Considerations for Protest Management During Elections

Protests, demonstrations, and other related events on and after Election Day may result in the need for a coordinated police response. Agencies should plan and prepare for this possibility. Police departments should take the lead on making the following important considerations for protest management:

Public Communication:

- Be proactive in communicating expectations with the community through a variety of channels
- Communicate how often, and where, agency press conferences should be on Election Day
- Communicate with community members and the media during any potential demonstrations or critical incidents. If needed, update your communication strategy
- Ensure that you have capabilities to message on social media as well as track incidents or developments broadcast over social media

Planning and Preparedness:

- Complete and disseminate an ICS Plan (Incident Action Plan) for Election Day
  - Identify how many polling locations there are and where they are located
  - Identify how many polling locations will be open at once in your specific jurisdiction
  - Have ingress/egress routes and floorplans for each of the buildings and its surrounding areas readily accessible
- Identify the most likely locations for a demonstration related to the election or its results to emerge
  - Locate your closest resources to each of these locations
- Be aware of potential extremist threats currently in, or threatening to come into, your community on Election Day and for the days that follow
  - Request a briefing from authorities who might have such knowledge
- Plan access to/deployment of the resources (staffing, equipment, etc.) you may need during a response to a demonstration

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Command and Control:

- Identify if anyone/who from your agency should be on-site at each polling place
  - Clearly define the authorization they will have to immediately make requests for backup and tactical units
- Determine whether decision-makers should be at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or Unified Command Center, or spread across various locations
  - Identify who will be required and be on-call if you activate the EOC
- Clarify how agencies (e.g., law enforcement, fire, EMS) will communicate with one another during potential incidents
- Include your mutual aid partners in your EOC or Command Center. If they cannot send representation, establish direct lines of communication between EOCs/Command Centers
- Identify, share, and receive important information from your fusion/intelligence/problem-solving centers

Response:

- Provide election officials and the head of each polling location a direct line within your agency
- Decide how officers (i.e., uniformed, plainclothes, and tactical units) will be deployed in general and in response to any evolving demonstrations
- Review policies for mass demonstration events. Make additional plans around unavailable mutual aid partners due to mass demonstrations that are taking place in their own areas
- Consider deploying CIT-trained officers to establish community/protestor dialogue and potentially de-escalate situations
- Coordinate with state-level agencies for the potential response of state resources such as the National Guard or state police
- Incorporate communications center staff incorporated into the response