STATE ELECTION BOARD

AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT:
The mission of the Oklahoma State Election Board is to achieve and maintain uniformity in the application, operation and interpretation of the state and federal election laws with a maximum degree of correctness, impartiality and efficiency.

This mission statement was adopted by agency management during the creation of the first agency strategic plan in 2001.

LEAD ADMINISTRATOR:
Paul Ziriax, Secretary of the State Election Board
405-521-2391, pziriax@elections.ok.gov

GOVERNANCE:
The Secretary of the Senate, who is elected by the members of the Senate, also serves as the Secretary of the State Election Board. The Secretary is the chief state election official, is responsible for voter registration and election conduct in the state, and has general supervisory authority over the County Election Boards.

The State Election Board is composed of three members and two alternates. Board members are appointed to four-year terms by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, from lists of ten nominees recommended by the state committees of the two political parties with the largest number of registered voters. Two members and an alternate member are appointed from the list of one political party, and one member and an alternate member are appointed from the list of the other political party. The duties of the Board include certifying election results, hearing contests of candidacy, and appointing County Election Board members and Secretaries.

The current Board members and alternates are:
W. Stephen Curry, Chairman
Thomas M. Montgomery, III, Vice Chairman
F. Diana Spurlock, Member
Gerald D. Buchanan, Alternate
Dr. Tim Mauldin, Alternate

The State Election Board does not have any committees or subgroups.

GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY:

There is no formal attendance policy for Board members. A quorum consists of two members. 26 O.S. § 2-101.4 provides that, "A vacancy shall occur when a member fails to attend five (5) consecutive meetings of the Board or when a member changes his party affiliation."

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MODERNIZATION EFFORTS:
The most significant modernization effort was the installation of a new statewide ballot scanner voting system. Installation of the new system began during 2011. The new equipment was used for the first time on February 14, 2012. The voting system complies with all requirements of state and federal law and includes a component that allows voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently.

The agency upgraded its voter registration database and election management system, a project that began in 2008. This effort was completed at the end of FY-2013 and the legacy system was removed from service.

For the 2014 elections (FY-2014 and FY-2015), the agency launched two major new services for voters:
1) Oklahoma Military and Overseas Ballots Online – A new online portal that securely transmits absentee ballots electronically to uniformed and overseas voters. This system was implemented to meet the requirements of the federal Military and Overseas Voters Empowerment (MOVE) Act and state law (26 O.S. § 14-118).
2) Online Voter Tool – A new online portal that enables Oklahomans to confirm their voter registration, find their polling place, view their sample ballots, and track the status of their absentee or provisional ballots.

The purchase of the new voting system and the upgrade of the database have been done to comply with the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. Oklahoma received federal funds specifically for the purpose of complying with this legislation. While the initial purchases were made with federal funds, ongoing maintenance and operations will be a state responsibility. Leftover federal HAVA grants were used to implement the Oklahoma Military and Overseas Ballots Online portal and the Online Voter Tool, as allowed by federal law.

In FY 2012, the State Election Board assisted the County Election Boards (through a contract with the Oklahoma University Center for Spatial Analysis) in redrawing precinct lines after congressional, legislative and county commission redistricting. The number of precincts statewide was reduced by 8.5%, which helped to reduce the number of precinct officials required for most elections.

The agency has taken numerous steps to reduce costs. Travel has been limited to necessary equipment maintenance and training. Printing and postage expenses have been reduced through the use of e-mail and the agency website, and we continue to explore ways to use technology to create efficiencies.

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<u>CORE MISSION:</u>

All services performed by the State Election Board are directly related to its core mission of conducting elections and providing voter registration services. No other agency duplicates the services provided by the State Election Board.

<u>PRIVATE ALTERNATIVES:</u>

While there are vendors in other states that provide services such as equipment programming and ballot printing, we are not aware of any vendor in the private sector that provides comprehensive election conduct on a statewide basis. The State Election Board has not been approached by any organization about privatization of the statewide election system. We believe that the current system provides secure, accurate election conduct at a cost that is lower than the fees charged by vendors of election services in other states.