

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

Notes & Feedback
Listening Session Attendance: 4

- **Notes & Feedback about Early Voting in General**

1. A poll worker in the audience said that some people are very suspect of whether their absentee vote is going to count. She also stated that reporting the number of absentee votes affects the turnout on Election Day.
2. In relation to people being worried about absentee ballots not counting, it was said that these concerns are allayed when voters are able to see how professionally their ballots are handled by poll workers.
3. The audience expressed that they like printing out a sticker and placing it on the absentee envelope and that doing so makes handling absentee ballots easier.
4. One of the audience members reported that her municipality had to go through 800 absentee ballots, starting at 6:15 pm on the Monday prior to the election, and that those processing those ballots did not go home until 4 am.
5. Regarding challenges, this audience felt that they tend to be rare overall, outside of specific incidents. The change to the challenge procedure therefore may not be as large of an issue as believed, though the change in challenge procedure is still noteworthy.
6. The audience expressed concerns about situation where a voter who early votes but dies before Election Day still have their votes counted, though it was mused that since when they *cast* the ballot they were alive, it would be consistent with current procedure to

still count this ballot. There were also concerns that early voting could make it more difficult to run felon checks, particularly at satellite locations.

7. One of the attendees said, “We’re going to see more people voting early. It’s a given.”
8. An audience member, who was a poll worker, begged, “Please don’t add any more rules!”
9. One member of the audience felt that, “Sometimes, the voters just aren’t going to come vote.”

- **Notes & Feedback about Registration**

1. It was asked whether Same Day Registration would be available at early voting locations. Edward Edney, G.A.B. staff member, stated that it was our intention that Same Day Registration would be available at early voting locations.
2. During the discussion, G.A.B. staff member Edward Edney stated that previous meetings suggested restricting early voting to those who have registered before late registration.
3. The audience brought up issues with SRD registrations, especially registrations collected on college campuses. The issues particularly noted were incomplete or incorrectly filled out registrations, and registrations that either never arrive or arrive late. These voters, especially if they wind up trying to vote before Election Day, have to “register again”, slowing down the voting process.

- **Notes & Feedback about Costs**

1. There were concerns expressed about townships with part-time clerks, particularly whether the clerk would be able to handle mandated early voting hours and whether the township budget could fit in the costs of early voting.
2. One poll worker noted that her municipality spends \$35 per Automark cartridges, and asked that the G.A.B. remember the

costs to municipalities to actually implement changes to election procedure.

- **Notes & Feedback about Option B, Municipalities Opt Into Early Voting**

1. The audience responded positively to a suggestion of instituting some manner of “population threshold” for early voting, where early voting statutes would not apply for populations below a certain population.
2. The audience seemed to agree that Option B could cause confusion in terms of voting from municipality to municipality, and that the perceived inequality might upset voters in municipalities without early voting.

- **Notes & Feedback about Option C, In-Person Absentee Voting is Streamlined**

1. Option C would help poll workers because the voter’s name would already be checked, and votes fed in. However, the work may get shifted onto the clerk’s office instead, so it may be a lateral move in terms of ease.
2. Has there been any consideration in Option C to process them in the clerks’ office and add the totals to the wards, as a kind of absentee central count? The commenter expressed worries about RAM packs, particularly running the tabulations in the offices in the office and then taking the RAM packs to the polling place.

- **Notes & Feedback about Pilot Program**

1. Due to the budget crisis, and the fact that we are now less than six months through 2009, it was strongly suggested that we wait to pass (or at least enact) any early voting legislation, including a pilot, until after 2010.
2. Teri Lehrke, Clerk of the City of La Crosse, did not like the idea of starting a pilot in November 2010.