



Update on the Preparations for the Elections in 2026

August 18, 2026

Presenters

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Purpose of this Workshop

Following a workshop held in March 2026, today's session will provide an update to the public and the Ramsey County Board of Commissioner about the preparations underway for the highly visible elections held in 2026.



Agenda

- Summary of the State Primary results and voter turnout
- Communications & Website Updates
- Election Security and Emergency Preparedness
- Virtual translation services now available
- Student Election Judges & Teacher Liaisons
- Contracts for Election Services
- Upgrading the Voting System



August 11, 2026, State Primary Results

High turnout seen across the State. Record number of absentee voters for a non-presidential primary.

Almost **113,000** voters in Ramsey County, of which 21,500 voted by absentee or early voting.

2022 turnout = 70,900

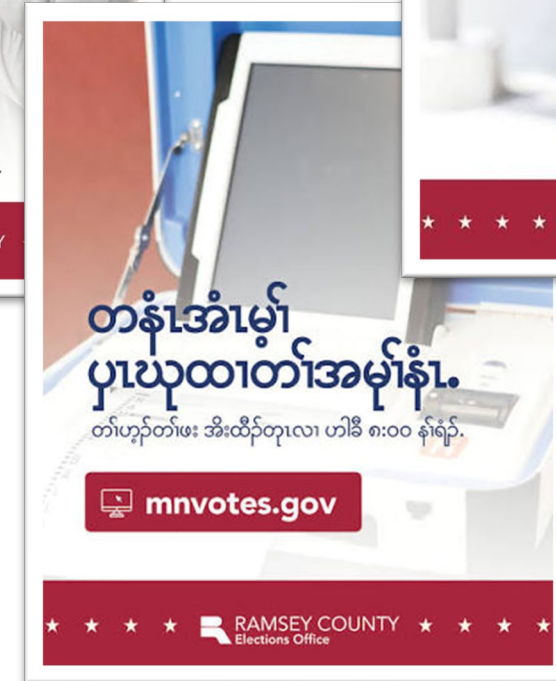
2018 turnout = 101,000

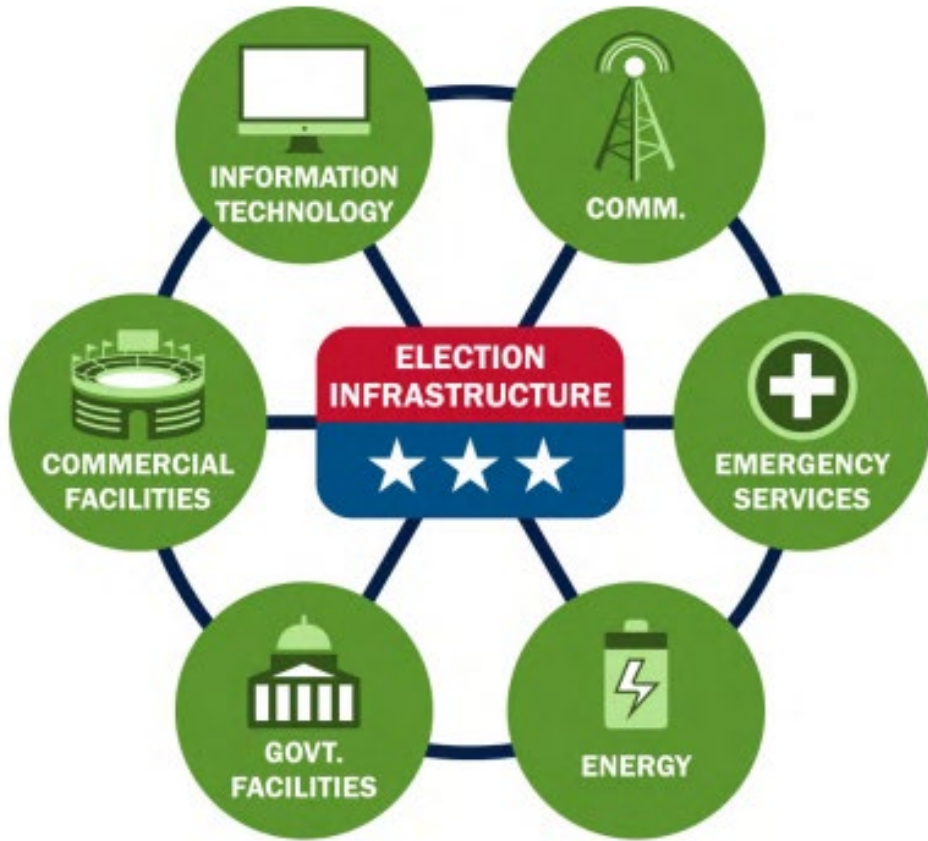
2014 turnout = 34,100

Deployed over 1,500 election judges across 165 polling places and three early voting locations.

Communications, Website Updates, and Providing Trusted Information

- Improved website layout that highlights relevant information.
- Increased social media, sharing trusted election information.
- Creation of an Elections Tool Kit for community organizations.
- Communications coordination with our city partners.
- Use of Media Advisories to ensure accurate information for the media.
- Creation of Elections Office Hours where the public can discuss election topics with a local election official.





Emergency Preparedness

A cross-county group of stakeholders organized to support the county's election responsibilities during an emergency.

Acts as the incident command center until a formal one is required.

Individual members act as the liaison within their departments to ensure proper expertise and resources are available. Escalate issues to proper leadership.

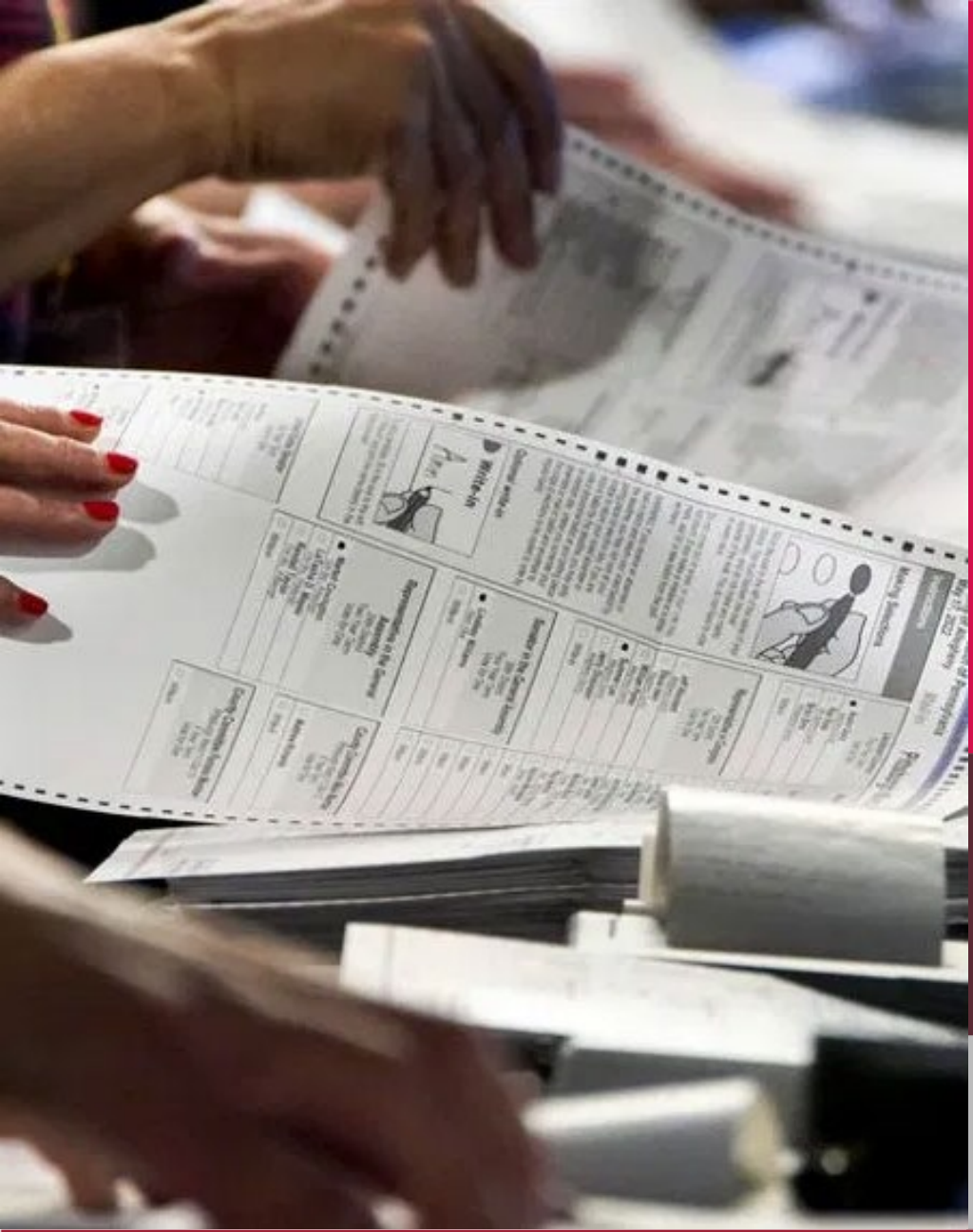


Emergency Preparedness

Historically, most emergencies are isolated and only impact a few locations.

Recent examples include:

- Loss of power or network access.
- Temporary lockdown at a polling place, usually schools.
- Inappropriate activities, such as disorderly voters, observers, or media access.
- Traffic control issues.



Topics for 2026

Observers at Polling Places

While this activity is illegal, multiple groups have contacted our office. We are discouraging this activity and encouraging people to serve as an election judge.

Presence of Law Enforcement

Only voters and persons assisting voters are allowed in the polling place. Law enforcement are only allowed within 50ft of a polling place and can only enter if requested by our election judges.

Voting on College Campuses

State Law now requires pop-up voting on college campuses when requested. This activity creates new cyber and physical security challenges. So far five colleges have requested this service for 2026.



Code of Conduct at Polling Places

Election Judges are trained to only allow persons authorized under *MN Statutes 204C.06* within 100ft of the polling place.

Only the following individuals are allowed inside the polling place:

- Voters
- Person brought by the voter to help assist
- Election judges
- Media and exit polling

Tools, such as maps and duty cards, are provided to our election judges to help determine where and what can occur in and around the polling place.

To ensure the safety of our election judges, we have asked them to disengage from a situation where someone is refusing to comply with 204C.06, to contact our office and allow county leadership to resolve the situation.



Securing the Voting System

Upgrading to the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) 2.0 federal standards.

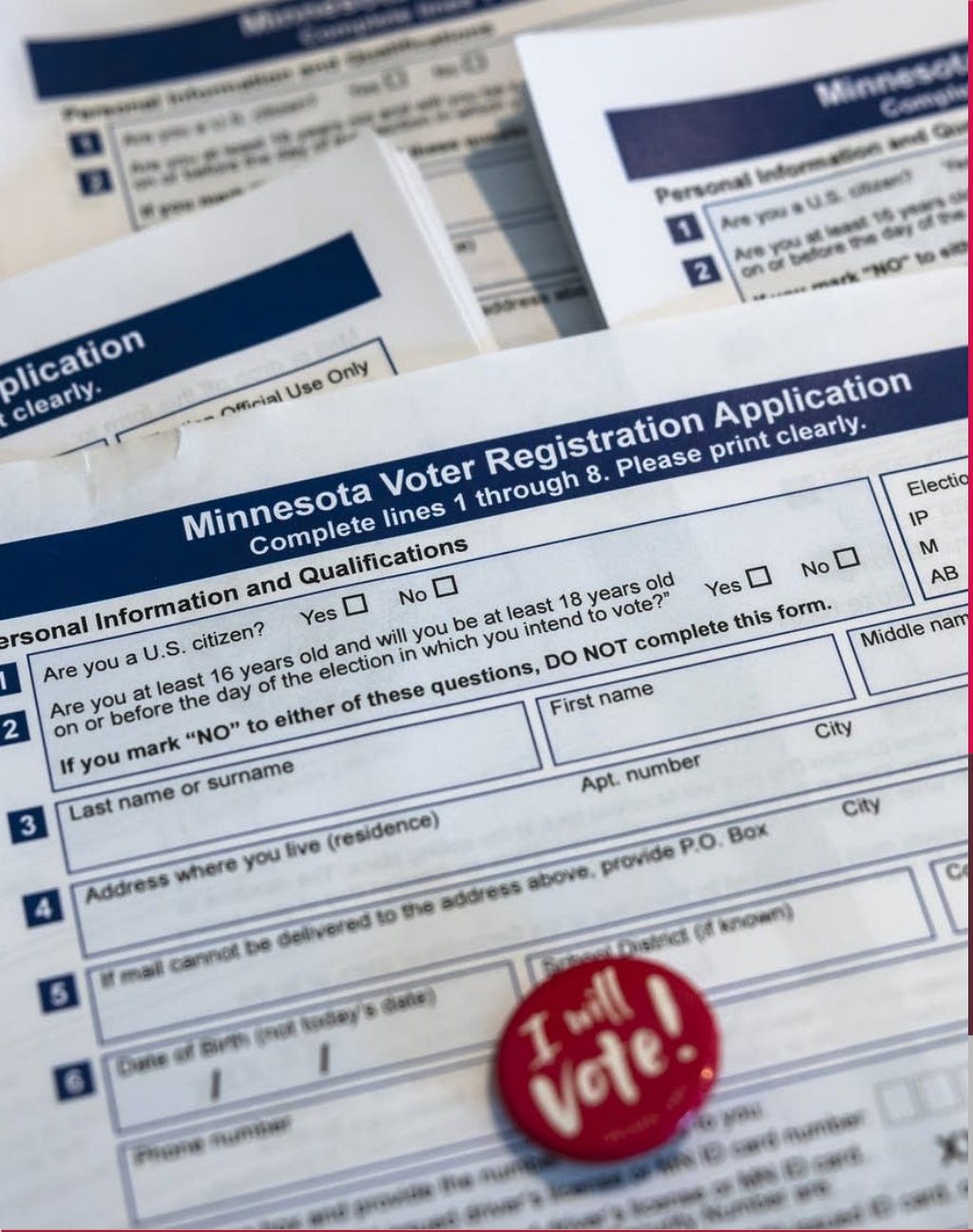
Ramsey County uses a non-networked voting system.

Located in a secure environment with auditable chain of custody processes.

Paper ballots required in Minnesota.

Rely on physical security and bi-partisan election judges.

Publicly auditable using the Cast Vote Record and during recounts and the post election review.



Securing the Voter Registration Database

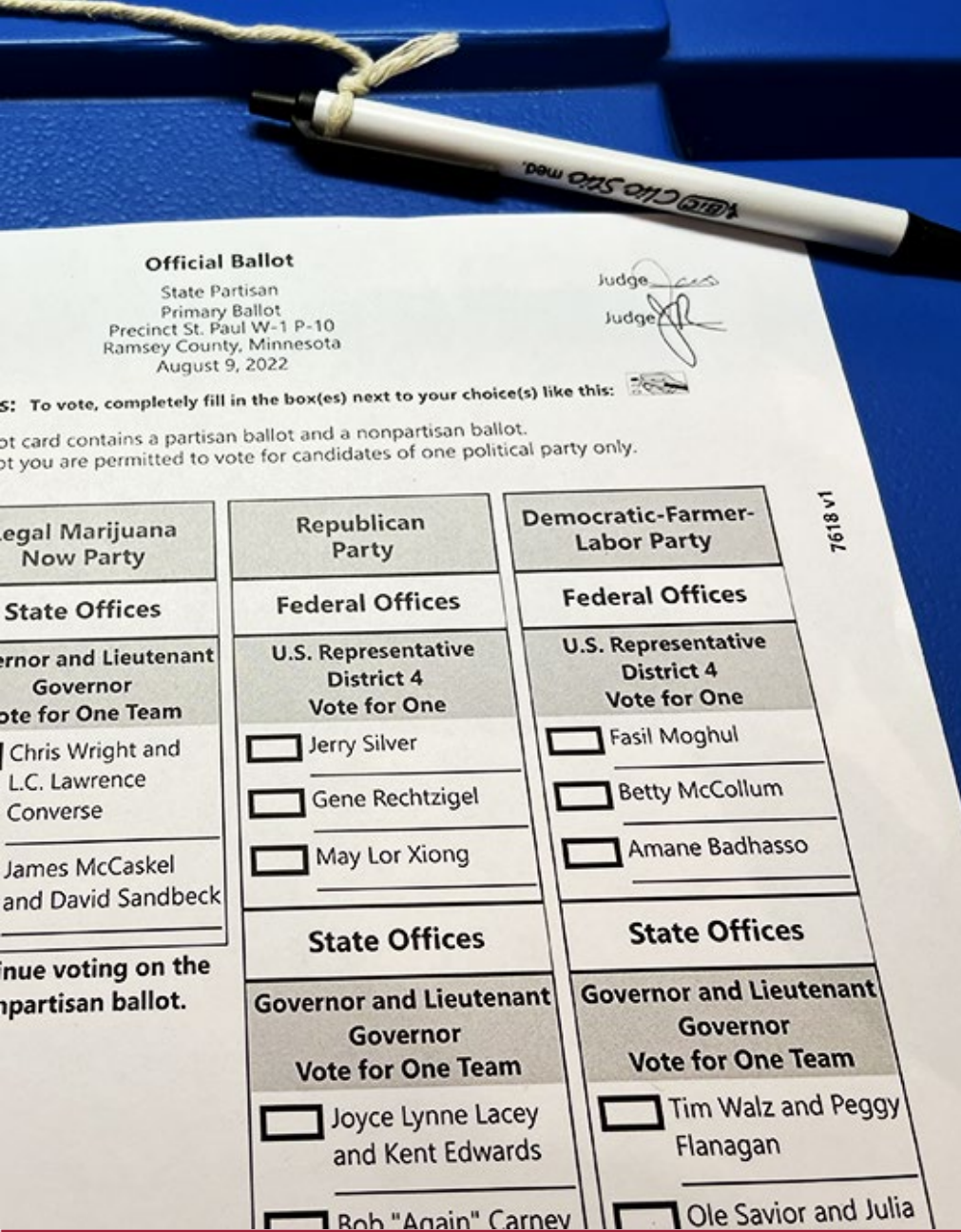
Access is granted from the Minnesota Secretary of State to verified users and verified devices. Requires two factor authentication.

County provides training and monitoring system users.

Daily system maintenance, including:

- Verifying active records
- Verifying address ranges
- Forward violations for investigation

Redundancies in place in case of failure or loss of access.



Securing the Voted Ballots

Election Judges complete an audit at polling place.
Witnessed and sealed in ballot box by all judges.

Ballots are never unsealed. Only opened for
recounts, resolving discrepancies ahead of
canvass, post-election review, or by court order.
Candidates can appoint “ballot guardians.”

Ballots are kept in a secure facility. Early Voting
ballots are returned every day.

Coordinate with Sheriff’s Office for physical
security.



Translation Services Available to Voters

Deploying 50+ professional interpreters to support translation needs at Election Day Polling Places.

Translated sample ballots and polling place signage.

Election Day translation phone line.

NEW – A digital translation application will be available at select polling places. It will allow voters to receive translation services from a professional interpreter if one is not available at their polling place.



Working with Teachers and Students

Coordinate with teacher liaisons at various high schools to recruit and train students to serve as Election Judges. Teacher liaisons are paid a \$500 stipend annually.

We expect to deploy up to 300 student election judges during the general election.

Coordinate with Washington Tech High School to support our election night returns.

Student election judges are paid \$16/hour.



Contracts for Election Services

Since 1996, Ramsey County has entered into contracts with cities and school districts to carry out their election duties.

Current six-year term expires at the end of 2026, in the process of negotiating another six-year term.

Changes to cost schedule include:

- Change in election year
- Salary increase for election judges
- Purchase of new voting booths
- Accounts for the growth in absentee voting



Upgrading the voting system

Need to meet the **VVSG 2.0** federal standards.

Current system purchased in 2015.

Cities own the polling place's hardware, ballot counters and accessible devices.

The county owns:

- Software and hardware used to create ballots, memory devices, and report results.
- Absentee voting hardware.
- Back-up equipment.

Anticipate upgrading end of 2026.

