



Hall County Government

ELECTIONS & REGISTRATION

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DIRECTOR
Lori Wurtz

**BOARD OF ELECTIONS AND
REGISTRATION**

Tom Smiley, Chairman
Craig Lutz, Vice Chair
Ken Cochran, Member
David Kennedy, Member
Gala Sheats, Member

To: Hall County Board of Commissioners
From: Hall County Board of Registrations and Elections
Re: 2020 Evaluation of Elections Director Lori Wurtz
Date: March 1, 2021

The Hall County Board of Registrations and Elections ("BRE") believes that Hall County's 2020 Evaluation of Elections Director Lori Wurtz is inaccurate and unfair. The following is a non-exhaustive list of the BRE's concerns regarding Ms. Wurtz's 2020 evaluation:

1. The BRE believes that Ms. Wurtz performed admirably during the 2020 election cycle. Each election for which she was responsible was certified on time and in accord with those standards set by the Secretary of State;
2. The 2020 election cycle was one of the most challenging election cycles to occur, due to a confluence of events, including COVID-19 and the transformation and enhanced scrutiny accompanying Georgia's transition to a swing state. The BRE does not believe the Hall County evaluation of Ms. Wurtz accorded appropriate weight and context to the very challenging and dynamic nature of 2020 elections;
3. The BRE was neither consulted nor solicited to comment on the evaluation of the Election Director, despite being the entity in Hall County tasked with specifying the functions and duties of elections staff and managing its own election-based affairs;
4. Hall County's performance evaluation of Ms. Wurtz is internally inconsistent. By way of example only, with respect to work performance it states that Ms. Wurtz did *not* meet expectations

regarding a 'consistency in election communication' and yet, under "communication skills" the evaluation states that Ms. Wurtz "*meets expectations*" and that she is "good with handling the public and defusing situations" and composes "acceptable documents" and "displays acceptable telephone skills;"

5. "The Elections Director conducted Hall County elections (with Hall County being the 10th largest county in the state) on a budget that in some instances is appreciably lower than comparably sized jurisdictions. In addition, Hall County Elections have less allocated resources, such as physical work, storage space and personnel than comparable Departments;
6. Hall County created an evaluation document that harshly criticizes Ms. Wurtz's performance. However, and inconsistently, Hall County has broadcast to the community glowing accolades as to how Hall County conducted 2020 elections. In that publicly-released statement, Hall County acknowledged and itemized the formidable challenges associated with 2020 elections and concluded that Hall County "successfully conduct[ed] multiple elections throughout the year despite the many, many challenges they had to overcome and face;"
7. The Hall County BRE believes it incongruous that the Hall County administration created an evaluation document so harshly critical of the Elections Director – and which omits a meaningful recognition of the unprecedented 2020 elections challenges - but then broadcasts a public pronouncement extolling the virtues of the Elections Department. The text of Hall County's publicly broadcast statement is here:

2020 was a challenging year. First off it was a presidential election year which is challenging in and of itself. The state implemented all new voting equipment this year. Our staff worked tirelessly to implement the new machines and trained the many poll workers needed to staff our precincts. And then, of course we had the pandemic which forced us to completely rethink how we conduct an election - from sanitation efforts to socially distanced lines to masks for our employees. The pandemic also contributed to a record surge in absentee voting; meaning staff spent upwards of 12 hours per day at some points processing applications and issuing ballots to the Secretary of State's office. And, although it was a challenge, I'm proud to say that our election staff was still able to successfully conduct multiple elections throughout the year despite the many, many challenges they had to overcome and face.

8. The BRE believes such accolades – and the recognition of unprecedented challenges during the election cycle - should have been duly incorporated into the document evaluating the very person (Ms. Wurtz) that performed so admirably during an unprecedented year.
9. The BRE has overriding legal concerns as to the propriety of the Hall County Elections Director reporting to the Hall County Board of Commissioners, by and through its senior staff; and,
10. The BRE has overriding concerns with Hall County's Performance Improvement Plan of the Elections Director which has, as its first area of identified improvement, a focus on the 'procedures' for elections. The procedures for election is an area that Hall County should not affect either directly or indirectly. Hall County management's concern over election procedures permeates the performance evaluation document, to include specific reference to

procedures for handling absentee by mail ballot processing and the
November 3, 2020 General Election audit.