



## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction

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**Abstract** As the American election administration landscape changes as a result of major court cases, national and state legislation, changes in professionalism, and the evolution of equipment and security, so must the work of on-the-ground practitioners change. This Open Access title presents a series of open access case studies designed to highlight practical responses to these changes from the national, state, and local levels. This book is designed to be a companion piece to *The Future of Election Administration*, which surveys these critical dimensions of elections from the perspectives of the most forward-thinking practitioner, policy, advocacy, and research experts and leaders in these areas today. Drawing upon principles of professionalism and the practical work that is required to administer elections, this book lifts up the voices and experiences of practitioners from around the country to describe, analyze, and anticipate the key areas of election administration systems on which students, researchers, advocates, policy makers, and practitioners should focus.

**Keywords** Election • Administration • Policy

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*The Future of Election Administration: Cases and Conversations* raises up the voices of election administrators from the local, state, and national levels across the country, as well as vendors and other experts involved in elections. Their perspectives are essential to our understanding of the democratic process, and it is vitally important that their stories are shared widely. Election administration functions have been under siege since the 2000 presidential election, and media accounts of the most recent elections of 2016 and 2018 have, by and large, contributed to a negative narrative about what happens on the ground. Wait times or long lines, voter rolls that are not accurate up to the minute, intricate processes such as election security protocols, how we handle voters who do not appear to be eligible to vote, how we determine voting districts, the time it takes to count (and recount) votes, the deficiencies of aging equipment—all of these have been oversimplified and positioned as emblems of a broken system. These stories present a more balanced view and will be used, we hope, to advance an informed conversation across the field, in the media, and among the general public.

In this book, practitioner experts discuss and reflect on some of the most important aspects of election administration today, including the influence of history on current practices, construction of the current architecture of election administration, challenges related to technology and security, professionalism of the field, and innovative tools that help the field address current and future challenges. This book is a companion book to *The Future of Election Administration*, which lays out the experiences of practitioner, policy, advocacy, and research experts and leaders across election administration today. The authors address current and upcoming aspects of election administration systems, describing, analyzing, and anticipating the key areas of election administration systems on which students, researchers, advocates, policy makers, and practitioners should focus. Both of these projects were developed out of the Auburn University Election Administration Symposium Series.

## THE AUBURN UNIVERSITY ELECTION ADMINISTRATION SYMPOSIUM SERIES

These books are the culmination of nearly five years of dialogue that began with a series of conversations between public administration and political science faculty at Auburn University and election officials around the country (including the leadership of the Election Center, the National

Professional Association for Election Officials) about how to gather these perspectives and present them collectively to critical audiences. The most obvious of these audiences of course include election administrative professionals in the field, the vendors who serve it, and the researchers who study it. But we also hope to reach the policy arena, where local county and township commissions, state legislatures, and policy advisors at all levels of government propose ideas and make decisions that affect election operations, as well as the media who cover this critical aspect of American democratic functioning.

The Auburn Symposium on Election Administration is a vehicle to convene an initial set of conversations between leading academics, practitioners, and advocacy groups in the field. The first gathering was held at Auburn University on September 14-15, 2015. Titled *The Evolution of Election Administration Since the Voting Rights Act: 1965-2015*. The symposium brought together a diverse set of more than 60 voices through plenary sessions, panels, and informal gatherings to examine how the field has developed over the past half century, the challenges that remain, and future trends. The Auburn University symposium series expanded in 2017, and faculty hosted *Inclusion and Integrity in Election Administration* on October 15-17, which featured the US Election Assistance Commissioners and data-driven conversations around the Election Assistance Commission's Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS). The goals of *Inclusion and Integrity* were to foster conversations about critical issues that impact American democratic institutions, support the development of common language across diverse professional communities engaged in the practice of election administration, and promote dialogue between those who conduct elections and those who study the way elections operate. Drawing more than 200 participants over 2 days, *Inclusion and Integrity* advanced the conversation with cutting edge (and controversial) topics including the lack of diversity in the election workforce, the difficulties in untangling financial aspects of election operations, and presentations by representatives of leading equipment and service providers in the field about security concerns and the future of voting equipment. Through 64 separate panels and plenary session speakers, participants discussed data and measurement issues around national surveys, voter access and participation, diversity, voting system vendor concerns, election professionalism, technology and security, costs and resources, measuring success, and emerging research in the field.

## THE FUTURE OF ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PROJECT AS COMPANION VOLUMES

Our publisher encouraged us to develop two companion books to capture the range of issues and voices in election administration today. The chapters in both *The Future of Election Administration* and *The Future of Election Administration: Cases and Conversations* reflect the presentations and discussions at the October 2017 Auburn symposium. As a whole, the project identifies several key themes of common concern to election officials, policy makers, and researchers. How do we equip election administrators with the knowledge and skills to operate effectively in a rapidly changing legal and technological environment? How do we equip election offices with voting systems and operating procedures that inspire voter confidence about the integrity of election administration broadly? How do we sustain access to registration and voting for all eligible voters? Underlying all of these concerns is an intergovernmental mismatch between resources and authority that must be addressed if modernization is to take effect equitably across the states. These volumes can be read jointly or separately as stand-alone books, but our intent (and our hope) is that they are used together.

### *The Future of Election Administration*

*The Future of Election Administration* addresses current challenges and the future of access and participation; challenges in professionalizing the work of election officials; and emerging and future issues in the field. Each of these is briefly described below.

Part I of the companion volume begins with an exploration of the historic components of American election administration and how these remain relevant today. Its chapters identify and analyze impediments to voting and how those have changed over time for different groups. Authors in this part also discuss the issues that present particular challenges, and offer prescriptions for policy change as well as for administrative practice.

Part II examines the professionalism of the field of election administration as an area of public service. The chapters include perspectives from the administrative professionals who run elections, professionals who work in the field as academics, and those who work as members of professional associations and other nonprofit organizations. The authors provide a historical

and contextual discussion of the development of the public service professionalism generally, and the professionalism of election administration specifically. They lay out the evolution of the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS), the Election Performance Index (EPI), and the Election Administration Professionalism Index (EAPI). Some authors take up the importance of common language and common data format across the field of election systems, and specifically, the challenges in building common terminology and data formats. Other authors take up the quality and composition of the profession, including the history and development of diversity and resource availability.

Part III addresses issues that have emerged recently as either challenges or opportunities (or both), the ways in which election administrators have responded, and how they are preparing to address foreseeable challenges in the future. Authors discuss equipment, acquisition, and security. They lay out the components of election integrity and how we attempt to ensure it. Authors take up the use of audits to increase quality and transparency. Additionally, there is a discussion of elections from a comparative context as a way to compare what is happening in the US election system as we attempt to modernize.

## THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

This volume tracks the three parts in *The Future of Election Administration*, and is comprised of first-person, practical case studies written about experiences in the field. These illustrative case studies bring forward issues addressed in the other volume through firsthand accounts of often complicated and compelling issues. Taken as a whole, the pieces speak to where we are today as a field and where we ought to and are likely to go in the future.

### *Future of Election Administration: Cases and Conversations*

The cases in this volume are presented in three groups, loosely organized around the ways that historical practices and reforms are reflected in today's issues; the professionalization of the field and approaches to capacity building; and tools that have been developed for the field. Of course, the experiences of election professionals are multidimensional and not neatly classified into categories, and so the readings provide illustrations

that link broadly across the spectrum of the field. That said, we find these categories reflective of the key current themes in the field.

Reflections on History and Links to Reform. American election administration is rooted in more than 50 years of federal prescriptions that address practices which imposed inequities on particular groups and, more recently, a tide of technological change. Cases in this part examine these themes from a variety of perspectives and a blend of experiences.

Robert Montjoy, former Election Director of the state of Alabama and emeritus professor from both Auburn University and the University of New Orleans, discusses how the state of Alabama proceeded to implement a federal court order throughout the state on a controversial issue. He sheds light on how a small, committed group of people on a tight budget were able to make substantial improvements in election administration and pave the way for future improvements.

Thomas Wilkey, former Executive Director of both the US Election Assistance Commission and the New York state election board, works with Donetta Davidson, former Secretary of State of Colorado and Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Commissioner, to discuss the impetus behind the federal Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VMSG), its development and evolution, and why it continues to be important today, especially as the relationship between election offices and vendors become even more critical.

Kamanzi Kalisa, formerly the Director of Election Policy and Programming for the Council of State Government's Overseas Voting Initiative, takes up the work of that organization to improve voting for overseas citizens, military personnel, and dependents, and describes the process and its challenges.

Jill LaVine, Election Director of Sacramento County California (retired), and Alice Jarboe, Assistant Registrar (retired), describe the provision of language assistance for voters who speak languages other than English. They present their approach to service provision in a large suburban county including the challenges they have faced, and how they have partnered with the community to enhance these efforts, particularly as more demands are put on their offices with the inclusion of previously uncovered languages.

Bruce Adelson, former lawyer for the US Department of Justice, spent a significant portion of his career investigating election administration complaints across the country. Here, he discusses his work on evaluating accessibility issues for poll sites and voters. He recounts problems he has

seen, principles for addressing those problems, and considerations for the field. Attention to accessibility is only expected to increase as an essential aspect of election administration as the voting population ages.

Cybersecurity has also emerged as an essential aspect of election administration. Matt Masterson, formerly a US EAC Commissioner and currently serving as a senior advisor for the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) cybersecurity unit, discusses cybersecurity from a national perspective. He presents what DHS has done since the designation of elections as critical infrastructure in 2016, and what they hope to achieve in the future.

From the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to the present, election practices have reformed significantly to expand the franchise to all eligible voters. Public attention to election operations has not expanded to include the diverse perspectives of staff and the vendors who serve election jurisdictions. And yet, the lack of staff diversity and the relatively negative media treatment of equipment vendors may contribute to loss of public confidence in the overall election process. Lauri Ealom, Election Director in Kansas City, Missouri, writes about her career and diversity in election administration and its importance for enhancing voter experiences. She discusses the central place of a diverse election office to enhance official understanding of voter needs to create programs and enhance implementation to meet those needs. Shauna Dozier, Election Director of Clayton County, Georgia, continues this discussion in a case study that tracks her experiences in rising through the profession as a young election official to her work today, reflecting on the changing demographics of voters and election officials. Mindy Perkins, President and CEO of VR Systems, Inc., presents the current public relations challenges facing election equipment vendors. She details a firsthand account of the vendor experiences in serving customers and maintaining public confidence under conditions of system stress and heightened public scrutiny.

The current election administration environment is chock-full of changes in voting methods and discussions about which methods are more effective in achieving policy goals. Lori Edwards, Supervisor of Elections in Polk County, Florida, broadens this conversation by discussing the financial challenges presented by policy change and highlights concerns that are not obvious in the current conversations about election administration reform.

Of course, change in election practice is not limited to American elections; structures and operations in other countries inform our

understanding of the benefits and limitations of what we do in US election jurisdictions. Kelly Krawczyk, Associate Professor at Auburn University details her observations of elections in Ghana and discusses the trade-offs between efficiency, transparency, and integrity and what we can learn for the US system from an international perspective.

**Professionalizing the Field and Building Capacity.** Election administration is a relatively recent arrival to the professional scene within the broader field of public service. Local offices face challenges in building capacity within the intergovernmental relationships unique to the field, and education and training programs have emerged to provide both content knowledge and practical training. Cases in this part discuss these efforts from the perspective of state and local election offices, graduates of university-based programs and professional training associations.

Ernie Hawkins, former Election Director of Sacramento County, California, and Chair of the Election Center Board of Directors from 1999 to 2019, discusses the importance of training, communication, and peer sharing for the field of election administration. He describes the advent of the Election Center and his experiences in communicating with public officials about the complexities of the field.

Lori Augino, Election Director for the state of Washington, discusses how she has transformed the state election office to improve election administration across the state. Using principles of authentic collaboration, power sharing, and streamlined communication, she illustrates how the office has increased the impact of state-county interactions and enhanced consistency and quality of elections in counties across the state through certification, training, and other processes and tools.

The discussion of the state role in building capacity through training is continued by Virginia Vander Roest, Training and Communications Manager, Michigan Bureau of Elections. She discusses the Michigan training program and the benefits that it brings to local election jurisdictions, as well as the challenges in serving more than 1000 counties and townships.

University-based curriculum for the election administration field has emerged, first through graduate certificate programs at Auburn University, and subsequently through certificates at the University of Minnesota. The Auburn program focuses on graduate education and this volume includes the experiences of several of its Master of Public Administration (MPA) and PhD students and recent graduates. Lindsey Forson, Cybersecurity Program Coordinator for the National Association of Secretaries of State



(NASS), tracks her journey through reflections about how she became interested in the topic through her doctoral program training, and how that interest is converging into a career dedicated to advocacy and support. Blake Evans, formerly an Election Coordinator in Escambia County Florida (and now Elections Chief in Fulton County, Georgia), discusses the transition from being a Master of Public Administration student with a focus on election administration into the actual position and what information he needed coming into the job. Auburn University graduate students Tyler St. Clair (MPA Program Election Center Fellow) and Shaniqua Williams (PhD Program) discuss their experiences in Nigeria for the 2019 presidential election, and in participating in that experience.

Professional certification in election administration has been well established through a partnership between the Election Center (also known as the National Association of Election Officials) and Auburn University's graduate program in election administration. Tim Mattice, Executive Director of the Election Center and former training director for the New York State Board of Elections, chronicles the evolution of national certification for election administrators through the Certified Elections Registration Administrator (CERA) program and its subsequent iterations for election equipment and services vendors (Certified Elections Registration Vendor (CERV)) and election monitors (Certified Elections Monitor (CEM)). The themes of these experiences are augmented by a discussion about education and training from Doug Chapin, a longtime advocate for election administrators and now working at the Fors Marsh consulting group.

Tools for the Field. As the field of election administration has become more professionalized, examples are emerging that illustrate how to accomplish process improvements, leverage technology, and use data to its best advantage. Cases in this part reflect experiences of election officials and other professionals with customer service, organizing to meet cybersecurity requirements, tools that can enhance capacity for infrequent but critical procurement and redistricting decisions, accessibility improvements, the utility of the EAC's Election Administration and Voting Survey, and the value of data integration tools in meeting current challenges.

Amber McReynolds, former election official from the City/County of Denver, Colorado, and current Executive Director for Vote-at-Home, an advocacy group promoting mail balloting, provides advice for election administrators about how to improve processes by adopting an office-wide customer orientation to the work that election officials do, which she

thinks will enhance the voter experience and by extension the quality of voting in the US.

Tim Tsujii, Election Director in Forsyth County, North Carolina, discusses the creation of a line management tool based on commercial off-the-shelf technology. Through illustrations of the pilot program and further evolution, he shows how it can be used to improve communication with voters to increase voter satisfaction and participation.

Noah Praetz, a former election official with Cook County, Illinois, and currently a contractor for DHS, discusses the challenges that cybersecurity protocols pose to election officials at the local level. He offers tools for establishing protocols that address the key dimensions of local operations, and that draw upon new national institutional architecture around technology security in election administration.

Procurement of major election system hardware and software does not occur frequently enough for most election officials, many of whom conduct elections using equipment and technology purchased years ago. David Bennett, Treasurer and Financial Officer of VR Systems, Inc. and former state procurement expert, discusses the procurement process from multiple perspectives, with an emphasis on the challenges of purchasing technology and how established processes can frustrate local and state election offices in getting the results that they are seeking. He presents ways in which election officials can build capacity to improve their technology acquisition processes.

Also relatively infrequent but critical is the process of drawing district and precinct lines. Kim Brace, President of Election Data Services, illustrates how to use Geographic Information System (GIS) tools to improve the work that election officials do. He lays out the history and attendant problems of precinct line maps and placement of voter residences. Brace implores election officials at all levels to educate policy makers about the negative impact of some of their redistricting practices on efficient and accurate administration of elections.

The staff at Evan Terry Associates, Inc., a firm that specializes in accessibility, continue the discussion of accessibility and poll sites. They use their experiences working with election offices in New York to provide advice for election jurisdictions across the country about how to resolve common physical barriers for voters with disabilities, communication and etiquette considerations with these voters, and universal approaches that can help election officials work with all voters.

Last, but not least, electronic datasets occupy a particular space in election administration. The national EAVS database and corresponding reports produced by the EAC provide one lens for understanding the strengths and limitations of data flowing through local election jurisdictions to state offices and then to the EAC and the field. Sean Greene, consultant and former employee of the EAC and Pew Center on the States, discusses the value of the EAVS today from a national perspective. Susan Gill, Supervisor of Elections in Citrus County, Florida, adds to this conversation with a view from the local level, discussing the challenges election officials have responding to the EAVS.

David Becker, Executive Director and founder of the Center for Election Innovation and Research and formerly with The Pew Charitable Trusts, closes out the volume with a case that traces his development of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) and its contribution to improving the quality of data that states use in maintaining voter registration lists. ERIC streamlines processes that states can access to synthesize voter registration data along with data from multiple sources, ensuring the accuracy of electronic voter registration databases.

In sum, these case studies represent the collective wisdom of people who have developed a significant body of professional expertise about the issues facing election administration today. They have worked in a variety of roles in American elections and their perspectives are informed by a host of experiences. Our contributors include local election officials, state election officials, national government officials, academics, students in graduate programs, equipment vendors, consultants, advocates, and representatives of third party groups that represent associations of election officials and other related constituencies. Nearly all of the contributors have served in multiple roles across government and the election system more broadly. Many were selected as election officials through direct public elections; others have been appointed by elected officials. Together, the collective wisdom included here provides us all with a more complete understanding of how to improve elections in the US and how to move the field forward in a way that enhances public trust, ensures integrity, and is efficient, accurate, and transparent. Elections are the way that we measure democracy, and election administration is the machine that runs elections; these voices are at the heart of that machine.

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