

Alexandria School Board Meeting  
December 4, 2014

Anna Leider, Registrar of Voters, City of Alexandria

Thanks for the opportunity to appear and thanks for consideration of our long-standing proposal to close schools to students on general election days. There is one primary reason for our recommendation and that reason is the safety and security of Alexandria school children.

- During Presidential elections, up to three thousand voters enter a school on Election Day. During off-year elections that number drops, but still ranges from 1,500 to 2,000 voters.
  - Looking at data from the November 2014 election, about 45% of all voters come to the polls between 9am and 4pm which translates to 675 to 900 voters per polling place.
  - Doors that are normally locked for security reasons must be opened to voters. And voters cannot be required to sign in via an ACPS registration system.
  - This year, at least one parent and PTA President expressed great concern with the flow of voters at George Mason Elementary. We will be looking at that issue again prior to the next election.
  
- In addition, traffic increases greatly around schools on election days creating hazardous conditions, especially during morning drop-offs and afternoon pick-ups. This election we received complaints about

dangerous conditions at George Mason, MacArthur and Lyles Crouch as well as reports of school buses completely blocking the parking at Patrick Henry.

Due to state and federal laws we are partners by mandate in providing polling places to voters. The law requires that public facilities be used whenever possible. In many neighborhoods, schools are the only public facilities available. Currently, 8 schools serve as polling places as well as 5 rec centers that are next to schools.

In discussing this issue with our colleagues around the state we find that most schools have decided to close on general election days due to increased danger to students. When we looked at the 2014-2015 calendars for other Northern Virginia localities, most do use Election Day as a teacher work day, including Arlington, Fairfax and Prince William Counties.

We understand that the 2016-2017 calendar does include Election Day as a teacher work day and we appreciate that since in Presidential election years, all of these security concerns will be magnified. It will also give students at TCW who are eligible the opportunity to serve as election officials.....

Thank you for your consideration.