

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

Notes & Feedback

Attendance: 11

- Notes and Feedback about Early Voting in General
 1. Attendees felt that having a system in place where true early voting would be in place for twenty days could be difficult to monitor in terms of maintaining accuracy and integrity over a much longer “Election Day” time period.
 2. On the subject of poll workers, it was felt by this audience that finding poll workers is already difficult, and finding poll workers for that many days would prove even more difficult.
 3. One audience member felt that adopting either Option A or B, which are the true early voting options, would result in “chaos and confusion”.
- Notes and Feedback about Need for Early Voting
 1. Some in the audience directly questioned the need for early voting at all. One audience member felt that rising trends of pre-Election Day voting should be disregarded instead of facilitated. Another felt that since absentee balloting is a convenience, a voter should be prepared to wait to take advantage of that convenience. Others felt that the problem might be traced to simultaneous voting and registration, while others felt that media coverage emphasizing “early voting” spurred the high in-person absentee voting turnout.
 2. These voters were concerned that the complaints about the current system were coming mainly from larger cities, particularly Madison and Milwaukee, and there were fears that problems endemic to only these areas would result in state mandates imposed upon the entire state to fix problems that would not be workable statewide. Similarly, given

Wisconsin's very high rate of voter satisfaction, it was questioned why the complaints of a disgruntled one-percent of voters should overhaul a system that seems to be working for 99% of Wisconsin voters.

- Notes and Feedback about SVRS

1. There were two concerns expressed about the use of the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) in conjunction with early voting. One concern was about the reliability of the system when considering its use as an e-poll list. The other concern regarded the costs of modifying SVRS, especially if the scenario where SVRS would be upgraded for a failed pilot – it was felt that, in this scenario, that the cost would have gone “straight down the tubes”.

- Notes and Feedback about Early Voting Costs

1. It was felt by several audience members that the cost of early voting would be “tremendous”, and that the cost per voter in small municipalities prevents early voting from being a fiscally responsible system in those municipalities.

- Notes and Feedback about Registration

1. One attendee stated that voter fraud was her greatest concern with early voting. Beyond her opposition to early voting on these grounds, she also stated that she believes that Same Day Registration should be abolished to help prevent voter fraud as well.
2. A clerk in attendance suggested that the G.A.B. look at the statute regarding the ten-day residency requirement, in the context of early voting, to see if it would need to be amended if early voting was implemented.
3. It was suggested that the state change the registration process to make it easier for clerks to administer, which would help alleviate problems with lines both for in-person absentee voting and Election Day voting.

- Notes and Feedback about Option A, Regional Early Voting Districts
 1. One audience member, working from the premise that the problem with in-person absentee voting is the convenience factor, suggested that we leave the current system intact, but allowed for absentee vote centers at the county clerks' office.
- Notes and Feedback about Option B, Municipalities Opt In
 1. This audience believed that the optional system proposed in Option B would eventually become a mandatory system, which would negate the great advantage of Option B and result in the undesired imposition of every municipality having to offer true early voting on their own. The mandatory expansion of polling place hours was given as evidence of this having previously occurred with supposedly "optional" systems.
- Notes and Feedback about Option C, Streamlining In-Person Absentee
 1. A poll worker felt that Option C, with some tweaking, could be a workable system. The poll worker felt that the absentee application was superfluous for in-person absentee voting. The poll worker also suggested allowing the use of voting machines set up in the clerks office instead of a secure container, which would allow voters to place the ballots directly into the machine.
 2. As a follow up to that statement, it was suggested that Option C be written flexibly, so if a municipality could use a machine it would be allowed; otherwise, municipalities could use a ballot box instead.