

ANNUAL REPORT, STRATFORD CT. REGISTRAR OF VOTERS OFFICE, CY 2022

DEPARTMENT FOCUS AND MISSION

The Stratford Registrar of Voters office is responsible for the registration of eligible voters and the conducting of primary and general elections and referendums. Voters elect a Democratic and Republican registrar every four years on a town-wide basis to manage the office and to provide checks and balances.

Our mission is to ensure the accuracy and integrity of all election results by providing professional and efficient services in an impartial manner and to encourage all eligible citizens to exercise their right to vote. Working with the Secretary of State's office in Hartford, we maintain an accurate, updated, transparent voter registry to provide citizens with access to the vote and to uphold confidence in the voting experience. This includes

- registering new residents as well as those who have come of age;
- removing electors who are deceased or have moved out of town;
- purging electors who have been inactive;
- updating the names, addresses and party affiliation of Stratford registered voters.

In an effort to prevent election interference, we seek to conduct all functions in the office in a strictly non-partisan manner. We hire 110+ poll workers, from across all political affiliations, for every election to help us fulfill our mission. *Contact us if you would like to be considered for such a paid position: Registrar@townofstratford.com*

A major focus of our office in 2022 was the August 9 primary election and the November 8 General Election which focused on the election of candidates for U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, governor and the statewide constitutional offices, state legislative races, and Judge of Probate.

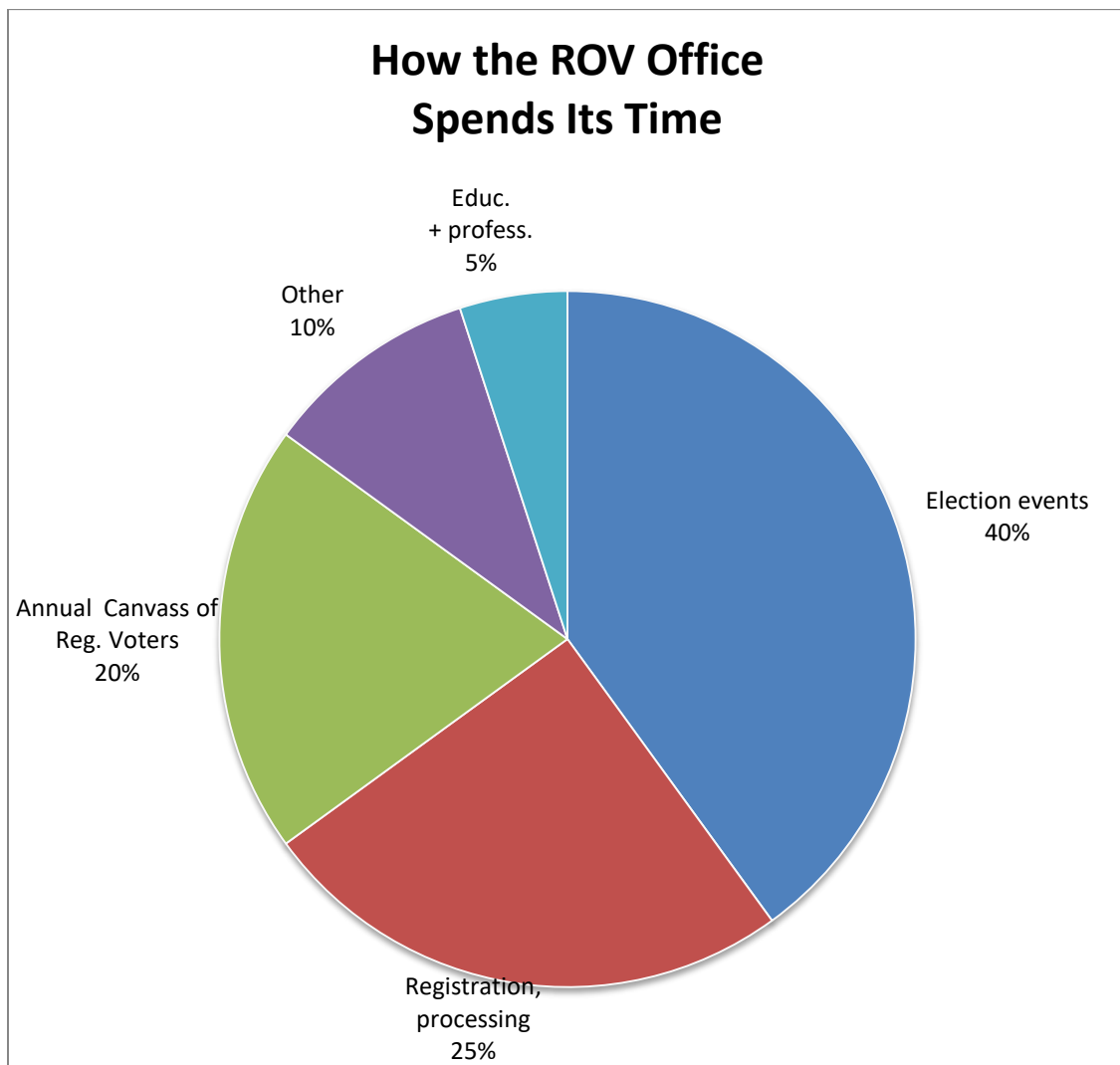
2022 will be remembered for perhaps the hottest temperature of any primary election days in recent memory; four of our tabulator machines malfunctioned and had to be replaced by backups.



**ENSURING ACCURACY 1:
PARING THE VOTER ROLLS**

In 2022, the ROV office continued to tightly monitor the registration of eligible voters in Stratford. We added 2,489 new voters to the rolls in Stratford, changed information on 2,973 voters (such as moving their address across town, to where they may be in a different Town Council district), and removed 3,603 voters. Registrations can be removed due to such reasons as a voter moving out of town, dying, or not participating in several consecutive elections.

In all, the office handled 9,065 transactions in CY2022.



ENSURING ACCURACY 2: ERIC

Like all municipalities in Connecticut, Stratford takes part in the ERIC – Electronic Registration Information Center – effort to share information with other states and keep voting records as up to date as possible. See <https://ericstates.org/> Some 33 states plus the District of Columbia are part of this non-profit organization whose mission is to assist states in improving the accuracy of voter rolls and to increase access to voter registration for all eligible citizens.

Each member state submits its voter registration and motor vehicle licensee data. More sensitive data such as date of birth and the last four digits of the Social Security number are protected using a cryptographic one-way hash and then transmitted to ERIC.

Each member state then receives reports that list the voters who have moved within their state, voters who have moved out of state, voters who have died, duplicate registrations in the same state, and individuals who are potentially eligible to vote but are not yet registered. States may request a report identifying voters who appear to have voted twice within the state in the prior federal election, voted in more than one state in the prior federal election, or who voted on behalf of a deceased voter in the prior federal election.

As part of its annual caucus each Spring, the Stratford ROV then examines the potential problem cases and makes hundreds of adjustments in an effort to keep the voting system as accurate and up to date as possible. We have to certify back to ERIC that we used its data to update our records.



ENSURING ACCURACY 3: LEARNING FROM OTHERS

The ROV office remained abreast of best practices in the field through participation in ROVAC (the Registrar Of Voters Association of Connecticut trade organization) and through the Secretary of State's office. Stratford Registrar Louis DeCilio served as Chairman of the Audit Committee for ROVAC. Registrar James Simon helped update the ROVAC Handbook, due to the many changes in Connecticut election law, and also served on the ROVAC Education Committee, which generates programming for the two annual conferences. Finally, both Registrars served on the Fairfield Council ROVAC group that shares best practices from this region of the state.

In January 2022, the Stratford Registrars volunteered to have Stratford's 2021 ballots used in a trial, conducted by the UConn Center for Voting Technology Research, to examine additional safeguards to protect the integrity of the vote tabulation process.

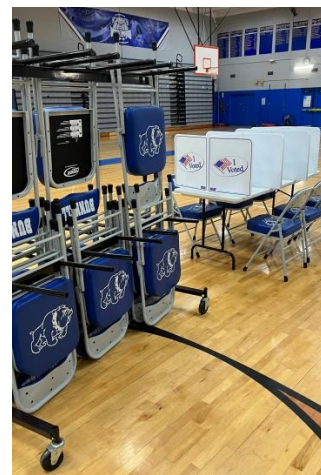
At a time when the voting process was being criticized elsewhere, the Stratford ROV office increased its use of Facebook and other parts of the Internet to communicate directly with voters, explaining the year-long election process and answering their questions about the integrity and accuracy of elections in Stratford.

INVALUABLE MEMBERS OF THE STRATFORD ELECTION TEAM: 110 PAID POLL WORKERS

There are two full-time, elected Registrars of Voters in Stratford, but with the 10 regional polling locations, we can't be in all places at all times. So we hire about 110 paid polling workers to work at the 10 neighborhood polling locations (and at Town Hall, where we offer Election Day Registration and process the Absentee Ballots).

We are very appreciative of the many Tabulator Tenders, Ballot Clerks, Official Checkers, Assistant Registrars, Absentee Ballot Clerks, and Election Day Registration workers who arrive before 5:30 a.m. and work until they are dismissed after polls close at 8 p.m. Most of them help as a way to give back to the town they love; they get paid little more than minimum wage, once you consider all the hours involved. (We used 22 high school-aged workers for paid positions on 11-8-22, and they helped provide a burst of youthful energy that was appreciated.)

We are especially grateful to the Moderators who run each voting location. Under Connecticut Law, they make the final decisions on whatever issues emerge during the day; even the two Registrars of Voters cannot overturn their decisions.



Setting up a polling location

MOST DRAMATIC MOMENT OF THE NOV. 8, 2022 ELECTION IN STRATFORD:

A fire alarm was pulled at about 2 p.m. Second Hill Lane School, where all voting in District 10 takes place. The voting area in the gymnasium was evacuated and locked down while local election workers (and Registrars back at Town Hall) awaited word on if/when voting could resume.

Any registered voters who approached the area were told of what was happening, and most stayed until the all clear was called.

The shutdown continued for about an hour; we track turnout throughout the day at each polling location, and the number of voters at D10 during these hours did not appear to be significantly affected.

2022-23 ROV BUDGET:

**TOWN OF STRATFORD
PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGET
FISCAL YEAR 2022**

ORG	OBJ	DEPARTMENT/DESCRIPTION	FY 2018 ACTUAL	FY 2019 ACTUAL	FY 2020 ACTUAL	FY2021 BUDGET	FY2022 MAYOR PROPOSED	PERCENT CHANGE
REGISTRAR OF VOTERS								
01106	6003	Payroll - Regular	209,692	200,267	217,354	176,807	178,681	
01106	6102	Printing & Stationery	456	426	206	700	700	
01106	6302	Equipment Service	6,984	9,981	5,600	5,600	5,600	
01106	6343	Education/Travel Expense	3,045	3,159	1,281	3,100	3,100	
01106	6463	Deputy Registrars	800	1,024	800	1,000	1,000	
01106	6464	Canvassers	1,397	820	488	1,000	1,000	
01106	6465	Election	83,171	49,101	49,163	64,000	51,715	
01106	6526	Primaries/Specials	14,809	35,365	2,455	32,200	34,700	
01106	6599	Election Material Equipment	2,933	2,164	1,331	2,250	2,250	
			323,287	302,307	278,678	286,657	278,746	-2.76%
HEADCOUNT			4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	

MAJOR DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

1. The Registrars of Voters are responsible for the administration of all local, state and national elections, registration of eligible voters and conducting primaries and referendums. Our mission is to ensure the accuracy and integrity of all results by providing professional and efficient services in an impartial manner and to encourage all eligible citizens to exercise their right to vote.
2. 2020 Presented itself with some unique challenges due to COVID-19. We are happy to report, the goal of protecting the integrity of our elections while simultaneously ensuring the health and safety of voters and poll workers, was met. Our office received a \$10,000 grant for implementing and ensuring safety standards were attained.
3. Cyber Resiliency and Security of our Elections was another top priority. Our office completed an assessment from the Connecticut Military Department which resulted in an additional \$5,000 grant being awarded.
4. In an effort to help offset the additional costs due to COVID-19, our office applied for and received a grant in the amount of \$31,824 from the Center for Tech & Civic Life.
5. The Election and Primaries/Specials accounts fluctuate depending on the type of election conducted (i.e. Presidential, Gubernatorial or Local). The primaries/election account, for this budget cycle, is based on the projected assumption of a town wide dual party primary for offices in September 2021. This account does not take into consideration any unexpected special elections, primaries or referendum that may occur.

SPOTLIGHT: ELECTION DAY COMES EARLY

Registrars, Stratford Rotary Club sponsor innovative HS voting program

Juniors at Stratford and Bunnell High Schools got an early taste of voting issues – and a chance to use the town’s professional voting machines –under a program funded by the Registrars and the Stratford Rotary club.

We launched a comprehensive program in 2022 designed to have each Junior at Stratford High School and Bunnell High School learn about voting on three separate occasions during their mandatory Civics course.

- First, the Registrars offered workshops for all 11th graders in their separate Civics classes and discussed why voting matters, how candidates are chosen, how to campaign -- whether for HS Senior Class President or for U.S. President -- and what they should expect in casting a ballot.
- The Registrars then set up the town’s Opti-Scan voting machines with the names of all candidates for Senior class positions. Stratford Rotary paid to have professional ballots printed. At each school, dozens of students gained experience by filling the roles of Polling Moderator, Assistant Registrar, Official Checker, Ballot Clerk, and Tabulator Tender, and they helped 330+ students cast ballots.



- The Civics teachers were then urged to debrief the students, eliciting comments on what they learned from the process and to gather names of students who would like to be hired in paid positions for the town’s November 2022 election.

In all, 22 of the students later worked in the paid positions. You may have seen some of them when you cast your own ballot.

Garrett Covino, the faculty adviser to student government at Bunnell, said, “Students were attentive, proud, and excited to foster a sense of actual civil engagement. Not to mention how happy they were to receive an official ‘I Voted’ sticker. Who knew that a sticker could be so enticing?”

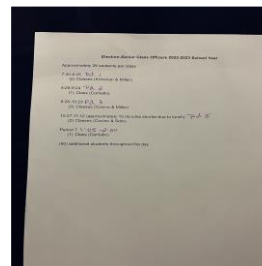
Elizabeth Bourjailie, Chair of the Humanities Department at SHS, said some of the students carried the message home to parents. One told her: “[She] had thought it so cool to see her name on a real ballot! She told me all about the election process when she got home and who was there. Kudos to everyone who set that up.”

Bourjailie also said SHS school psychologist Alissa Orti “reached out to praise the decision to bring this opportunity to our schools” and said it “provided students with this one-of-a-kind-experience.”

The multi-step process demystified voting for students and allowed them to ask questions about issues like absentee ballots and ballot security that they had seen in the news, said Simon, a former political reporter who obtained the grant as a member of Stratford Rotary.

In a final report on the project, he said:

- More than 330 students in Grade 11 heard our preliminary discussion on voting and elections and actually cast a ballot. Many then discussed the project back in the classroom to close the learning loop.
- 40 students -- some of the same voters, some students from other grades – gained practical experience by serving as high school election workers.
- More than 20 BHS and SHS students applied to work in paid positions at the Stratford polls in the August 2022 primary and the November general election.



Kirsten Kovacs-Hardy, Humanities coordinator at Bunnell High School, said studies have found only 50 percent of young people are taught how to register to vote in high school.

“I knew we had to do better,” she said, looking back on the project. “In order to encourage students to vote, we must first remove some of the mental and structural barriers. These include understanding complicated rules when it comes to requesting absentee ballots, a lack of confidence in the value of their votes, and an overall fear of the voting process.”

“I believe Lou DeCilio and Jim Simon helped dismantle these and other barriers during their informative discussions and facilitation of the simulated election. The teachers and administration at Bunnell thank them and the Rotary Club for their support of this important endeavor. We look forward to making this an annual event.”



ELECTION QUIZ: *How do I know if it is an election year in Stratford?*

Every year is an election year in Stratford!

- The presidential election tops the ballot every four years (including 2020, 2024)
- In the following odd-numbered year (2021, 2025), we have municipal elections, with the mayoral race and town council elections on top of the ticket
- In the other even-numbered years (2022, 2026), we have statewide elections; the race for governor, constitutional offices (and often U.S. Senate) tops the ballot
- In the final odd-numbered years (2023, 2027), the ballot includes all town council positions, some Board of Education and Land Use Boards positions, and Constable.

Looking ahead to 2023:

Early 2023

Stratford Registrars take part in an appointed town Redistricting Commission, designed to redraw lines for the 10 Town Council Districts so each has a similar number of residents (based on the 2020 U.S. Census). Recommended changes go to the Town Council for final approval; new lines take effect in 2023 municipal election.

Connecticut Legislature to make decision on whether Early Voting, approved by voters in 2022, should go into effect for 2023 or start thereafter

September 12, 2023

Potential primary elections for any challengers to party-endorsed candidates for Town Council, Board of Education, Land Use Boards, and Constable.

November 7, 2023

General election for offices listed above.

SUPPLEMENTAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- Stratford ROV Town Hall [web pages](https://www.stratfordct.gov/content/39832/39846/39935/default.aspx) :
<https://www.stratfordct.gov/content/39832/39846/39935/default.aspx>
- Register to Vote; change your name, address and/or Party affiliation:
<https://voterregistration.ct.gov/OLVR>
- Look up and see if you are already registered:
<https://portaldir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1yUL06V2ci3TmhQDbOL-b0tv4nOnowc38XOINIE6L33A3aJ5ifObNeX3k>

COME VISIT US AT STRATFORD TOWN HALL, ROOM 117,
MONDAY-FRIDAY, 8:30a – 430p:

- ✓ Registrar James Simon (D); jsimon@townofstratford.com
- ✓ Registrar Louis DeCilio (R); ldecilio@townofstratford.com
- ✓ Judy Scala, administrative assistant; jscala@townofstratford.com