. **What is the process of contacting election attorneys, the State Boards and Commissions, and law enforcement to prevent illegal activities from occurring during voting? Is this process explained accurately beforehand?**

6. **What does your state do to remove deceased and inactive voters from its lists? How can volunteers assist in this process?**

7. **What is the process for verifying the registration of new voters? How can volunteers assist in this process?**

8. **What is the process for protecting vulnerable voters from exploitation, and is this process being followed? Especially considering pandemic related changes to voting practices, plans need to be developed to protect these vulnerable voters:**
   a. Those residing in nursing homes or assisted living facilities
   b. Those with disabilities who require assistance in voting
   c. Those who are receiving care in hospitals
   d. Those who are homeless or living in shelters
The battle for election integrity is fundamental. For far too long, the left has dominated the election administration space. Just as conservatives must reform and reclaim the educational system, the bureaucracy of government, and the corporate culture in America, so must we involve ourselves in the administration of our elections. The good news is that there are many of us, and everyone has a part to play. This toolkit does not cover every scenario; it intends to provide an overview of states’ election infrastructure and the role that elections officers play in it; to shape activists’ thinking as they work to involve themselves as elections officers and learn more about election laws.

Here is what you can do right now:

1. Visit FreedomWorks.org/ElectionProtection and sign up for election integrity updates.
2. Reach out to your County Part chair and ask to be included on his or her list of elections officers.
3. Apply to become an elections officer on your county’s website.
4. Research your state’s election laws and regulations.
5. Befriend your County Board of Elections members and always seek new opportunities to assist.
6. Keep FreedomWorks in the loop!

Working together, FreedomWorks activists will secure our elections for years to come.