

## The election night follies of 2018

Posted by [TBN Editor](#) On 11/07/2018

**Lexington Park, MD** - Tuesday, Nov. 6 was a busy day for most Americans who celebrate democracy and take the responsibility of choosing leaders on many levels most seriously. While "mid-term" elections don't attract the turnouts to match those of a presidential year, they are just as important. Many quality of life issues are the purview of the individuals who gain the votes during these elections. Throughout Maryland, state leaders and lawmakers are picked while the state's jurisdictions also choose their leaders. It's a huge transfer of responsibility that voters perform by secret ballot. While Maryland generally has good election policy and top notch facilitators, what happened Tuesday evening after 8 p.m. was simply unacceptable. Election officials in the locations that had an eleventh-hour surge of voters waiting in line did the correct thing in allowing everyone standing in those lines at closing time to vote. Not surprisingly, it took a significant amount of time. In Prince George's County, the situation was made worse when some polling places ran out of paper ballots. Who could have seen that coming?

What wasn't acceptable was the embargo of information election officials chose to enact on those jurisdictions where all the votes were tallied and ready to be released to a curious public. That anxious group included candidates, their families and friends, campaign workers, party officials, post-election gathering hosts, members of various media outlets and, most importantly, the local voters who had a right to know in a timely manner, who had won the various races.

"We will release the unofficial results once they have all finished voting," Maryland Elections tweeted. Maryland Elections Board Administrator Linda Lamone is quoted in the Baltimore Sun as saying, "it's my understanding that some [counties] have gone ahead and posted it anyway but we have asked them not to." Lamone further indicated that this embargo was not a departure from the past. What Lamone hasn't done is adequately explain why this policy would be applied. What do local elections in Towson and Prince George's County have to do with local races in Calvert, St. Mary's and Charles counties? Why should a jurisdiction waiting to learn results of their local election have to be held in suspense when the Election Day voting is over?

Lamone has been Maryland's election administrator since 1997 and there have been prior attempts to have her removed. True, some of it was political. In a 2004 Washington Post story about an effort to have her removed, it was noted that, by law, she could only be removed due to "incompetence, misconduct or other good cause."

In this case, misconduct is not applicable. However, imposing an embargo on non-impacted counties certainly calls into question her competence. So, is this a "good cause" to finally conclude her tenure? We believe informing the public and allowing the hard-working local political community to finally exhale is one of the greatest causes ever.

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