

## Russell: Setting goals for registrars

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The 2014 election has come and gone, and the buzz around the state is that Connecticut needs complete election reform. As the president of the Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut (ROVAC), I ask you to pause and evaluate how the process went overall in the state.

The issues that Hartford experienced on the morning of the election are unconscionable, and there is no excuse for not having everything ready to go well before the polls opened at 6 a.m. There will be an investigation into what happened, and why, and steps will be taken to address the issues so that they never occur again.

It is important to note, however, that there are 339 Registrars of Voters for 169 municipalities in Connecticut. Three of those registrars had a major problem in their city, while other registrars in towns and cities across the state conducted their elections professionally and ethically.

No system is perfect, and no one realizes this more than the members of ROVAC. Our organization works with the secretary of the state's office and the Legislature every year toward employing more technology in our election system and offering more education to our members.

As an example of our desire to improve the election process, in 2013, ROVAC promoted the measure that passed in the General Assembly that would allow municipalities to employ electronic poll books. This would allow voters at the polling places to be checked in electronically, thus reducing waiting times in line, and reducing tallying errors at the end of the night. Poll books also allow for a speedier data input of voting histories into our statewide registration system. This innovation was piloted with success in about 25 towns this year in Connecticut. ROVAC looks forward to the secretary of the state's office certifying poll book vendors so more towns can take part in this new system.

In 2013, a state panel was formed for the purpose of devising a certification program for Registrars of Voters. This panel consists of four registrars, a representative from the State Elections Enforcement Commission, and a representative from the office of the secretary of the state. This group has been working hard all year, and is close to presenting a curriculum to Secretary of the State Denise Merrill. Once sanctioned, there will be greater opportunities for intensive, in-depth education and training for Registrars of Voters across Connecticut. This is a goal that ROVAC vigorously supports.

Among our highest priorities going forward into next year's legislative session is to update and streamline our state's end of night reporting process for elections. It is past time for a major update in this process, and no one will welcome it more than the Registrars of Voters across the state. We, along with our head moderators, are the ones who, year after year, struggle with antiquated reporting forms and the difficulties of accurately hand transcribing numbers from voting tabulator tapes onto a separate form at the end of a busy 16-hour day.

ROVAC will be promoting and supporting these efforts long term. Our aim is to utilize technology and education to bring our election system into the 21st century, while supporting the voting rights of all our citizens and maintaining the integrity of this all important process.

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