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HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU SERVED IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION? WHAT POSITION DID YOU HOLD BEFORE BEING APPOINTED YELLOWSTONE COUNTY ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR?

I have been the election administrator for Yellowstone County for just over one year.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST ELECTION CHALLENGES YOUR OFFICE/JURISDICTION HAS ENCOUNTERED SINCE YOU’VE HELD THIS OFFICE?

Misinformation and disinformation have dominated elections over the past few election cycles, and voters do not always know where to turn or how to access correct information. In addition, recruiting and retaining staff is difficult, as election offices throughout the country face high numbers of turnover in staff.

WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST CONCERNS ABOUT THE 2024 ELECTION?

Recent election cycles have been dominated by disinformation and misinformation. Ensuring that voters receive accurate information from election officials is difficult when news is being disseminated through so many informal channels. Inaccurate information can erode voter trust and confidence in the system, so trying to cut through the noise with accurate election information is critical in this and future election cycles.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR TRAINING YOUR ELECTION WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS THIS YEAR?

Yellowstone County has been training its election judges since the end of February 2024 for the biennial election cycle. We would like to train 500 election judges for use throughout the two-year cycle and have, to date, currently trained just over half of our target numbers. Individuals interested in being election judges must be registered voters in Yellowstone County and can find more information, including our online application form, on our website at <https://www.yellowstonecountymt.gov/elections/GetInvolved.asp>.

WHAT ARE YOU AND YOUR FELLOW ELECTION OFFICIALS DOING TO COUNTER THE SPREAD OF ELECTION MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION, COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH VOTERS, AND MAINTAIN PUBLIC FAITH IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS?

Election officials throughout the state have sponsored a website dedicated to answering voters' frequently asked questions at <https://votinginmontana.org/> so that voters have a trusted resource to find accurate answers to their questions. In addition, election administrators are making themselves available to answer questions from voters within the community in forums such as this one to ensure accurate information is being relayed to combat misinformation and disinformation. Continuing to relay accurate and reliable election information to our community to ensure public trust in Yellowstone County's election processes is a top priority of my office.

DO YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF YOUR ELECTION WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS? WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR ENSURING THAT YOU AND YOUR ELECTION WORKERS ARE PROTECTED?

Election processes throughout the United States have experienced a rise in threats, both from international as well as domestic sources, and Yellowstone County Elections takes the increase in the threat environment seriously. To that end, Yellowstone County is working with law enforcement to ensure enhanced security measures on election day to protect voters and election workers.

WHAT RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, GRANT PROGRAMS, ETC. DO YOU RECOMMEND TO HELP PREPARE LOCAL OFFICIALS, ELECTION OFFICIALS, AND GOVERNMENTS FOR HOLDING FREE, FAIR, AND SAFE ELECTIONS?

Reaching out to state and local governmental partners, including law enforcement, is incredibly important to ensure the delivery of free, fair, and safe elections.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS TO ADDRESS IN THIS UPCOMING ELECTION CYCLE?



Many voters aren't aware of the multiple election processes in place to verify the security, integrity, and accuracy of our election. Voting systems are publicly tested prior to every election. Elections are administered and overseen by election judges who are voters from our county – voters who are interested in participating as election judges can apply to serve at the county election office. Furthermore, in Yellowstone County, we use numerous safeguards to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the election at every step, including chain of custody logs, paperwork to track the ballots as they are received and processed, and performing essential election tasks in teams of at least two election judges. And after voting is completed in federal elections, certain races and precincts are chosen at random to be hand-counted to verify the accuracy of our voting systems. In addition, the Canvass Board, which is the body that certifies the final, official results, always has the opportunity to petition for a recount or inspect the ballots if there is an error affecting the accuracy of the vote totals prior to the certification of the results.

WITH A CONCERTED EFFORT TO HARASS AND INTIMIDATE ELECTION OFFICIALS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, [ONE IN FIVE WILL BE CONDUCTING THEIR FIRST ELECTION THIS YEAR DUE TO THESE OFFICIALS LEAVING THEIR POSITIONS IN DROVES](#). ACROSS THE NATION, ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS ARE FACING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, ABUSE, AND, IN SOME CASES, DEATH THREATS FOR DOING THEIR JOBS. HAVE YOU FACED ANY OF THESE ISSUES? WHAT KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED TO CONTINUE IN YOUR POSITION?

Fortunately, I have not personally experienced these issues, although I know that other election officials have unfortunately been the victims of harassment and intimidation tactics. But as General Colin Powell once said, “A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work.” This is especially true of our system of government both on a local and a national level. Elections happen at the intersection of power, so there will always be someone who is dissatisfied, who wants to use intimidation and coercion to get their way. But if we believe in democracy, then we must also believe it is incumbent upon us to defend it with our own sweat, determination, and hard work, despite the challenges and obstacles.

DO YOU HAVE ANY WORDS OF ADVICE AND/OR A CALL TO ACTION FOR OTHER ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND/OR CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR OFFICE THIS YEAR?

My message is for voters: if you have questions or concerns about the security or accuracy of local elections, contact your local Election Office directly. Election officials around the United States and here in Montana want to ensure voters have confidence in their elections, and we want to provide you with accurate information. Better yet, volunteer to be an election judge or a poll worker in your jurisdiction.

WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH US?

Voters in Montana can check the status of their registration at voterportal.mt.gov and, during an active election, can use the same site to check the status of their ballot. If a voter is shown as “inactive,” they should contact the local Montana election office and update their registration information immediately to ensure they



are able to vote without undue delay in the upcoming elections. If a voter is shown as “active” and their current address is correct, they should be #VoteReady for the upcoming elections.

