

Early Voting Listening Session – Public Session
West Allis City Hall
July 23, 2009
West Allis, WI

Notes & Feedback

Attendance: 21

- Comments and Feedback on Same Day Registration
 1. Both same day registration and early voting were believed to be sources of fraud. They are both felt to make our system of elections less secure. It was thought that the state is jeopardizing the integrity of elections by making them more accessible, and thus both same day registration and early voting should be retired.
 2. Kathy Nickolaus, clerk of Waukesha County, said that she would like to close the period where both open registration and in-person absentee voting occurs.
 3. One member of the audience wondered whether SVRS would be used at early voting locations to handle same day registration.
- Comments and Feedback on Voter ID
 1. One audience member felt that showing an ID prior to receiving a ballot was essential. He stated that without voter ID it becomes very difficult to prosecute voter fraud.
 2. One audience member reported that when Indiana implemented voter ID, the state saw an increase in voters, both Democrat and Republican.
 3. State Senator Mary Lazich read aloud a prepared, written testimony. The G.A.B. has archived this testimony. Senator Lazich strongly suggests implementing a photo ID requirement before implementing an early voting system. Incorporating a voter ID

system into early voting would help ease concerns regarding voter fraud.

4. One audience member suggested an automated system where a voter would be able to scan their ID to receive their ballot.
 5. It was stated that voters are already showing ID when they go to vote. Examples of things that require an ID were stated, including getting on a plane, turning in scrap metal at a recycling plant and buying Sudafed cold medicine. Since these activities require an ID, voting should also require ID.
- Comments and Feedback on Voter Fraud Concerns
 1. Several audience members felt that there is too much voter fraud as it stands, and that every time the state increases voter convenience it opens up more avenues for voter fraud.
 2. The representative from Election Protection felt that in terms of fraud, that there were only two prosecutions for fraud that occurred in Milwaukee County is proof that voter fraud is not a major issue, and that there is not an issue with double voting in Wisconsin. The representative stated that the strength of SVRS is to catch double voting.
 3. There were concerns raised about voters who early vote in one state being able to vote in another state. Adam Harvell of the G.A.B. staff stated that the current system relies on notice being sent by the Secretary of State's office in the state where the person has moved, and that the electronic registration databases between states do not currently have the ability to "speak" with each other automatically in that situation.
 4. One audience member asked, "How much theft is allowable?"
 - Comments and Feedback on Early Voting Costs
 1. One audience member asked why the cost isn't the major factor of why early voting plans should or should not move forward. The state plan was born out of a HAVA requirement, but early voting is

not part of those HAVA requirement, so therefore the state should satisfy the basic federal requirements before spending funding on early voting.

2. Kathy Nickolaus, clerk of Waukesha County, spoke on the costs and savings of early voting. She suggested that her ballot costs will drop, as will her post-election personnel costs, though her pre-election costs may go up. She said that SVRS poll book would be an up front.
- Comments and Feedback on SVRS, Voting Machines
 1. It was asked how many municipalities used DREs, and whether these DREs are accessible voting machines. Adam Harvell of the G.A.B. staff stated that many larger municipalities do not have DREs, and that mainly smaller communities use DREs as their accessible voting machines.
 2. There was some discussion of the software costs. Adam Harvell stated that \$150 per machine is a solid estimate of programming costs, and that the \$384,000 figure stated in the report is our estimate of costs to deploy SVRS changes statewide.
 3. Some felt that an e-poll list at each election site would be really needed on Election Day, not just in an early voting system.
 4. Adam Harvell of the G.A.B. staff was asked if we would be able to promise that any e-poll list would be crash-proof on Election Day. Mr. Harvell explained that since any such e-poll list is wholly theoretical at this point we cannot say yes or no with any certainty, but did say that no computer system is entirely crash-proof. Mr. Harvell brought up the experiences that the State of Maryland faced when they went to an e-poll list that crashed, since they didn't have a backup. It was stressed that some kind of back-up system is crucial.
 5. One audience member claimed that issues with the SVRS prior to the previous election, in terms of the HAVA check to remove ineligible voters, makes it difficult to have faith in any e-poll list system run from SVRS. Particularly, the reasons given for not

disallowing voters whose HAVA checked failed seemed like “poor excuses”.

6. A representative from Election Protect said that one major advantage of using machines during early voting is to prevent spoiled ballots, such as by crossing party lines in a primary.
 7. There are concerns of how clerks should secure voting machines during an early voting period.
 8. Several audience members said that she would consider early voting at a clerk’s office only, as it would be easier and more secure to administer.
 9. Several members of the audience said that the state should spend money on upgrading the SVRS system to be more efficient and effective.
 10. It was asked how the G.A.B. could guarantee to be at or under budget with SVRS modifications, given a history of cost overruns.
- Comments and Feedback on Early Voting in General
 1. One audience member stated, “I have no faith that my vote was counted when I voted absentee.”
 2. One member of the audience wanted to know if not changing current procedure is an option. Adam Harvell of the G.A.B. staff stated that is an option, and that doing nothing is an option that can be chosen on the survey.
 3. One audience member wondered why it is necessary to vote 20 days before an election. She said that there is so much news that can come out in a week that could affect how people vote, and that she feels that early voting is promoted so that people are rushed into vote and don’t change their mind.
 4. It was stated that in Texas, which is an early voting state, people don’t early vote until the last few days of the two week early

voting period, which causes the lines that the G.A.B. is trying to avoid.

5. Representative from Election Protection stated her group supports no-excuse voting., and that a Saturday or Sunday voting day be made available, perhaps not both.
6. A representative from Election Protection noted that there were issues in Milwaukee during the 2004 Presidential Election, where polls were open until 10 or 11 at night. She stated that moving to central count helped out, but it still took two days to count all the votes. Election Protection sees early voting as a way to address these issues.
7. The representative from Election Protection felt that requiring chief inspector training for at least one early voting poll workers is an excellent suggestion.
8. Regarding the issue of long lines for early voting, one member of the audience felt that the more early voters there are, the longer the time it will take to early vote and to sort these votes. Eliminating in-person absentee voting, and not adopting early voting, would prevent these issues. If a voter can't vote on Election Day, perhaps that voter should not vote.
9. It was stressed that any early voting system must have very clear chain-of-custody procedures to ensure election integrity.
10. One audience member, who is a poll worker and chief inspector, said her biggest complaint is the statistics and reports that need to be filled out. Problems noted are that the forms are in "legalese" that make it difficult for poll workers to fill out these forms.
11. It was felt that voting has become complex and chaotic, with too many complicated rules.
12. Concern was expressed about the marking both the ballot and the absentee envelope, which could potentially identify which elector cast which ballot.

13. One member of the audience quoted the Wisconsin state statutes that absentee voting is a privilege, not a right. This person felt that an elector really wants to make sure that their vote counts, that elector should come to vote on Election Day.
- Comments and Feedback on Option A, Regional Early Voting Districts
 1. Concerns were expressed, given how each municipality runs elections with different procedures, that municipal clerks may issues with certifying election administration that was not carried out under their procedures and their supervision.
 2. One audience member felt that voters would want their municipal clerks to handle their vote, instead of a county clerk.
 - Comments and Feedback on Option C, Streamline Absentee Voting
 1. Poll workers at the meeting stated that they do not want more paperwork or lists, and that certain streamlined procedures might help them to do their duties.
 - Comments and Feedback on Early Voting Pilot Program
 1. In regards to a pilot program, it was felt that a pilot program failure would make an elector's vote less secure, and since every election is important, the commenter didn't want to risk a pilot program failure even in an "off" election.
 2. One audience member was concerned with the pilot program needing a legislative change, particularly if a pilot failed. Adam Harvell of the G.A.B. said that no legislation has been drafted regarding a pilot program, but that any such legislation could contain a sunset clause that would expire, requiring another legislative action to implement full-scale early voting.