

Early Voting Listening Session – Clerks’ Session
Northcentral Technical College
August 3, 2009
Wausau, WI

Notes and Feedback

Attendance: 52

- Notes and Feedback about Early Voting in General
 1. Several clerks from smaller municipalities felt that early voting, in general, was something that would be a benefit to large municipalities that would be burdensome, both in terms of costs and staffing, to small municipalities.
 2. Needing to have a chief inspector for the entire early voting period was also noted as a major burden, both for the clerk and for the chief inspectors, who instead of needing to be off one day now would need to take off work for a twenty day period.
 3. It was suggested that early voting only affect presidential elections. One municipality reported that they had thirteen voters in thirteen hours of the polling place being open in smaller elections, and that early voting would be wasteful in such an election.
 4. One clerk stated that central count is not a panacea for the problems with late night counting on Election Day, stating that tabulating did not end until after midnight – which was much later than tabulation when it was done at polling places.
 5. It was asked whether a 15% increase in early voting is enough justification for the cost increases associated with early voting.
- Notes and Feedback about SVRS, E-poll Lists and Technology
 1. The clerks expressed concern whether SVRS would be able to handle the demands of an e-poll list. The sheer number of users that would be on the system at one time and the corresponding response times was a particular

concern. Voters trusting an e-poll system as being secure, particularly when there are many who distrust DRE machines, was also a concern. Finally, first-hand experiences of SVRS freezing and crashing when municipalities have attempted to use SVRS to check registration have given examples of SVRS not being ready to function as an E-poll list, and in need of improvements.

2. There was a significant amount of discussion regarding the M-100 voting machine. It was suggested that Option C use one of these machines set out in the lobby, instead of a secure container, when ballots are cast. It was also noted that though the M-100 only handles 10 ballot styles, there is technology that would allow 100 ballot styles that has yet to be approved at the state level.

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

1. It was said that voters would not support an option that would require them to drive to a county seat or larger city, when they currently have the option to just go to their town clerk.

2. The clerks wanted to have more specifics about how a regional early voting district would distribute costs, if Option A was adopted.

3. It was noted that the County Clerks' Conference "dreaded" idea of regionalization.

4. It was asked whether municipalities would have to be contiguous to be part of the same regional district. Edward Edney of the G.A.B. staff answered that there have been no definition of how the regions would be determined.

- Notes and Feedback about Option B, Municipalities Opt-In

1. The clerks in this meeting were very receptive to the idea of a population threshold determining whether a municipality would offer early voting or not.

2. One clerk stated that opting out would be great for small municipalities, but she recognized the value in standardization and felt that Option B would cause too much voter confusion.

- Notes and Feedback about Option C, Streamline Early Voting
 1. Several clerks stated that they found value in the absentee envelope, and that it should be retained. Reasons for keeping the envelope included better ballot secrecy, better public perception in terms of preventing election fraud and being able to keep the option of “beating the ballot”, which would otherwise be eliminated. It was also believed that the absentee envelope makes it easier to sort through in-person absentee ballots and ensure that they are routed to the correct polling place on Election Day.
 2. It was stated that for small municipalities, Option C would be the most appropriate, since the vast majority of small municipality absentee voters are by mail.