

Conservation District Supervisor Elections in WV



Carolyn Hefner
Operations Division Director, WVCA
President, NASCA



West Virginia Conservation Agency

WV Code §19-21A

Enactment of WV Code §19-21A established the formation of the Conservation Districts and the process in which to elect supervisors.

- Candidates were required to submit a petition signed by 25 or more landowners within the county.
- The State Committee conducted the elections.
- Notification of the election was made by the State Committee denoting the date and locations to cast their votes from the list of candidates within the county.
- In order to vote you must have been 21 years of age and a landowner within the county.
- State Committee certified the elections.



Election Process Challenged

In 2005, the election process was challenged in the US Federal Court. The Federal Judge's response was he will give the state legislative process the opportunity to correct the problems prior to the court making a ruling.



WV Code Amended

In 2006, the amended code was enacted to allow the candidates for Conservation District Supervisor to be placed on the county ballots in the primary elections as nonpartisan candidates.

- Two candidates are to be elected from each county.
- Exception counties exceeding 100,000 in population would elect one additional supervisor.
- Counties will elect one additional supervisor for each 50,000 residents over the 100,000.
- To allow for staggering within the county. For the first election the candidate receiving the highest number of votes served a four-year term.
- The candidate with the second highest number of votes would serve a two-year term. Subsequent terms of office for supervisors elected thereafter shall be four years.



Election Results

2008 Election:

- 113 seats – 99 seats filled with a 49% turnover.
 - Of the 49% only 20% were not familiar with districts.

2010 Election:

- 57 seats – 55 seats filled with a 34% turnover.
 - Of the 34% only 57.8% were not familiar with districts.



Identified Advantages

1. Greater diversity of individuals.
2. A mix of age groups showing an interest including younger candidates.
3. Opens the selection process up to the general public.
4. A changeover in positions that had been held for many years by the same individual.



Identified Disadvantages

1. Persons filing for conservation supervisor position using opportunity to enter political arena.
2. Lack of knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the position.
3. Look at position as way to supplement retirements.
4. Hard to find qualified persons due to commitment required.
5. In non-agriculture area it is hard to find persons to file for the office.
6. Persons running to support their own agendas.



Questions?



West Virginia Conservation Agency