

Early Voting Listening Session – Public Session  
Brown County Central Library  
August 4, 2009  
Green Bay, WI

Notes and Feedback

Attendance: 12

- Notes and Feedback on Early Voting in General
  1. Concerns were expressed that early voting is a statewide solution to a “big city problem”, as well as an “overkill” solution. One audience member from a small town stated that their town clerk would go “ballistic” if additional voting hours would be required for early voting. There were questions of whether clerks would be able to use their discretion for both the number of hours and the number of days early voting would be offered in a municipality.
  2. It was suggested that early voting should keep in mind that there are elections with only one item on the ballot, for which early voting would be a waste of time and cost. One audience member stated that they were not concerned about there being different procedures for different elections, stating that it is the voter’s responsibility to know whether early voting was in effect for a given election.
  3. It was felt that a problem with voter education in Wisconsin has occurred due to the rapid and numerous changing in election administration, and that keeping policies stable will help with voter education, instead of voters having to learn new procedures every election.
  4. Cost was brought up as a concern in implementing early voting.
  5. There was a suggestion that Saturday and Sunday hours should take place in public libraries, which are civic locations that would benefit from the cost it would take to use the space. It was noted that this would be an extra cost overall.
  6. One audience member wanted to know if the G.A.B. was talking about online voting in our early voting presentation. Edward Edney of the

G.A.B. staff stated that online elections were not a part of any early voting plans.

7. It was suggested that a card swipe system, tied to state-issued ID, could be harnessed to take advantage of SVRS and make registration and voting a faster process.

- Notes and Feedback on Same Day Registration

1. Same day registration was identified as a major cause of the lines in the November 2008 election. One audience member described same day registration on the day before the election as “chaotic”.
2. Some audience members posited that it was not the volume of same day registrants that caused the lines – one gave a figure of 20 same day registrants in a ward of 1800 voters – but the registration form and procedures that cause delays. It was believed that reforming the same day registration process to be easier and faster would help alleviate both the lines seen in November 2008 as well as voter confusion. Suggested improvements included streamlining the form, having a large number of poll-workers specifically available for same day registration, allowing non-clerk staff to process registrations and allowing municipal clerks to handle registrations instead of them having to go through Madison.

- Notes and Feedback on Option A, Regional Early Voting Districts

1. A problem noted by the audience regarding Option A is that a regional center, particularly if only one opens, must have enough staff to handle an entire county’s population, which could require significant staffing.

- Notes and Feedback on Option B, Municipalities Opt-in

1. There were several audience members who stated that the lack of uniformity inherent in Option B is too great of an issue to adopt an opt-in/opt-out system. One concern would be that opting-in or out could result in running two to three year battles within municipalities, turning early voting into a political tool without the benefit of increased turnout. Another stated that of the options presented, he would support A or C over B because of the lack of uniformity in Option B.

2. There were questions asked regarding college students who permanently reside in a municipality that offers early voting, but go to school in a municipality that does not, or vice versa. The questions included which municipality's rules would be in effect for that student to vote, and concerns that a student would be able to receive an absentee ballot from one location and early vote in the other.

- Notes and Feedback on Option C, Streamline In-Person Absentee

1. It was felt by one member of the audience that the major drawback of the absentee voting system is that a voter does not know with certainty what happens to their ballot when they vote in-person absentee. The voter does not know whether their ballot is rejected at the polling place, and does not see their vote being placed in a tabulating machine.

2. An audience member believed that in-person absentee could be made better by clerks deputizing "deputy clerks" solely for the purpose of helping to administer in-person absentee voting. This attendee felt that the absentee application could be eliminated from in-person absentee, but that the envelope should be kept and streamlined. The reasons given for wanting to maintain the envelope were to allow for easier challenges, and to prevent a system where a ballot itself would have to be marked, which would likely make voters feel less secure about the secrecy of the ballot than the current system.