

Board of Elections leaves Alliance

- By Savanna Tenenoff Brunswick Beacon Staff Writer
- Feb 1, 2024 Updated Apr 8, 2024

The Brunswick County election office has withdrawn its membership from The US Alliance for Election Excellence.

Elections Director Sara LaVere told the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners of the decision during the county's goals workshop. The workshop is designed for county departments to share their successes, shortfalls, goals and needs.

In April 2023, the Brunswick County Board of Elections voted to remain in the Alliance after county commissioners asked the county elections office to withdraw, citing concerns that membership in the Alliance would bring partisan funding to the board of elections and as well as the organization's alleged connection to Facebook founder and billionaire Mark Zuckerberg.

The U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence, launched by the nonprofit Center for Tech and Civic Life, states it is "a nonpartisan collaborative that is bringing together election officials, designers, technologists, and other experts to help local election departments improve operations, develop a set of shared standards and values, and obtain access to best-in-class resources to run successful elections."

The Center for Tech and Civic Life describes itself as "a team of civic technologists, trainers, researchers, election administration and data experts working to foster a more informed and engaged democracy, and helping to modernize U.S. elections."

The Alliance's goals, as stated in the membership agreement, are primarily related to networking. The agreement states the Alliance's purpose is "to learn from election officials, inspire them to excellence, and celebrate their success."



The Board of Elections in April 2023 voted 3-2 in favor of remaining with the Alliance. The elections department has now made the decision to exit the organization.

LaVere said she currently serves as the president of the North Carolina Association of Directors of Elections and serves on the federal U.S. Elections Assistance Commission (EAC). Between participating in the organizations and her regular workload, she said something had to go.

"We made the decision [because] with everything going on in 2024 [and] administering the election," she said.

"And then I'm also with the directors association and the elections assistance commission. Something had to go."

She told commissioners EAC has a Local Leadership Council (LLC) that connects local election officials to discuss concerns, problems and ideas. The EAC website states that the LLC "is made up of 100 local election officials who are current or former officers in each state's local election official association."

Commissioner Frank Williams asked her if she felt like participating in the EAC is filling a "void" and she responded yes.

She said the EAC offers opportunities for her to share experiences and challenges that other officials and election departments may experience. It also has different resources and materials she uses, she added.

"I didn't even realize but the Elections Assistance Commission is kind of a customer service agency for election officials," LaVere told commissioners. "So their job is to put out materials and guides and standards that we then put into practice."

Other organizations, she noted, offer virtual seminars and other resources that aid in training, skills, like writing an editorial for a newspaper, and handling situations, such as the power going out during election time.

She also said traveling to attend and participate in EAC opportunities and duties is covered by the federal government, not the county.

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