

Early Voting Listening Session – Public Session
Town of Washington Town Hall
August 11, 2009
Washington, WI

Notes and Feedback

Attendance: 16

- Notes and Feedback on Early Voting in General
 1. A chief inspector gave written testimony, which she read aloud. Copies of this written testimony can be found in our Early Voting Comments binder.
 2. Several attendees made the point that a one-size-fits-all solution will not work for all municipalities, and that attempting to impose one will not work.
 3. There were suggestions that some of the issues that municipalities faced in the November 2008 election could be solved administratively, without the need for legislative changes.
 4. Different views on the need to improve absentee voting were expressed. The range of opinions included support for early voting to the abolition of no-excuse in-person absentee voting. The question of whether voting was a privilege, a right or a civic duty was debated amongst the audience.
 5. Voter education, or the lack thereof, was suggested as a reason for some of the issues faced by municipalities in November 2008.
 6. It was expressed by one attendee that early voting gives people a chance to vote who might otherwise not be able to do so.
 7. Another attendee was concerned that having 20 voting days would open a window for more possibilities of voter fraud.

8. This audience was unsure whether pushing back the deadline for in-person absentee voting or early voting would achieve the desired results. It was pointed out that it is the very last days before the election, during the proposed cut-off, that in-person absentee voting is most popular. It was also asked, particularly in terms of getting everything into the system, whether the cut-off actually gave enough time to clerks to prepare.

- Notes and Feedback on SVRS, E-poll Lists

1. It was suggested that making upgrades to SVRS would be more effective in catching vote fraud, and one attendee felt that it would be worth the money as a taxpayer to include an e-poll list in SVRS.
2. One attendee was concerned about the security of the e-poll list, and how much defense it would have against hackers.
3. A representative from the Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) stated that there was no high-speed internet available in his location, which would be required for SVRS use, and that this situation is common among towns throughout the state.

- Notes and Feedback on Early Voting Costs

1. One attendee felt that in terms of government expenditures, putting dollars towards elections should be a high priority.
2. Another attendee stated that he sees that the current system is cumbersome, causes bottlenecks and is expensive in terms of manpower. However, he felt that the early voting proposals (Options A & B) would be more expensive than the current system.
3. During the discussion on costs, the idea of finding administrative methods to solve issues under the current system was again brought up as a more cost-effective solution than a legislatively mandated overhaul of the system.
4. There was a suggestion that the G.A.B. investigate whether it would more cost-efficient to move to county-level election administration of elections, as most states run their elections.

- Notes and Feedback on Pilot Program
 1. Some attendees strongly felt that there has to be a better system than our current one in terms of both time and money, and thus strongly encouraged the G.A.B. to experiment to find the best solution through piloting different options.
 2. It was agreed that pilot program costs could be contained by including only municipalities that have the appropriate machines.
- Notes and Feedback on Option A, Regional Early Voting Districts
 1. It was asked whether regional early voting districts would be confined by county borders. Adam Harvell of the G.A.B. staff stated that it would possibly not be, such as a judges elected across counties. It was stated that a multi-county region would require a voting machine that handles more ballot styles.
 2. One attendee felt that early voting at a central location would cause fewer people to vote, due to travel.
- Notes and Feedback on Option B, Municipalities Opt In
 1. A representative from the Wisconsin Towns Association suggested that there be cut offs based on population size. He notes that he represented towns as small as 50 voters.
- Notes and Feedback on Option C, Streamlining In-Person Absentee
 1. There was a strong amount of support for Option C. It was felt that streamlining was the most “plausible”, and that it seems that it would be both “cheaper and easier” than the current system.
 2. A representative of the Wisconsin Towns Association stated that though they are opposed to early voting, he felt there could be things that could be streamlined.
 3. One attendee stated that though he had concerns about the up-front costs, he felt that there might be long term savings that would make

streamlining cost effective. He also felt that though it might allow for fewer burdens on Election Day.

- Notes and Feedback on Combining Options
 1. There were a few suggestions that a combination of Options A and B would be the best choice. In this model, municipalities could not only decide whether to allow early voting, but whether they would want to join together with neighboring municipalities to share costs and administrative burdens.
 2. There was also a suggestion for having a hybrid of Options A and C, which would mean that a streamlined in-person absentee system could be administered at the county level.