



Charleston County News Release

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Charleston County Hosts Hungarian Officials to Discuss Voting Practices

Charleston County's Board of Elections and Voter Registration welcomes officials from Hungary to share ideas on voting.

Delegates from Hungary flew to the U.S. and met at Charleston County's Board of Elections and Voter Registration office on Tuesday, Oct. 2 along with representatives from the Charleston Area League of Women Voters.

The purpose of this unique meeting was to talk about how the League of Women Voters connects U.S. citizens with their government.

Marilyn Bowers, Executive Director of Charleston County's Board of Elections and Voter Registration, conducted a demonstration of South Carolina's voting system and election procedures, and provided a tour of the office.

"This was the first time that I have actually had visitors from another country," Bowers said. "This was a valuable meeting for everyone, and we learned a lot about the election process in Hungary."

The Hungarian visitors were Colonel Gabor Borondi, Deputy Commander, Fifth Infantry Brigade, and Dr. David Pustzai, International Affairs Advisor. The Workgroup for International and European Affairs, Hungarian Socialist Party Parliamentary Faction were in the U.S. under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. While in Charleston, they were hosted by the South Carolina World Trade Center.

"It is always very interesting to see the differences in the ways elections are conducted, even within the United States," Bowers said. "We meet and talk with election officials from other states quite often to discuss federal legislation that may affect our national elections. We also discuss how to improve some of our procedures such as making the absentee balloting process more accessible to our military and overseas citizens."

In Hungary, all elections are held in April, May or October, and, with minor exception, citizens vote every four years.

"Most people would be shocked to hear that there is an election every Tuesday somewhere in South Carolina," Bowers said. "Our meeting was encouraging, as we are hoping to move toward consolidating voting dates throughout the state."

Facts on the voting system in Hungary:

- Voter registration is automatic when a Hungarian citizen turns 18 years old.
- To vote in an election, citizens must present their National Picture ID card, which they receive when they turn 14 years old, along with another issued card that shows their name and address.
- Voter turnout is much higher in Hungary than in the U.S. and South Carolina.
- If they fail to change their address, citizens have to return to their old voting location and vote under the old address. There are no penalties if they don't update their address and vote in their previous district.
- Hungarians vote every four years except for Parliamentary Elections, which are held every five years.
- All elections are held in April, May or October.

To learn more about Charleston County's Board of Elections and Voter Registration, go to <http://vote.charlestoncounty.org>.

Visit the Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.