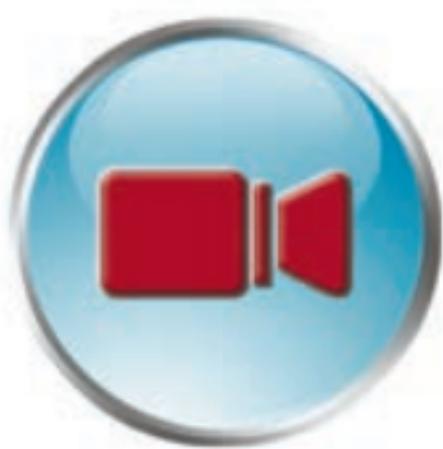


Steady turnout on first day of early voting

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ
STAFF WRITER

More than 200 people had voted early in Suffolk through midday Sept. 18 on the first day of in-person absentee voting in Virginia.

City Registrar Susan Saunders said 213 people had voted by 12:30 p.m. as they began lining up outside the registrar's office at 440 Market St. about two hours before her office opened at 8:30 a.m. for early voting. By the time it did open, the line had stretched



Video online at
suffolknewsherald.com

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Voting: Successful first day at polls

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down the sidewalk in front of the building and around the corner.

"We had a line at 8:30, but it went smoothly," Saunders said.

Around 11:30 a.m., a steady stream of people were coming and going from the registrar's office, with those voting saying the process was straightforward and took them less than five minutes.

Some came to the registrar's office checking on whether they could vote even though they had requested an absentee ballot by mail. They were told they had to wait for their ballot to be mailed to them. Ballots were scheduled to be sent out Sept. 18.

Councilman Roger Fawcett, running unopposed in the Sleepy Hole Borough, came to vote, while another councilman, Curtis Milteer, was outside campaigning.

Janine Joyner said she voted early because she's had leukemia and cannot do a lot of standing.

"I wasn't sure about what was going to be going on in November," Joyner said. "I already knew how I was going to vote, so I said I'm just going to go ahead on and do it."

Voting around noon Sept. 18, she said she was in and out of registrar's office in about five minutes.

"There was one lady in front of me," Joyner said. "Everybody was on point."

William McKnight requested an absentee ballot by mail and was told he would not be able to vote until he received that ballot. He said he understood.

"That's good that the system's working," McKnight said. "The system works. And when you hear people talking about fraudulent (voting), I don't see it."

Saunders said the registrar's office will be open for voting from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and it will also be open on the two Saturdays prior to Election Day — from 8:30 a.m. to

4:30 p.m. on Oct. 24 and 31.

When they come, she said people will be checked in as they are on a normal Election Day, issued a disposable qualified voter card before receiving their ballot, which is put in a folder. People are then given a pen to mark their ballot and then feed it through the voting machine. The pen and folder are also disposable, Saunders said.

"The voter is actually voting in person here, as they would very similar to what they would do on Election Day at their precinct," Saunders said.

People will still be able to vote in person at their precincts Nov. 3, and they will also be able to drop off completed ballots at each precinct.

Saunders said the questions most asked have been about the type of identification needed to vote, and what hours the registrar's office is open for voting.

"The law has changed," Saunders said. "You no

longer need to have a photo ID, but there is a list of identifications. Certainly, you can use your driver's license. You can use the utility bill, or a bank statement, as long as it's current. We'll be able to accept student IDs, and that can be a student at a college of higher education anywhere in the United States."

For those using a driver's license, Saunders said people can use a Virginia license, whether expired or not.

Saunders said she has an experienced team of people in her office and who have regularly worked at polling precincts on Election Day to make the process as smooth as possible.

"We didn't have any glitches," Saunders said, "and if I had wood, I'd knock on it somewhere."

Contact information

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By mail

The first step to voting absentee by mail is completing and submitting an application. You can do this online at the Department of Elections website. Voters may also submit their vote-by-mail applications by email, fax or postal mail. To use these methods, first download and complete the application form. Then return the completed and signed form to your local registrar's office as a scanned attachment to an email, by fax or by postal mail.

Once your application is processed, you'll receive your ballot in the mail. Follow the instructions on the ballot and return it to your local registrar by 7 p.m. on Election Day. You may mail your ballot back or hand deliv-

er it to your local registrar's office. If you're returning it by mail, the ballot must be post-marked on or before Nov. 3 and received by the registrar by noon on the third day after the election.

Voters who are concerned about their health and safety due to the coronavirus may disregard the witness signature requirement.

Early in person

If you'd like to vote early in person, you may do so at the local registrar's office ending the Saturday before Election Day (Oct. 31 for this year). You do not have to give a reason or fill out an application to vote early; however, you must be registered to vote. Disabled-accessible voting equipment and curbside voting is available for early in person voting.

Voting on Election Day

You can still choose to vote in person between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Election Day. Visit elections.virginia.gov to find your current polling place.



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