



COUNTY OF ALLEGHENY

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2008 General Election Experience Report

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Overview

The entire state of Pennsylvania and particularly the Southwestern region was once again characterized as a “battleground state” in the 2008 Presidential Election. As a result, the candidate organizations, news media and voters were acutely interested in the County’s pre-election readiness and expected performance level on the day of the election. In my opinion, we met these expectations due to the efforts of the full-time and temporary Elections Division staff, the 200 field technicians and over 7,500 precinct election officials and constables. Post-election media accounts also support this conclusion.

A total of 659,347 ballots were counted which represents 68.96% of this county’s 956,114 registered voters. 40,783 absentee ballots were issued, and 2,808 provisional ballots were cast on Election Day. Of these, 268 were fully counted, 1,071 were partially counted and 1,469 were rejected. In all, over 47% of the provisional ballots were at least counted for State-wide offices which include the office of Presidential Elector.

The 2,808 provisional ballots that were cast represent a 68% decrease in the number cast (8,513) in the previous 2004 Presidential Election. This decrease can be attributed to the accuracy of the election-day poll books, the doubling of the number of election-day staff who fielded voter registration and polling place inquiries as well as the correct application of provisional ballot procedures which were reinforced at the pre-election training classes. The voter education efforts carried out by the Pennsylvania Department of State and the candidate organizations also played a part in assuring that voters attended their assigned polling place, lessening the need to vote a provisional ballot.

Over 397,000 “emergency ballots” were supplied to the 1,321 polling places in the event that at least one-half of the voting machines in a precinct were not functioning. Of these, 730 “emergency ballots” were cast within thirty-five precincts and were used due to the local election boards experiencing difficulties in printing a “zero tape” prior to the opening of the polls. On-site voting machine technicians assisted in the resolution of these issues, resulting in voters being able to cast their ballots on the iVotronic voting machines.

The members of the voting public should be acknowledged for their contribution in this effort, as well. The cooperation, patience and sense of community that they exhibited in the November 4, 2008 General Election played a large part in its success.

Accessibility

Although the Allegheny County Elections Department had made an aggressive effort to make all 1,321 polling districts in Allegheny County handicap accessible, seven polling districts remain classified as inaccessible which are as follows:

- 130-1-4 Duquesne
- 130-2-3 Duquesne
- 153-0-1 Haysville
- 166-4-2 McCandless
- 166-4-3 McCandless
- 188-24-1 Pittsburgh
- 188-26-17 Pittsburgh

Since these polling districts could not be modified by using any of our accessibility items such as door loops, ramps, “mobi” mats, signs or cones, we continue to look for alternative sites for these seven districts.

Our office was also made aware of a problem with a ramp that ended up being too steep to fit the accessibility requirements. This problem occurred at the polling location for the 15th Ward, 1st & 2nd Districts in the City of Pittsburgh. For the November 4, 2008 General Election, a 4-ft. suitcase ramp was sent to this location. After our office conducted an on-site inspection of the polling location, we decided to use a 6-ft. suitcase ramp for the May 19, 2008 Primary to solve this problem.

Provisional & Absentee Ballots

The administering of provisional ballots during the 2008 Presidential Election has decreased by 67% from the 2004 Presidential Election. Primarily, according to the Call Center support calls received, voters wanted to cast their ballots on the voting machines and were willing to put forth the extra effort to find their assigned polling location. Secondly, various civic organizations emphasized the importance of not only registering to vote but locating where to vote. Furthermore, during the fall of 2008 the Allegheny County Elections Division reduced the training class size significantly for new election officers, updated the Election Officers Reference Manual and provided “refresher” review sessions.

Recommendation: Continue the standard and specialized training classes which have proven to be highly effective.

Recruitment

We are successfully recruiting younger, computer-savvy volunteers for the Election Boards via the County web page and will continue to use this valuable tool. Additionally, a corporate recruiting program is in development with USX in which employees will serve as poll workers and be compensated by the corporation as inducement to participate in volunteerism and citizenship. We will be electing election board officers (judges and inspectors) in 2009. Hopefully, more new people will run for office.

L&A Testing

For the third consecutive election, we conducted automated L&A on all iVotronics and all PEBs. The testing was done by full-time employees of the County in the presence of members of Vote Allegheny and The League of Women Voters. We also conducted manual L&A on several hundred iVotronics. These tests also proved to be 100% accurate. The PEBs were read into ERM, and the testing proved to be 100% accurate.

Network Security Report

November 2008

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Firmware Verification

**Pre-Election
Verification Study**

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**Post-Election
Verification Study**

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Rovers

For the General Election of 2008, we had 143 rovers, just four short of our goal.

Recommendation: Explore the aspect of using union workers as rovers and laborers since we are presently hiring temporary employees to install ramps and set up accessibility items. We require that the temporary employees attend a training session the day before the election to practice setting up the equipment and explain the scope of the job. If we utilized full-time employees, there would be consistency from election to election. This action would eliminate the training session, and we would have better accountability of their work.

The sign-up sheet for rovers should also state the training dates and possibly a brief overview of the job. This would give new rovers a general idea of what is involved and clear up some questions that they may have.

Call Center

The 2008 General Election Call Center Statistical Report, in comparison with the 2007 General Report, reflects an overall decrease in the technical calls received.

Our election officers and voting machine technicians are becoming more proficient with the implementation and operation of the iVotronic voting machines. Support calls traditionally received for "opening problems", "printing zero tape", "closing problems" and "printing final results tape" decreased by at least 50%. A significant factor contributing to this decrease is the specialized classes designed for the voting machine technician which was introduced during the Primary 2008 Election.

For the 2008 General Election, we launched an Operations Training Class (paperwork class), which focused on these concerns shared by the election officers and which were reflected in the 2007 Call Center Report. Given the heightened number of registered voters of 42,286 from Primary 2008 to General 2008, we anticipated an increase in the number of support calls to the Call Center for issues surrounding Admin./Paperwork. Other issues also had an impact on this number such as new elections officers and the overall atmosphere of the Presidential Election. Additionally, the elections officers telephoned the Call Center due to the new procedural directives which were included in the Election Officer's Reference Manual Election and taught during the various classes. Consequently, the 2008 Call Center Report for the General Election did reflect an increase in calls to Admin/Paperwork by approximately 50%. However, it generally takes at least two elections before the information learned is positively replicated in the results.

In terms of structure, a centralized Call Center system consisted of seven operators who captured the pertinent information and transferred support calls to Level II operators, five ES&S representatives and two County Warehouse personnel for resolution. ES&S was primarily responsible for answering technical calls, and County Warehouse personnel dispatched leadmen and rovers, accordingly. Increased calls regarding paperwork issues required Level II County Warehouse personnel to frequently dispatch leadmen and rovers. Moreover, the demand required us to quickly educate Level II ES&S representatives about the dispatch procedures so that they could assist in their deployment.

Recommendation: For the upcoming 2009 Primary, increase the knowledge base of the Level I operators who will not only capture the general information but

also have at their station a manual for those calls that do not require an in-depth response. All information not covered in the manual will be transferred to Level II appropriately.

Pay-Station

The Controller's Office enlisted twenty volunteers to staff the regional centers for the purpose of collecting the poll worker pay sheets. The staff worked from 8:00 P.M. to approximately 11:00 P.M. collecting all pay sheets and transporting them to the Controller's Office for processing that began at 7:00 A.M. the following morning. As a result, poll workers and constables were paid in days rather than in weeks.

2008 Election Officer Survey

The Allegheny County Elections Division mailed an Election Officer Survey to over 6,600 elections officers. Of the surveys received over 95% rated key areas in the Elections Division process as "good" to "excellent."

Parallel Test

**Parallel Test
Report**

