

Audit of Voter Registration Process – Office of Library Services

Division of Inspector General

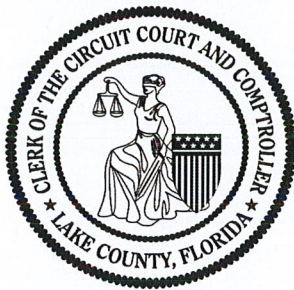
Gary J. Cooney, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller
Audit Report

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Division of Inspector General

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September 21, 2020

Board of County Commissioners

The review of the Voter Registration process of the Office of Library Services that was identified in the 2020 Audit Plan is complete.

The overall controls in place are well-designed and functioning as intended. Opportunities for Improvement are included in this report.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by the Office of Library Services and also those in the Lake County Library System contacted during the course of our audit.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri W. Freeman
Inspector General

cc: Gary J. Cooney, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller
Denise Bell, Chief Deputy Clerk
Jeff Cole, County Manager
JoAnne Drury, Deputy County Manager
George Taylor, Director, Office of Library Services

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Scope and Objective

The objective of the audit of the Office of Library Services' Voter Registration process was to assess the design and execution of controls to minimize the risk that someone could commit a fraud or make an unintentional error without it being detected by someone else.

Tests were conducted in order to achieve the audit objective, which included inquiry with management and staff, observations at municipal and county branch libraries, observations at the Library Services headquarters, and review of procedures, documents, and Florida Statutes.

Overall Conclusion

The controls in place are well-designed and functioning as intended. Opportunities for Improvement are included in this report.

Background

The Lake County Library System is a cooperative of six county branch libraries and ten municipal libraries. As defined in Section 97.021(43), Florida Statutes, a public library is a voter registration agency (VRA). Under Section 97.058(1), Florida Statutes, a VRA must provide applicants the opportunity to register to vote or to update a voter registration record, at the time the applicant applies for services or assistance from that agency, for renewal of such services or assistance, or for a change of address required with respect to the services or assistance. Completed forms are picked up from the Office of Library Services and delivered to the Supervisor of Elections by the Lake County Clerk's Mail Receiving Center.

Opportunities for Improvement

1. Voter Registration Confirmation

Twelve libraries (six County libraries and six municipal libraries) do not have a control to detect if an application is altered after it is submitted to Library Services, which could result in patrons not being eligible to vote.

Agreed Upon Action: The Supervisor of Elections provided the County with a card to be given to patrons when they turn in a voter registration form. The card contains contact information for the Supervisor of Elections and instructions on how to follow up on the status of their voter registration. All locations have the Supervisor of Elections business cards and will receive additional cards from Library Services via courier. Staff have been retrained in the process and signage has been emailed to all supervisors.

2. Acknowledgement Process

There is no evidence that all voter registration forms are submitted by Library Services to the Supervisor of Elections Office. The source of deliberate misdeeds or reasons for recurring errors cannot be easily identified and addressed without proof of the chain of custody of the forms.

Agreed Upon Action: See response for opportunity for improvement 1.

3. Voter Registration Update

Ten libraries (four County libraries and six municipal libraries) do not provide patrons with the opportunity to update their voter registration when the patron updates their library card information, e.g., with a change of address or name change, as is required under Section 97.058(1), Florida Statutes. If a patron has not updated their voter information to their current address or name, they may not be able to vote.

Agreed Upon Action: The County branch libraries will comply with the requirements of Rule 1S-2.048(8), Florida Administrative Code, which states a public library must provide to its patrons access to a voter registration application by either distributing applications or making applications available online for printing at the same time a patron applies for a new or renewal of a library card or updates an address for purposes of a library card. An email with the County's response and instructions were sent to all County branch supervisors. All County branches verified that they have the signage and

forms on display. The Support Services Manager is adding this to the Library Standard Operating Manual. The email was forwarded to the member directors for their edification.

4. Unsecured Pickup Location

Seven libraries (four County libraries and three municipal libraries) keep the voter registration forms submitted by patrons in the front area of the library. These submitted forms are in a location accessible to the public. As a result, voter registration forms could be removed, altered, or destroyed, which could result in patrons being prevented from voting.

Agreed Upon Action: The County worked with the municipal libraries and County branch libraries to locate a safe and secure space at each library to store completed voter registration forms before the forms are transported to Library Headquarters. All County branches confirmed that they would begin storing the completed forms in the branch's safe until the library couriers can accept the forms. Member directors were informed of the County's response and asked about any compliance concerns.

5. Date-stamp Missing

The staff at one municipal library stated they have not date-stamped the voter registration form as required by the Voter Registration procedure. According to Section 97.058(6), Florida Statutes, a voter registration agency must forward all completed and incomplete voter registration applications within five days after receipt to the Supervisor of Elections. A date-stamp is used to determine the date the voter registration form is received. This date is important as it is compared to the voter registration deadline. To be considered valid for an upcoming election, the form must be dated on or before the deadline. An unstamped patron's voter registration form may not be considered valid for an upcoming election, which could prevent the patron from voting.

Agreed Upon Action: The Program Specialist emailed the directors of two municipal libraries with the instructions and signage, with specifics on date-stamping and initialing the voter registration/update forms.

6. Voter Registration Question

Staff at one municipal library stated the library's card application form does not ask if the patron would like to register to vote as required by the Voter Registration procedure. The library card application form in Spanish at a County library does not include a question asking if the patron would like a voter's registration form. As a result, patrons may not be aware they can submit a voter registration form at the library.

Agreed Upon Action: The current library card application forms, which are available in English and Spanish, include a question asking the patron if they would like a voter's registration form. The County will ensure that County libraries are using the current form and will ensure that the municipal libraries have the current form. The Program Specialist worked with staff at Marion Baysinger Memorial Library (Groveland) and Parks and Trails to translate the current library card registration form into Spanish. The Spanish form was sent to member directors and supervisors.