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**State of Vermont**

**Office of the Secretary of State**

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**James C. Condos, Secretary of State**

**Christopher D. Winters, Deputy Secretary**

## **Position Requests for the Secretary of State's Office**

2/17/2021

### **ELECTIONS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

The 2022 election cycle was the latest chapter highlighting the need to expand Vermont's smallest-in-the-nation elections team (5 members, including the Director) by one. The elections division has remained at five employees for at least 12 years has been increasingly stretched thin as elections become more challenging each year.

Starting around 2016, the profile of elections dramatically shifted with much more emphasis around cybersecurity, disinformation, technology, and data. Concurrently, elections have been under the microscope like never before with increased attention from the public and the press.

In Vermont, we have seen several new systems and approaches changing election administration while improving ballot access: automatic voter registration, election day registration, and online voter registration and, most recently, increased early and mail voting. All of these have been great for Vermonters but have added additional administrative complexity and burdens upon our office.

The Secretary of State's Office is requesting an additional administrator position in its elections division to carry out high level functions such as:

- Backup in Director's absence
- Project management
- Systems and data specialist
- Request for Proposals (RFP)
- Grant writing/reporting
- Information Technology procurement
- Data analyst – voter registration, absentee voting, election results
- Checklist data management/integrity
- Website content management
- Cybersecurity background if possible
- Vendor management

This position would take on a primary role in all things beyond our most basic responsibilities in administering elections. Existing staff do the day-to-day of running Vermont elections very well, but it comes at the expense of other important work and projects we need to pursue to improve our data, systems, and processes. Some examples of projects in which we can maximize our participation and the benefit to Vermonters include:

- Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) for checklist & voter registration improvement
- Common data format work with the Overseas Voting Initiative (OVI)
- New geo-enabled elections work with Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI)
- Automatic Voter Registration improvements at DMV and with social service agencies
- Engaging national and state partners with voter education initiatives
- Procurement of new systems and software including new tabulators, services related to ballot mailing and an upgrade to our elections management system

The 2020 cycle required an “all hands on deck” approach with Secretary Condos, Deputy Secretary Winters and Chief of Staff Eric Covey dedicating almost all of our time to elections issues over the last year to ensure success. This came at the expense of the other divisions and cannot continue long term. Even before vote by mail, an additional position was on our horizon of legislative asks. With Vermont headed toward a permanent vote by mail system, there is no doubt we need this additional resource to ensure our continued success going forward.

Pay Grade: 29

Salary and benefits: ~\$125K

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## **ROVING ARCHIVIST**

This position is unique in Vermont and there is no other position in Vermont state government that has this job description. There is no budget issue as the Secretary of State’s Office has been financially supporting the majority of this position for three years in anticipation of this position being fully funded in our proposed FY22 budget.

In 2017, Secretary of State’s Office allocated funds for a temporary part-time position in VSARA to provide support to the Vermont State Archivist in carrying out the duties outlined in 3 V.S.A. § 117(g)(4-5) and for building what is now the Vermont Historical Records and Roving Archivist Program.

This position is critical as, unlike library, museum, and archeological programs, which receive significant Federal funding annually under specific Federal acts, archives and other historical records repositories must compete for a limited number of Federal and private grants each year to supplement their budgets for staff and programming.

The significant duties of the Roving Archivist are to:

- Ensure the State of Vermont, whether State government or its numerous non-profits, remains eligible for grants pertaining to the preservation of and access to Vermont archival records.
- Maximize the limited human and financial sources statewide, including grant funds, through a centralized resource – a highly skilled professional archivist and grant writer – who “roves” the State of Vermont providing:

- Technical archival expertise through onsite visits and workshops;
- Writing and co-writing grants;
- Opportunities to develop partnerships and consortia, and
- Awareness of the value of Vermont's historical records.

This position has evolved to a limited-service full-time benefited position that was partially funded (\$40K annually) by a Federal state programming grant in FY19-21 and will be fully funded by the Secretary of State's Office in FY22. This change:

- Creates sustainability of a centralized resource, who has already been instrumental in securing grants (\$350K since starting part-time in 2017), providing onsite visits and workshops, and building partnerships and consortia.
- Allows the State of Vermont to maximize a minimum of \$40K that can be requested annually for programming needs, which was awarded to VSARA in November 2020 effective June 2021 for this upcoming fiscal year.
- Provides ongoing archival expertise and support to more than 200 non-profit repositories in Vermont, many of which are managed by a single staff member and/or volunteers and financially fragile.

If not made into a permanent position, the State of Vermont will lose this vital centralized resource. Loss will result in the termination of the Vermont Historical Records and Roving Archivist programs and diminished ability for the State of Vermont to receive supplemental funds through much needed grants.

This position was created because VSARA staff, particularly the State Archivist, who also serves as the State's Chief Records Officer and VSARA's director, are stretched too thin.

This has not changed and over the course of the last three years. VSARA has received additional mandates to provide services that it is actively working to absorb, including the State Boards and Commission registry that the Agency of Administration and the Governor's Office requested of the Sunset Review Commission and that was added into state law during the 2018-2019 session.

Pay Grade: 28

Salary and benefits: ~\$110K