

Early Voting Listening Session – Clerks Session
La Crosse Public Library
July 16, 2009
La Crosse, WI

Notes & Feedback

Attendance: 24

- Comments & Feedback on the Cause of Issues in November 2008
 1. Media and campaign push for early voting is a major source of the issues during the last election. One clerk reported that people worried that they *have* to vote early for their vote to be counted, as a result of the often erroneous information they received on the topic.
 2. One clerk said that she had no issues despite the increase of in-person absentee voters because she brought in extra poll workers to specifically process those absentee ballots. She suggested that, instead of early voting, perhaps the G.A.B. should work with municipalities that had issues with in-person absentee voting to identify and resolve those issues administratively.
- Comments & Feedback on Registration
 1. City of Onalaska felt that what causes long lines are same day registrants. It's not the absentee voting process that is the issue, it's registering people to vote at the same time.
 2. One clerk felt that we should implement online registration before taking on any early voting changes.
 3. The clerks seemed to be in general agreement on the suggestion of having to register prior to early voting if you want to early vote. The audience also felt strongly that registration should close at some point prior to Election Day.

- Comments & Feedback on Costs of Early Voting

1. The timing of these early voting proposals is horrible, coming while state, county and municipal governments face cuts and furlough. Counties and municipalities don't have the money to do anything else. Had we adopted early voting four years ago, before buying the Automark accessible voting equipment, counties and municipalities might have had the money for new voting machines, but the situation is different now.
2. Vernon County Clerk noted that his finance committee talked about layoffs and financial survival, which is enough reason to oppose early voting's additional costs. He stated that there were no problems with absentee voting in Vernon County.
3. In the Village of Cochran, the clerk said that they'd be "lucky" if 10 people vote absentee, and therefore from her perspective early voting is too expensive.
4. From a financial perspective, it was believed that counties and municipalities cannot afford Options A & B. Keeping early voting locations open like a regular Election Day, from 7 am to 8 pm would be a huge expense. The idea of the electronic poll list is great, however the state should provide the funding to purchase the laptops and train poll workers.
5. Edward Edney of the G.A.B. staff clarifies that we are not asking for as many early voting locations as actual vote locations.

- Comments & Feedback on Small vs. Large Municipalities

1. Staffing an early voting location with two poll workers in a small municipality for several weeks is unrealistic. In general, early voting proposals do not consider the realities of part-time clerks.
2. City of Fountain City felt that an e-poll list would be impractical for relies, and that there would be problems training elderly poll-workers to use an e-poll list system.

3. In terms of e-poll lists, there are concerns that not having hi-speed connectivity in small towns would make statewide uniformity impossible, thus greatly reducing the usefulness of an e-poll list.
 4. Among smaller municipalities, there is worry that big cities are pushing early voting without considering the consequences of early voting on smaller municipalities.
 5. La Crosse County felt that the clerks are, “at the mercy of our legislators, and the odds of them doing nothing is slim.” She went on to say that the municipalities that are reliers are reliers for a reason, that if early voting happens the counties are going to have to have a major hand in administering early voting for these municipalities.
 6. It was noted that varying population size may force any early voting changes to reflect this reality.
- Comments & Feedback on SVRS, Voting Machines, E-Poll Lists
 1. The clerks wanted a guarantee that SVRS will not crash, and not experience poor response time, over the weekend before Election Day, particularly if we are suggesting that this be the time most poll books are printed out.
 2. Regarding the number of ballot styles that can be held on an Eagle Optical Scan Voting Machine, it is possible to program the RAM to hold more than the three ballot styles that some have worried could be the limit.
 3. City of Tomah felt that the time period between the close of early voting and Election Day was not enough time to have the voting machines tested and ready before Election Day.
 - Comments & Feedback on Poll Books
 1. There were questions whether early vote locations would require two poll books, or two laptops if an e-poll list was used, per early vote locations.

2. It was reported that it takes 20-30 hours to print and assemble poll books, which would be very hard to do in a weekend.

- Comments & Feedback on Early Voting in General

1. In the Town of Shelby, 1/3 of voters voted absentee. The greatest problem was filling out the paperwork. It was suggested that use of the same poll list for early voting & Election Day would be possible, and cut back on printing costs.
2. Some clerks felt uncomfortable about early voting in a situation involving clerks who are on the ballot having access to the ballots, as well as the related issue of workers who know the clerks also possibly having access to the ballots.
3. The City of La Crosse felt that going back to having a reason to vote early may be nice, but electors may resist such changes and make up excuses, which would not stop the growth of early voting.
4. It was felt that there can't make too many rules for any early voting that would be implemented or people will not be able to remember or follow the rules, which will only add to the problems posed by the current system.
5. The clerks felt that it is very "unwise" for media to broadcast exit poll results before the close of polls. It was agreed, however, that there is not much that can be done about this practice.

- Comments and Feedback on Option B, Municipalities Opt Into Early Voting

1. Vernon County suggested that early voting should be a version of Option B that would be population based. Specifically, he suggested that municipalities over 100,000 people would be required to offer early voting.

- Comments and Feedback on Option C, Streamlining Absentee Voting
 1. One clerk stated that she only favored Option C, and that the point to make to the legislature is that opening a bunch of early voting sites is going to be a step backward for voting security and integrity.
 2. It was strongly suggested that the G.A.B. alter and simplify the absentee application and envelope.