Numbered Memo 2020-05

TO: County Boards of Elections
FROM: Karen Brinson Bell, Executive Director
RE: Processing Requests for Party Change for Existing Registrants
DATE: February 7, 2020

In late 2019, the instructions on the voter registration form, were updated to indicate that a currently registered voter may update not only the voter’s name and address but also their party affiliation or unaffiliated status by fax or by email; the form may also be returned in person or by mail. **Voters making one of these changes are not required to submit a hard copy of the form with a wet ink signature.**

The instructions on the voter registration form were updated to reflect that existing registrants in the county are not required to re-register when they update their information. See G.S. §§ 163-82.15(a) and 163-82.16(a). For existing registrants in your county, you will already have a wet ink signature on file, except for individuals who registered at DMV, who do not require a wet ink signature for new registrations. See G.S. § 163-82.6(c).

Previously, an administrative rule permitted new registrants and existing registrants making a party affiliation change to submit their voter registration form via fax to the county board of elections, but the fax was required to be followed by a hard copy of the form with an original signature within 20 days prior to the election. This rule expired in 2017, but guidance and forms were not updated at that time.

Any new registration in the county still requires a wet ink signature. G.S. § 163-82.6(c) is clear that a for new registrations, a wet ink signature is required. However, there is no requirement in the statutes that updates to a registered voter’s name, address, or party affiliation must include a wet ink signature.

If you have voter registration forms in your incomplete queue or archive queue because the voter requested a party affiliation change and the forms were received by fax or email on or after November 19, 2019, and not followed by a hard copy with a wet ink signature, you should process these through. This was the date on which the updated voter registration form was made publicly available.