

Operation and performance of the Department of Elections

Authorized by the Commission on July 10, 2017

WHEREAS, the Department of Elections serves a critical role promoting accurate, fair, open, and secure elections for the citizens of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Department (a) supervises and coordinates the work of local electoral boards and general registrars to ensure uniform and legal elections processes, (b) proposes and administers regulations and provides guidance as necessary to promote proper elections, and (c) sets training standards and ensures that electoral board members and general registrars are properly trained; and

WHEREAS, the Department maintains the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS) that contains information about 5.5 million registered Virginia voters, and the Department is bringing more of its information technology services “in-house”; and

WHEREAS, the Department is authorized to employ up to 43 staff and is appropriated \$14.3 million for FY 2018 to provide electoral services, reflecting recently increased appropriations for VERIS and administrative services; and

WHEREAS, federal Help America Vote Act funds have historically been used to assist with modernizing election systems and technology, but these funds are projected to be depleted by FY 2019; and

WHEREAS, appropriate budgetary and financial management practices are a critical aspect of effective agency operations; and

WHEREAS, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) completed a limited review of VERIS in 2008 but has not fully reviewed the Department of Elections since 1998; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the operation and performance of the Department of Elections. In conducting its study, staff shall review whether the Department (i) adequately supervises and coordinates the administration of elections; (ii) sets appropriate training standards and provides adequate training for local electoral boards and general registrars; (iii) adequately fulfills all statutory reporting requirements in a timely manner; (iv) appropriately maintains required lists of registered voter information and employs adequate practices to ensure they are accurate and up-to-date; (v) effectively, efficiently, and securely administers VERIS; and (vi) is organized, staffed, and structured to ensure efficient and effective operations, including internal financial management and records keeping. JLARC staff may review other issues and make recommendations as appropriate.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Department of Elections, State Board of Elections, Virginia Information Technologies Agency, local electoral boards, and general registrars shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of state agencies pursuant to § 30-59 and § 30-69 of the Code of Virginia including all documents related to disciplinary proceedings or actions of the boards. No provision of the Code of Virginia shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the access of JLARC staff to information pursuant to its statutory authority.

JLARC shall complete its work and submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Commission by December 15, 2018.