



MEMORANDUM

To: SOE Management Team

From: Peter Antonacci
Supervisor of Elections

Date: January 24, 2019

Regarding: What Went Wrong

As previously mentioned, during the last six weeks I've carefully observed office conventions and operations particularly in context of the November 2018 General Election. Enclosed are my thoughts on that election and all that happened. Your feedback is welcome anytime in person or at our staff meeting.

Overview

The embarrassing problems that occurred during the 2018 General Election in Broward County have been well-documented by the public media and the Broward Canvassing Board (See Attached). It serves little purpose to restate those problems save to focus on the underlying causes. The purpose of this memorandum is therefore to identify underlying causes and to chart a path going forward our shared good ensuring efficient operations, smooth elections and a restoration of public confidence.

During my brief tenure, I have attempted to identify the underlying causes of the systemic problems within the operations of this office. In my view, these underlying causes are fundamentally and primarily one of management failure. Deficient management led to a persistent shortage of staff, a systemic lack of cross-training, planning and budgeting errors. Both of these items, as noted below, led to unnecessary and avoidable cost over-runs as well as very public breakdowns in operations. It is also important to note at this point that I have observed good things in the office as well and the most notable is the dedication and work ethic of the majority of the SOE team.

The causes and following actions are:

1. Failure to heed warning signs of high voter enthusiasm prior to and during this elections cycle. Again, driven almost exclusively by failed management, the consequences of this heedlessness were budget shortfalls, insufficient staffing and insufficient numbers of vote tabulators. These failures led to near chaotic conditions on Election Day and the ensuing recount.
 - a. **As a front-and-center example, the office incurred costs well in excess of \$1 million over budget expectations and most of these cost over-runs were both foreseeable and avoidable.** While the Broward County Commission has gratefully agreed to cover these

overruns, the Supervisor of Elections' Office must budget realistically for the 2020 Elections based on assumptions commonly shared by election officials and other observers around Florida. To that end, we are focusing much of our energies on budget preparation and analysis for the critical 2020 elections.

- b. The Supervisor of Elections currently has 72 authorized positions. At the time of the General Elections, approximately 15% of those positions were vacant. These vacancies – across multiple departments – led to systemic internal issues, chaos and a fundamental lack of trained employees available to achieve the job at hand. While temporary workers at the polls are essential, staffing elections with permanent, well- trained employees is absolutely critical. The Supervisor of Elections will train and maintain staff at authorized levels in order to properly service the needs of the 2020 Election and with an eye on the past failures, will make a top priority to ensure that vacancies are filled with highly trained and cross trained personnel.
- c. In order to meet voter demand, the office was required to buy 100 precinct level voting machines between the Primary and General Elections and rent four high speed tabulators after the General Election to handle recount demands. Plainly, in advance of 2020, the Supervisor of Elections must guarantee that sufficient voting equipment is operational and ready to deploy. The result of this planning failure was on painful display on Election Night and the recount.
- d. Further evidence of persistently poor management, it is clear that the office staff tends to be siloed into their own work spaces. During the recount, the Supervisor of Elections was forced to hire 20 temporary employees in order to feed the tabulation machines because staff members were not cross trained to accomplish this very trainable skill. This not only resulted in operational shortcomings but cost over-runs as well. In advance of 2020, the office staff will be cross trained for efficiency's sake and to avoid the unnecessary and avoidable costs of temporary workers. Further, by ensuring full-staffing and adequate cross-training, we will not only realize a more efficient operation but save taxpayers money as well.
- e. Every successful election is built on sound planning and preparation; and while some parts of the office functioned well in November, insufficient planning and preparation in the tabulation of votes reflected badly on the overall operations of the Office. Future planning and preparation will be vigorous. We will work to improve intra-office communications, expand internal training and cross-training opportunities, prioritize reducing turnover and ensure that every single employee is well-trained, cross trained and fully prepared for each election. One stark example that stands out and is the direct result of poor planning and evaluation is the fact that between the August Primary and the General Election 875,000 Election Day ballots were purchased. It is important to recognize that this number far exceeds even the most widely optimistic number of needed ballots by a significant margin. As fewer than 225,000 ballots we cast on Election Day, this alone cost taxpayers an unnecessary and avoidable \$1 million. As noted throughout this document, this office will redouble efforts to make realistic, fiscally prudent planning estimations in the future.



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Conclusions

In hindsight, it is without surprise that there were consistent failures in the preparation and execution of the most fundamental duties of this office. After observation it became readily apparent that these errors were caused by the simple fact of management deficiencies which led to predictable failures and preventable cost overruns.