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DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

PRESS RELEASE

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Department of Elections Debuts Virginia Election Data Project

RICHMOND, VA – The Virginia Department of Elections (the Department) released the Virginia Election Data Project, a collaborative effort with local election officials and the State Board of Elections (SBE), with technical assistance provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The Virginia Election Data Project, available at <http://elections.virginia.gov/dataproject>, analyzes election and voter data provided to the Department by local election offices and presents the data visualized in a user-friendly online format.

Highlights from this data analysis include:

- Highlighting changes in how Virginia voters are choosing to register to vote: In every year since 2012, the majority of voter registration applications were submitted through the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). However, Virginia voters are beginning to rely more heavily on online registration, which was introduced in 2013. In the first three months of 2016, approximately 40 percent of registrations came via the state’s online registration system, while 33 percent came from the DMV. Online voter registration is available through the Department’s citizen portal at <http://elections.virginia.gov/register>
- Preparing for Presidential election year activity: While Presidential election years generally bring high levels of participation, local election officials can use this tool to see that voter registration activity is almost 35% higher during the first three months of 2016 in comparison to the first three months of 2012. This allows local election officials to prepare to hire additional staff for processing voter registrations to ensure timely responses to voters.

Governor Terry McAuliffe applauded the release of the Virginia Election Data Project and said, “This approach to data analysis enhances government transparency and accountability as part of my administration’s commitment to make voting more accessible.” These visualizations enable members of the public to assess their locality’s performance in several areas, such as voter turnout, voter registration application acceptance rates and absentee ballot application processing times.

Virginia continues to be a national leader in leveraging technology and data to improve the voting experience. Commissioner of Elections Edgardo Cortés said, “We are delighted to debut the Virginia Election Data Project as part of the Department’s ongoing efforts to improve the administration of

elections in the Commonwealth. This tool allows us to use a data-driven approach to recognize best practices that will result in a better experience for Virginia voters.”

The Department and the SBE will use this data to identify general registrars with the best election administration practices and share them across the state. James Alcorn, Chairman of the Virginia State Board of Elections, said, “This tool helps the Board, policy makers, and the public to better understand and evaluate election administration in Virginia. This is in line with the Board’s practice of conducting quality reviews of elections with local election administrators.”

The Department of Elections created a working group of local election officials to provide feedback and guidance during development of the Virginia Election Data Project. Donna Patterson, the City of Virginia Beach General Registrar and a member of the working group, said, “This project provides a useful tool for identifying strengths and challenges in local election offices. We are building on the long history of working together as an election community to identify ways to better serve our voters.”

“Virginia’s year-long effort to use local-level data to assess and improve the elections process is an important step in identifying what’s working as well as where there are challenges,” said Sean Greene, project director for The Pew Charitable Trusts’ election initiatives. “This is a good example of how states can bring together local officials to both share best practices and take a hard look at how to improve election administration.” Pew’s election initiatives examine pressing election problems, share successful practices, and undertake projects to help states implement efficient and cost-effective solutions.

The working group of local election officials that assisted the Department consisted of Tammy Alexander, Electoral Board member, City of Petersburg; April Cain, Electoral Board member, Henrico County; Lisa Jeffers, Director of Elections, City of Waynesboro; Bill Lewis, Electoral Board member, City of Hampton; Margaret Marcenelle, Electoral Board member, Mecklenburg County; John Nunnaly, Electoral Board member, Caroline County; Donna Patterson, General Registrar, City of Virginia Beach; Greg Riddlemoser, Director of Elections, Stafford County; and Allison Robbins, Director of Elections, Wise County.

The Virginia Election Data Project is available at <http://elections.virginia.gov/dataproject>.

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