"Managing the Polling Place: Lines, Logic and Logistics"

EAC Roundtable Discussion

March 13, 2014

EAC Offices
Suite 150 Conference Room
1335 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Participate
Live webcast at www.eac.gov
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Agenda

9:00am – 10:30am   **Session I**

10:30am – 10:45am   **Break**

10:45am – 1:00pm (scheduled) Session II

Participants

Alice P. Miller, EAC Chief Operating Officer and Acting Executive Director

Merle King, Roundtable Moderator; Executive Director, Georgia's Center for Election Systems, Kennesaw State University

Panel

- Donetta Davidson, Executive Director, Colorado County Clerks Association
- Lori Edwards, Supervisor of Elections, Polk County, Florida
- Elaine Manlove, State Election Commissioner, State of Delaware
- Tammy Patrick, Maricopa County, Arizona; Former Member, President's Commission on Elections

- J. Kirk Showalter, General Registrar, City of Richmond, Virginia
- Christopher M. Thomas, State of Michigan; Former Member, President's Commission on Elections

Discussion Questions

These are questions the moderator is likely to pose to the designated panel. Depending on the direction of the discussion and time limitations, all questions may not be asked. These questions are provided to give the panelists the opportunity to further prepare for the discussion and to inform the public, including election officials, about likely topics.

The Presidential Commission of Election Administration (PCEA) was established by executive order in March, 2013, to identify best practices in election administration and recommend their promulgation throughout the nation. Among a wide range of concerns, the Commission was asked to identify best practices in polling place selection and management, poll worker training, and the efficient use of technologies to enhance the precinct voting experience. Although the initial public perception of the Commission's work was to explore the causes of long lines at polling locations, the report and its recommendations went beyond lines and wait times, and looked at the underlying infrastructure and procedures that supports election-day precinct voting and vote center administration.

The Commission has released its report (http://www.supportthevoter.gov) which included a broad spectrum of recommendations to election officials. This roundtable discussion will focus on those recommendations related to polling place location and design, managing queues, recruiting and training poll workers, and the use of precinct management technologies to improve and streamline the voting experience.

1. Some problems are persistent in election administration. Is polling place management one of those issues? Does it merit continued attention and efforts to improve? Will it be more, or less of a problem in 2014? 2016?

2. Process improvement requires the collection and analysis of data, as well as resources and organizational commitment. Wait –time data is an easily collected and easily understood metric. Are there other metrics for evaluating the efficiency of election administration that are as important? More important than wait-times? How is this data collected and used by election jurisdictions?

3. How does your jurisdiction maintain its inventory of polling places? Are there models and diagrams? How are the models created, maintained and used?

4. Do you see trends in polling place "evolution"? Are older polling places being replaced by newer models? What are the desirable attributes for a polling place in your jurisdiction?

5. Schools have long been a preferred polling location. Describe how your jurisdiction views the current and future availability of schools as polling places. Are there things that jurisdictions can do to improve the relationship between school boards and election officials?

6. Advanced/Early voting and the emergence of the Vote Center as a "super precinct" have been game changers for jurisdictions.   How has your jurisdiction implemented vote centers? How have they changed voter behavior? Resource allocation? Voter education programs? How have they impacted lines on Election Day?

7. Resource calculators are tools that are used to assist in planning the acquisition and application of resources (like personnel, equipment, ballots) to election administration issues. Does your jurisdiction use planning tools to improve the budgeting and allocation of resources to polling places? Is the process dynamic in order to accommodate changing resource needs as Election Day approaches and progresses?

8. Does your jurisdiction pre-test voting materials, including ballots (to identify time-to-complete as well as errors) and voter information? Are these methods effective? How is the data collected and used to improve polling location management?

9. On average, poll worker training consists of 2.5 contact hours, delivered well in advance of Election Day. How are pollworkers trained in your jurisdiction? Is the training effective? How do you measure the effectiveness of the training?

10. Are there models for pollworker training that election officials should consider? How do these models improve the effectiveness of training?

11. Recruiting pollworkers is both art and science. What are the impediments to recruiting and retaining effective pollworkers? Cite models of pollworker recruitment that are effective and could be emulated by other jurisdictions.

12. Managing the queues through the use of voter information initiatives, "line walkers" and other innovations can reduce wait times and improve the voting experience. What innovations can election officials model for the upcoming election cycle?

13. Do any states have a uniform training manual that is issued by the state election office?

14. Are there state laws that require or permit the chief election officer to develop uniform training documents/videos or on line training?

15. Similarly, do any jurisdictions use on line poll worker training and is the training material placed on their web site for easy review leading up to Election Day?

16. Do any jurisdictions do post election surveys of poll workers or give poll workers any active role in developing training materials or Election Day operational manuals?

17. Do any of the jurisdictions assign one poll worker to be the Manager? (Meaning that person does not do any of the other polling place tasks on Election Day and his/her assignment is just to manage the polling place operation ONLY?) And, is there separate management training for these polling place managers?

18. How many of the jurisdictions employ "greeters", whose only job is to ensure that voters are at the correct polling place and to direct them to the correct table within the polling place if there are multiple voting precincts?

19. What are possible solutions if a jurisdiction must assign a polling place to each precinct, but there is no available building large enough to manage the number of voters in that precinct? (Many voter registration software systems do not allow for sub-dividing a precinct into two polling places and this is an issue in many locations.)

20. Do jurisdictions monitor daily the number of early voters in every precinct and with that information do they do any modifications of staffing and of voting equipment in all of the precincts leading up to Election Day? Similarly, in precincts where over 50% of the voters have already cast their ballot early,

does the election office move poll workers to busier polling places in preparation for Election Day? If not, is it because of state laws that require poll workers to be assigned to their own precinct?

21. Do any of the jurisdictions have a polling place/poll worker management software that they are using in-house? If so, is this software a part of the state voter registration system, or is it an internal "home grown" system? Further, is the software linked to the state voter registration software so it can provide the data staff needs to monitor early voters and those who will vote on Election Day by precinct/polling place?

22. Do jurisdictions actively work with their state disability office and survey polling places for access prior to each election?