

from the desk of...



Craig Latimer
Supervisor of Elections



VoteHillsborough.org

June 2015

Checking Our List are you up-to-date?



Since taking office in January 2013, I've put an emphasis on communication, transparency and customer service with increased use of social media, a redesigned website (with live chat), and this monthly newsletter. And since there's no substitute for personal service, we opened two regional offices that keep the same operating hours as our two main offices and allow us to be a convenient resource for citizens living anywhere in our large geographic area. I am proud of the staff we have in place, ready to answer your questions promptly and professionally.

With our 2015 elections behind us, a lot of our focus is now on helping people register to vote and update their voter registration information. I want to encourage you to keep in touch with our

office and let us know if any of these things change:

- ★ your residential address
- ★ your mailing address
- ★ your name
- ★ your signature

And, if you get something in the mail from us, open it up and read it. Between now and the 2016 elections, we will be carefully reviewing our database of registered voters and working to make sure our voter roll is as current as possible.

3 Simple Steps...

...if you want to be a poll worker, campaign for a candidate, run for office, get out the vote, or stay informed about our upcoming elections:

1. Keep reading this newsletter
2. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter & YouTube
3. Visit VoteHillsborough.org often

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to the Tampa Bay Lightning on a fantastic season!

the flip side



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IN THE NEWS

Tampa Bay Times Award reflects agency's renewal

The transformation of the Hillsborough County elections office appeared complete last week as the agency became the first of its kind in Florida to receive the Governor's Sterling Award. This recognition for excellence didn't happen automatically or come overnight, and it speaks to the contribution that committed public servants can make to their communities, good government and democracy itself.

Under a former supervisor, Buddy Johnson, the elections office was in the news several years ago for all the wrong reasons. He was an erratic and incompetent administrator who turned the operation into a jumbled mess — politicizing the office, losing ballots, wasting tax money, and driving staff morale and public confidence into the ground.

Phyllis Busansky defeated Johnson in 2008, and she put several major reforms in place before her untimely death only months later. Her successor, Earl Lennard, continued that work with ethical standards and an attention to detail that raised the professionalism of the office. And his successor, Craig Latimer, took over in 2013 and built on that foundation, putting the

Johnson legacy farther in the rear-view mirror with a new-found focus on voter service.

The award Latimer's office received last week reflects the large role he played as chief of staff to Busansky and Lennard as both sought to redirect the agency. In the past six years, Latimer has improved staff training, made it more convenient to vote and opened up the political process with new tools for informing the voters.

The office joins Hillsborough's tax collector (2008) and Pinellas' tax collector (2013) among the select group of public and private entities that have earned a Sterling since the award was first given in 1993.

Few government agencies demand the public's trust as much as the elections office. The award has shown what can be achieved over a relatively short time when elected officials put the public's interest ahead of self-serving political agendas. For an agency with only 42 full-time employees, this award also reflects the value of leaders who show up to work and inspire teamwork by setting a professional and ethical tone that's a point of pride for the entire office. Job well done.

Few government agencies demand the public's trust as much as the elections office.

Check out SaintPetersBlog.com's story published 5/18/15, too.

Tampa Bay Times



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Ebbs, flows define our political fishbowl

Once upon a time, you walked into the Hillsborough elections office in downtown Tampa only to encounter a receptionist behind plexiglass and a buzzer to ensure no one got in unnoticed. This seemed odd for a supposedly public office, but the elections boss back then, Buddy Johnson, was a secretive sort of guy. There were rumors of a hidden back exit, too.



Craig Latimer

Turned out there was plenty to keep under wraps during Johnson's tenure — uncounted votes, mysteriously moved polling places, irresponsible public spending, plummeting staff morale and generally little reason to believe the important job of running elections was getting done right.

That plexiglass was the first thing to go when Phyllis Busansky, a political breath of fresh air until her death in 2009, took over with her chief of staff, Craig Latimer. And today, Latimer runs an elections office officially turned around. Don't take my word for it — he's just won the prestigious Governor's Sterling Award for excellence. Things can change, even in government.

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE and The Tampa Times

BRIAN BURNS — Publisher
JOE GUIDRY — Opinion Editor
KEN KOEHN — Managing Editor

Our Views

Latimer's notable accomplishment

Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections Craig Latimer and his team deserve attention and praise for earning the Governor's Sterling Award, the result of an exacting process that required every aspect of the office's operations to be scrutinized.

It is the first elections office in the state to receive the award.

Latimer, elected in 2012, entered the competition as a means to promote efficiency, productivity and customer service and "to show voters I take their trust seriously."

Sterling examiners spent a week in the office interviewing employees and observing operations, and then spent weeks analyzing the organization's results and comparing its processes and results to other organizations.

They found a well-organized office with clear performance benchmarks aimed at improving the voters' experience while protecting election security.

Latimer says a key strategy has been to emphasize more voter options. By making it easier for citizens to vote either through the mail, early voting or at the ballot box, his office was able to increase the number of voters while reducing lines and Election Day aggravation.

The shift also reduces costs, because fewer poll workers are needed.

Gov. Rick Scott in announcing the winners

highlighted some statistics that reflected the effectiveness of Latimer's strategies: The proportion of Hillsborough residents who voted before Election Day increased from 32.4 percent in 2004 to 58.33 percent in 2014. The number of voters increased 7 percent from 2008 to 2012, the highest increase of any large Florida county during that period and far exceeding the statewide average of 2 percent. And precincts reporting by 10 p.m. on election night increased from 0 percent in 2008 to 100 percent in 2014.

Moreover, since his election in 2012, Latimer has conducted six elections without incident.

The Florida Sterling Award was initiated by the late Gov. Lawton Chiles and is modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige Award, a national program that recognizes public and private operations for outstanding performance.

Hillsborough Tax Collector Doug Belden was the first local elected official to enter the competition, and his office won the award in 2008.

Latimer credits Belden's example, which few other local officials have followed. But Latimer himself deserves credit for deciding to subject his office to the grueling review, understanding that, regardless of how the office fared, the experience would drive internal improvement while also providing citizens a means to judge the office's performance.

It is reassuring to see the office is handling its work efficiently. It is also reassuring to see a government agency that welcomes more scrutiny and criticism in its effort to better serve the public.



We are very proud of Supervisor of Elections Craig Latimer for challenging his staff to meet the highest standards for serving the public in an effective and efficient manner and earning the 2015 Governor's Sterling Award.

The office and its processes were scrutinized by examiners, employees were interviewed and data was compared with other successful business practices.

Latimer voluntarily sought to have his office examined under a microscope and it not only passed, it shined.

the last word

We are proud to receive commendations from the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the Tampa City Council recognizing our Governor's Sterling Award. We'll share pictures soon.

