

The Star-Ledger

N.J. attorney general dispatches more than 100 people to monitor Tuesday's election

By Blake Nelson

NJ Advance Media for NJ.com and The Star-Ledger

Published Nov. 5, 2019

The state Attorney General's Office is sending more than 125 employees throughout New Jersey to help oversee Tuesday's election.

The deputy attorneys general will be stationed in every county to help local officials address legal issues that might pop up. Gurbir Grewal, the state's attorney general, said in a statement that they would help "ensure the integrity of the election process."

Experts said how often legal issue arose varied widely from place to place.

Brigid Harrison, a political science and law professor at Montclair State University, said residents who had recently moved or changed their last names might be challenged at a polling place if their information didn't match the voter rolls.

In this scenario, which she said was more likely in the midst of a competitive election, a deputy attorney could advise as to whether that person was qualified to cast a ballot. The attorneys could also push back against people campaigning too close to voting booths, Harrison said.

John Farmer, a former New Jersey attorney general and director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University, said deputies had been monitoring elections for decades.

He added that a judge might ultimately need to rule on a specific voter's eligibility.

More deputies were sent out in 2017, when voters had to choose a new governor.

Turnout is generally lower without a Congressional midterm or governor's race happening at the same time, according to data from The Center for Government Studies at Rutgers University.

While more than half of New Jersey's registered voters showed up to the polls last year, only about about a fifth of the state voted in 2015, the last time the Assembly topped the ticket.

Tuesday's election features every seat in the Assembly, the Legislative house that passes the budget. Voters will also choose candidates for a host of local jobs.

The deputies will work from 6 a.m., when the polls open, until voting ends at 8 p.m. About 500 deputy attorneys general work for New Jersey in total, representing the state in thousands of cases each year.

Residents with voting questions can call New Jersey's voter assistance line toll-free at 1-877-NJVOTER.