

CASE STUDY: COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA, 2008 ELECTION

CASE STUDY OVERVIEW



“Datacard provided Mathews with trained technical support, hardware and software, all within the constraints of a small window of opportunity to meet the election deadline. Datacard demonstrated the ability to design and install a turnkey solution to the new and progressive technology beckoned by the future of secure and efficient elections.”

—MATHEWS COUNTY REGISTRAR

“The solution provided by Datacard Group provides increased security in our processes and timely and efficient workflow at our poll sites. Datacard Group completed installation in a timely matter, trained our personnel and worked closely with us to ensure a successful outcome.”

—FREDERICKSBURG COUNTY REGISTRAR

CUSTOMER: The Commonwealth of Virginia is the twelfth most populous state in the U.S. with a total population of approximately 7.7 million.

CHALLENGE: Improve the efficiency, security and auditability of voter check-in and eliminate the need for traditional paper poll books.

SOLUTION: Precincts used the Datacard® Advocate™ precinct management system to expedite check-in, automate management of voter registration data and eliminate the expense of printing paper poll books.

RESULTS: The Commonwealth accelerated voter check-in, improved poll site management and effectively handled high turnout in 17 localities during the 2008 election.

IMPROVING POLL SITE EFFICIENCY

Election officials throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia expected high turnout for the historic November 4, 2008 election. To ensure poll sites ran efficiently, they issued a solicitation for electronic poll books to replace traditional paper poll books, speed up voter check-in and improve the security and auditability of voter registration data.

The solution needed to meet three criteria. The software needed to be hardware-independent, so it could run on government-refurbished laptop computers that were provided by the Commonwealth as part of a broader effort to save money and support green initiatives. The solution also had to fit within a tight budget. Finally, it needed to be scalable to ensure a seamless rollout in future elections.

THE DATACARD® SOLUTION

Datacard Group, together with its local dealer BEC Plastic Card Solutions, responded to the solicitation with the Datacard® Advocate™ precinct management system. Designed to enhance poll site management, the Advocate solution includes two components that directly addressed the state’s needs.

The Precinct Control Center module includes electronic poll book software that enables poll workers to check in every voter using the same procedure, so there is no need to separate voters into alphabetical lines. This helps poll workers process voters more quickly and reduce poll site congestion. It eliminates the time, cost and effort required to print and distribute traditional paper poll books. Voter registration information is downloaded to each laptop from the same master file, which helps ensure accuracy without supplemental poll books.

The Precinct Automation Manager module helps poll sites manage voter registration data efficiently and securely, automating the collection and distribution of authorized voter data from a master database and providing detailed reporting during and after the election.



KEY POINTS

- By eliminating the need for paper poll books, the Datacard® Advocate™ solution speeds up voter check-in and improves the security and auditability of voter registration data.

Both of these modules met all three of the Commonwealth's criteria. They are device-independent, so they could work with refurbished laptops. They are cost-effective enough to meet budget requirements. The Advocate system is also scalable, allowing the Commonwealth to roll out electronic poll books to more precincts in future elections.

FAST IMPLEMENTATION

Virginia election officials selected the Advocate solution and awarded Datacard Group a four-year contract. Teams from Datacard Group and BEC inventoried, tested, loaded and deployed hundreds of refurbished laptops with Advocate system software at more than 100 precincts, in just eight weeks. (Typically, a project of this scale takes 12 to 14 weeks to implement.) Datacard Group also provided more than 200 statewide "look-up" devices at additional locations. Together, Datacard Group and BEC conducted training sessions with participating poll workers to help ensure operator success. For additional backup, Datacard offered on-site support during the election.

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME

At the local level, reactions to the Advocate solution were positive. "We experienced the future of secure, efficient precinct management with the Datacard solution this past November," said Nancy Rodrigues, secretary, Virginia State Board of Elections. "The training, technical support, hardware and software Datacard Group provided addressed our needs. We experienced no problems on election day with this solution."

FLEXIBLE CAPABILITIES

Not every precinct that used the Advocate system had the same requirements. Some required the ability to scan a driver's license to perform voter lookup — which is faster than entering voter data in a search field. Other poll sites needed thermal printers to issue check-in statements that served as a physical backup to the electronic record. The Advocate system is designed to work with a wide range of peripherals, so it easily integrated with these scanners and printers.

At the close of the election, each locality used the Advocate system to update the statewide voter registration system, helping ensure accurate voter credit. With paper poll books, establishing voter credit history requires the State Board of Elections to manually process data for each voter. The Advocate system makes this information available immediately — along with reports on turnout, including hour-by-hour breakdowns that help election officials coordinate volunteer poll workers in future elections and recounts.

Overall, election officials from Virginia noted Datacard Group's understanding of local poll site needs. "Datacard Group's expertise in providing precinct management solutions is among the best we have seen," said Juanita Pitchford, general registrar, Fredericksburg. "Datacard Group exceeded our expectations and demonstrated the ability to design and install a turnkey solution and resolve unexpected issues for our locality."

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