

**The 2012 Presidential General Election:
An Analysis & Recommendations**

**MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL
Standing Committee on Elections**

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EXHIBITS:

- Minneapolis City Map
- Precinct Analysis (NOTE: ledger-sized document)
- Voter Turnout Maps
- Election Judge Training Handout
- 2012 Election Equipment Testing Schedule

2012 PRESIDENTIAL GENERAL ELECTION: AN ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Introduction

On November 6, 2012, approximately 126 million Americans exercised their right to vote, reaffirming the power of our democracy. Locally, the City of Minneapolis experienced extraordinary voter turnout for the Presidential General Election, achieving a record-setting 81 percent participation rate¹. In total, the City served 215,806 voters; of that, 200,661 of those voters did so at one of the 117 polling places on Election Day.

Research has demonstrated a leading factor driving voter turnout is ballot content; that is, competitive political races and significant ballot questions tend to result in a higher rate of participation. That 2012 was a presidential election year partly explains the turnout experienced in Minneapolis. In addition to federal races, the 2012 ballot included important state and local races and two amendments proposed for the state constitution, all of which engaged voters across the political spectrum.

As is usually the case, planning for the 2012 election began more than a year in advance, overlapping work to conduct six special (unplanned) election events and to complete redistricting of political boundaries and the establishment of electoral precincts following the 2010 census. Anticipating a significant turnout, the Office of City Clerk – Elections Division doubled efforts to assure adequate preparation. Nevertheless, challenges were experienced that resulted in long lines and extended waiting times at many polling places on Election Day.

This report analyzes some of the major factors that contributed to the challenges experienced by the City and also identifies a number of recommendations intended to address those challenges in order to avoid recurrences in future elections.

II. The National Context

Minnesota has consistently led national voter turnout in 12 of the last 16 elections. An analysis by the United States Elections Project at George Mason University showed six states averaged more than 60 percent of voter turnout in the past six federal/state election cycles. Not surprisingly, topping that list with the highest turnout is Minnesota. In fact, the State's average eligible voter turnout since 2000 is just over 67 percent, more than 16 percentage points higher than the national average.

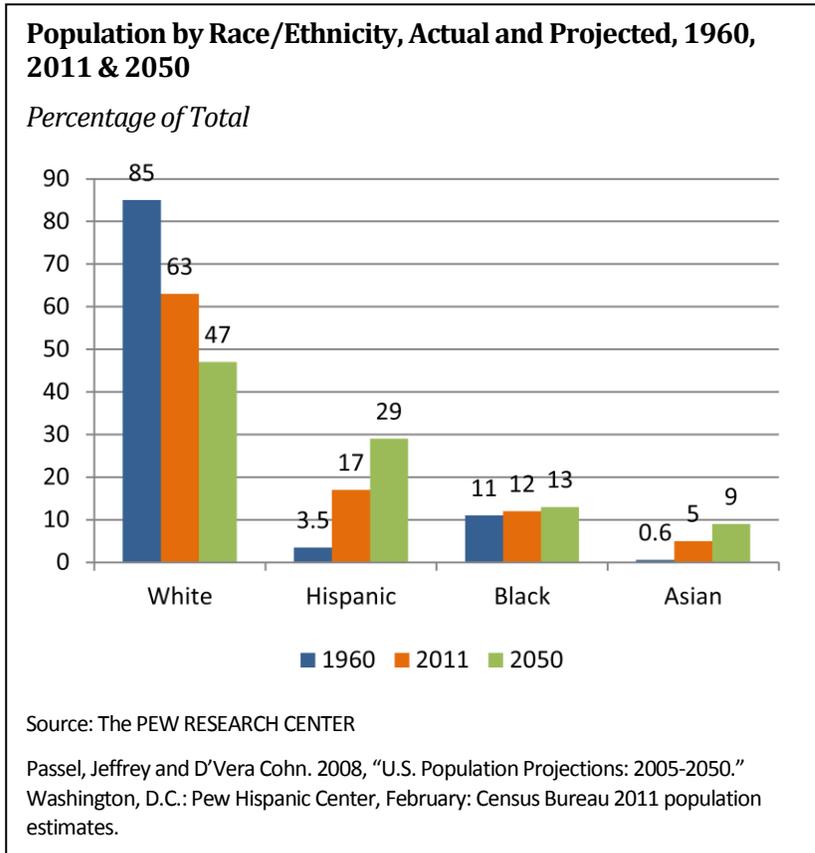
Studies show that states above the median national turnout rate make it easier for their citizens to vote. One particular procedure consistently proven to contribute to higher voter turnout rates is Election Day Registration, which has been available in Minnesota since 1974. Currently, states offering Election Day Registration have turnout rates above the national median, usually by 10 to 12 percentage points.² Other innovations that have the potential to increase voter participation include early and no-fault absentee voting, convenience voting systems, on-line registration systems, and other methods that match choice and opportunity with voter preferences.

¹ In Minneapolis, voter turnout is calculated as: total votes cast ÷ pre-registered voters + election day registrations. The 2012 turnout is the highest participation rate achieved since enactment of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1971 which extended the franchise to voters age 18 and older and the establishment of Election Day Registration in the State of Minnesota in 1974. For the 2012 General Election, Minneapolis achieved 81 percent voter turnout, as compared to the State of Minnesota which achieved 75 percent voter turnout as reported by CNN on November 8, 2012.

² The nine states cited in the US Elections Project study by Dr. Michael McDonald are: Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. In addition, the District of Columbia allows its voters to use Election Day Registration. Connecticut and Rhode Island also allow Election Day Registration, but only for presidential elections. Election Day Registration originated in the State of Maine in 1973.

Some important national trends that have and will impact voter participation rates include the collective voting power of racial/ethnic minority groups and the increasing engagement of young voters (traditionally those between the ages of 18 and 29). As the chart below illustrates, the collective voting power of minority groups will continue to increase in the future. These demographic groups are projected to become a collective majority of the nation’s population by 2050, according to the Pew Research Center. Among these groups, the record number of Hispanics who voted in 2012 constitutes an ethnic voting bloc expected to double within a generation, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

These demographic changes will come more slowly to the voting-eligible population than the overall population for a number of reasons. First, many immigrants are not eligible to vote because they are not citizens—and voting is a right reserved to citizens in the United States. Secondly, the profile of the nation’s racial/ethnic minorities is younger than that of the white population, so many of these “potential voters” are not yet old enough to register. Still, the eligible voting-age population will continue to diversify and is expected to become increasingly non-white every year. Among the 4.4 million 18-year-olds in 2011, for example, 56 percent were white; 21 percent were Hispanic; 15 percent were black; and 4 percent were Asian. Thus, minority voting blocs are expected to gain a larger proportion of the electorate through generational replacement alone. And this highlights another important voting demographic: young voters.



The history of youth voting is relatively short: in 1971, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment lowered the national voting age to 18. Turnout among 18-29 year-olds has typically been the lowest of any demographic. But since 2004, there has been a noticeable increase in young voters. While many variables may explain the upward trend in youth voting, campaigns targeting young, first-time voters—particularly through the use of social media and peer-to-peer networks—have proven to be effective at increasing turnout rates among these voters.

Finally, the decennial redistricting impacted voters across the State of Minnesota. In the process, some communities of interest were affected through changes in district representation, assignment to a particular electoral precinct, and the location of that precinct’s polling place. Hennepin County is the most populous county in Minnesota, accounting for one out of five residents, or about 22 percent of the population. Similarly, Minneapolis is the largest city in Hennepin County (and Minnesota); it accounts for approximately one-third of

the County’s population, or 1 of 3 residents in Hennepin County. Consequently, these national trends have an impact on the administration of elections in Minneapolis³.

III. 2012 Primary & In-Person Absentee Voting

Actual turnout for the 2012 Primary was significantly lower than projected, which belied the historic turnout experienced in the General Election. Since 1980, the average difference between primary and general voting percentages has been approximately 53 percent, with some small variation between years. The following chart tracks turnout between the primary and general for each presidential election year, from 1968 through 2012. As shown, in 2012, the difference between turnout for the 2012 Primary and the 2012 General Election was 70 percent. In fact, the variation between the turnout in the 2012 Primary and General Election set a new record in Minneapolis (at least since 1968) for lowest primary turnout and highest turnout for the general election.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR TURNOUT

Year	PRIMARY				GENERAL			
	# Pre-Reg.	# EDR	Total Voting	Percent Voting	# Pre-Reg.	# EDR	Total Voting	Percent Voting
1968	236,925	N/A	69,754	29%	258,030	N/A	194,694	75%
1972	244,730	N/A	57,646	24%	269,086	N/A	198,045	74%
1976	237,557	4,679	56,644	23%	255,493	38,760	201,135	68%
1980	240,201	2,563	33,532	14%	249,437	45,092	201,189	68%
1984	240,475	4,933	49,866	20%	254,198	36,318	200,238	69%
1988	222,179	2,150	17,521	8%	235,212	36,967	185,329	68%
1992	226,649	2,702	41,546	18%	232,250	39,156	186,438	69%
1996	199,886	2,604	34,238	17%	209,079	30,784	163,110	68%
2000	200,432	5,204	50,133	24%	212,604	46,627	175,191	68%
2004	225,761	2,038	22,766	10%	238,848	48,611	201,672	70%
2008	232,333	3,469	33,938	14%	240,022	50,505	208,973	72%
2012	221,553	1,690	24,434	11%	214,003	50,668	215,804	81%



While disparity between primary and general turnout can be—and often is—significant, the impact in 2012 was a difference of 24 percentage points from the 44-year average. The difference was significant enough to cause election administrators across the nation to question whether or not the predicted turnout for the 2012 General Election would dip below participation rates experienced in the 2008 Presidential General Election. Given this disparity in turnouts, future planning—at least for presidential election cycles—will need to largely discount predicted impact based on primary voting statistics, which may have little or no bearing on the actual turnout and experience for the General Election.

³ The City of Minneapolis is the largest and most populated municipality in the State of Minnesota, with a population of 382,578 according to the 2010 Census. It ranks as the 48th largest city in the nation. Minneapolis is the fourth largest election jurisdiction within the State of Minnesota, based on the number of registered voters for both counties and municipalities. The number of registered voters in Minneapolis is comparable—though not equal—to the number of registered voters in Ramsey County or Dakota County. [Excerpt from a report by Connie J. Schmidt, presented to City Council on June 17, 2011]

Further challenging planning assumptions for the 2012 General Election was the lower-than-expected turnout for in-person absentee voting on the Saturday immediately prior to Election Day. State law requires each election jurisdiction to accept in-person absentee voters on the Saturday before Election Day, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. In Minneapolis, the Elections Division provided in-person absentee voter access on that Saturday, November 3, with extended hours, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Despite significant advance preparations to handle a high turnout on that day, the City only assisted 220 voters that day. On that day in the 2008 Presidential election, Minneapolis served more than 1,000 in-person absentee voters. This low turnout just three days before Election Day caused further doubt about the level of turnout that would be experienced on November 6.

IV. Electoral Precincts & Polling Places

IMPACT OF REDUCTIONS IN PRECINCTS

As part of the City’s Fiscal Year 2012 Budget, the Office of City Clerk reduced the number of precincts from 131 to 117, amounting to the elimination of 14 precincts⁴. That plan was anticipated to result in an ongoing operational savings of approximately \$30,000. Concurrently, the Clerk’s Office recommended “equalizing” precincts to achieve the greatest level of consistency with respect to the average number of pre-registered voters in each precinct; the overall compactness of precincts; the preservation of neighborhoods, where possible; and the conformance to established congressional, state, and local boundaries, as required by state law⁵. Within the overall parameter of 117 precincts, divided equally among thirteen wards, the goal of nine precincts per ward was established.

As a result of these plans, Minneapolis in 2012 had nine precincts with less than 1,000 registered voters and only two precincts with more than 3,000 registered voters; the “average precinct” had 1,844 registered voters. In 2008, Minneapolis had thirteen precincts with less than 1,000 registered voters and nine precincts with more than 3,000 registered voters; the “average precinct” had 1,830 registered voters. As illustrated below, the City was simultaneously able to create fewer precincts and narrow the margin of overly-small (inefficient) precincts and overly-large (ineffective) precincts compared to 2008.

Precinct Factors—	2008	2012	#/%
Total No. of Precincts	131	117	-14/11%
Precincts = <1,000 Registered Voters	13	9	-4/31%
Precincts = >3,000 Registered Voters	9	2	-7/78%
Registered Voters per Precinct (Avg.)	1,830	1,844	-30/2%

Fewer precincts, but less widespread deviation among registered voters per polling place.

Compared to other cities of the first class across Minnesota and other Hennepin County cities with populations over 75,000, the City of Minneapolis in 2012 had the highest number of precincts and the highest voter-to-precinct operating model. St. Paul had the second-highest number of precincts, totaling 97 precincts to serve its

⁴ Minneapolis had 182 precincts in 1990, with a median of 1,237 voters per precinct based on pre-registered voters. The overall downward trend in the number of precincts over the intervening decades reflects cost-savings efforts that have aimed at preserving critical operating resources (staff, election judges, equipment and supplies, the elections warehouse, etc.) required to plan, organize, and conduct elections in the regular, four-year cycle (federal, state, and local).

⁵ The establishment of precincts is dictated by state statute, primarily MINN. STAT. §204B.14, and the establishment of polling places within precincts is subject to the provisions of MINN. STAT. §204B.16.

146,929 Election Day voters. Brooklyn Park had the fewest number of precincts of all the selected cities, serving its 34,407 Election Day voters through a total of 25 precincts. With respect to the voter-to-precinct operating model, Bloomington followed Minneapolis as the city with the second-highest ratio of voters to precincts, while Rochester had the lowest voter-to-precinct operating model out of the selected cities. This information is reflected in the following chart.

City	Precincts	Election Day Voters	Average Number of Voters-to-Precinct
Bloomington	32	53,840	1,683
Brooklyn Park	25	38,407	1,537
Duluth	34	55,351	1,628
Minneapolis	117	215,804	1,844
Rochester	52	63,001	1,282
St. Paul	97	146,929	1,515

Minneapolis had the highest number of precincts as well as the highest voter-to-precinct operating model. By comparison, Brooklyn Park had the lowest number of precincts and Rochester had the lowest voter-to-precinct operating model in the 2012 General Election.

IMPACT OF REDISTRICTING

Every twenty years, the timing of the federally-mandated redistricting of political boundaries following the national census coincides with a scheduled presidential election. The last time this occurred was in 1992. At that time, the City of Minneapolis had 153 precincts with a voter turnout of 186,438, which included approximately 39,000 Election Day Registrations. By comparison, in 2012, Minneapolis had 117 precincts to serve an Election Day turnout of 200,661, which included 50,668 Election Day Registrations.

Year	Precincts	Pre-Reg. Voters	AB & EDR ⁶ Voters	TOTAL VOTES
1992	153	232,250	39,156	186,438
2012	117	214,003	52,952	215,804
CHANGE	-36	-18,247	+13,796	+29,366
%	24%	8%	26%	22%

Minneapolis experienced an increase of about 22% in voter turnout between the 1992 Presidential Election and the 2012 Presidential Election, both of which followed redistricting.

A polling place is generally located within each precinct for the purposes of conducting election activities. In a small number of instances, a precinct's assigned polling place may be located up to one mile outside the actual boundaries of that precinct—usually because there are no suitable facilities available within the actual precinct. Because of this fundamental connection between polling places and the ability to vote, many residents have strong ties to their precincts and/or polling places. To minimize potential voter confusion in the first presidential election following redistricting, the City maintained as many polling places as possible that were used in 2010.

⁶ Prior to 2010, Election Day Registrations (EDR) and Absentee Ballots (AB) were both processed in the polling place and counted together as a percentage of the total voter turnout. Beginning in 2010, EDR ballots were tabulated at a centralized location, separate from the polling place.

Working with Council Members, the Elections Division was successful in meeting that goal, despite changes in ward and district boundaries. Out of 117 precincts, only 7 polling places were new in 2012, with new polling sites being established in Wards 2, 6, 8, 10, and 11, as shown below.

WARD- PRECINCT	NEW POLLING PLACE LOCATION
2-7	Augsburg College, Christensen Hall 720 22nd Ave S
6-5	Phillips Community Center 2323 11th Ave S
6-6	Peavey Recreation Center 730 22nd St E N
8-5	Watershed Charter High School 4544 4th Ave S
10-9	Minneapolis College of Art and Design 2501 Stevens Avenue
11-3	Windom South Community Center 5843 Wentworth Ave S
11-7	Mt. Zion Lutheran Church 5645 Chicago Ave

Of the 7 new polling places used in 2012, only 1 experienced any significant problems, as reflected in the number and type of complaints from voters.

Watershed Charter High School (Ward 8-Precinct 5) was one of the City's polling places that experienced some of the most significant challenges on Election Day.

CHANGING POLLING PLACES

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §204B.14, subd. 3(d), and Minneapolis City Charter, Chapter 2 §7, the City Council is responsible for establishing voting precincts within the city's thirteen wards. By law, precinct boundaries must be re-established after each decennial census within sixty days of the date when the State Legislature completes its redistricting plans or by no later than nineteen weeks before the date of the state primary in a year ending in two, whichever comes first. As part of its work to complete redistricting processes, the City Council did adopt a revised precinct plan at its regular meeting on Friday, March 30, 2012. The adopted plan included a net reduction of 14 precincts, but retained as many existing polling places as possible and also balanced the known population of pre-registered voters among those precincts to minimize some of the variation in the City's voter-to-precinct model. Under state law, the designation of a polling place remains effective until a new polling place is officially designated for that particular precinct and generally cannot be changed between the primary and general election. Changes in polling places may be made outside of those restrictions, but must be completed no less than 90 days prior to an election⁷.

Staff estimates the "average polling place" costs approximately \$7,400. This reflects ballot production and printing costs; expenses related to recruiting, training, and staffing the polling place with election judges; purchase of supplies and materials; additional voting booths and signage; maintenance, storage, programming, and transport of equipment and supplies to and from the warehouse, including the tabulator and AutoMark;

⁷ If the City of Minneapolis wishes to consider changing the designation of polling places prior to the next regularly scheduled election—which is the 2013 Municipal Election—than it must complete that work, as prescribed, by no later than 90 days prior to Tuesday, November 5, 2013, which is on or before August 7, 2013. Under MINN. STAT. § 204B.16, subd. 1, the City would be required to inform affected registered voters in the precinct about the change in polling place via a non-forwardable mailed notice. Staff estimates the notice required under the statute is approximately 30 cents per pre-registered voter.

facility rental and ancillary polling place costs; and costs for postage and a variety of mailings. This does not include costs for a new ballot tabulator or AutoMark, which would also be required for each polling place.

V. Election Judges

The men and women who staff polling places on Election Day are the face of the election system for the majority of voters. In many ways, the question of whether an election was a successful event or not—despite a myriad of other influencing factors—relies upon the experience of and performance by these individuals. Minneapolis is fortunate to have a corps of election judges who bring a high degree of experience, enthusiasm, and dedication to the job. Any story about success on Election Day must be credited to their hard work.

RECRUITMENT, TRAINING & DEPLOYMENT

Under state law⁸, each electoral precinct is required to be staffed with a minimum of four election judges at all times. As the largest, most-populated municipality in Minnesota, Minneapolis generally deploys a higher number of judges per precinct—though the final number varies depending on the type of election and anticipated turnout. For the 2012 Presidential Election, an average of ten election judges per precinct was scheduled, with a few precincts having even higher numbers of judges deployed based on projected turnout and Election Day Registrations. The following chart illustrates the planned increase in election judge deployment from the 2008 Presidential to the 2012 Presidential.

Polling Place Staffing Levels – Planned Deployment			
Precinct by Registered Voter Count	2008 General	2012 General	# of Precincts Impacted
Up to 750 registered voters	7	10	6
750-1,000 “	9	11	4
1,000-1,300 “	10	12	12
1,300-1,500 “	10	12.5	12
1,500-2,000 “	11	13.5	39
2,000-2,500 “	12	15	28
2,500-3,000 “	13	16	15
Over 3,000 “	14	17	2

There is no formula to determine the exact number of election judges needed for each precinct for each type of election. The criteria are determined by careful analysis of variables:

- The type of election that is being planned;
- The number of current registered voters (a fluid number that changes daily with new registrations);
- The historical turnout, including Election Day Registrations, for specific community zones or precincts;

⁸ MINN. STAT. §204B.22

- Nuances that reflect the character of a particular precinct which influences special needs, such as language/translation support, accessibility, young/first time voters, etc.;
- The baseline number of election judges planned per precinct, starting with the four judges required by law, but adjusted based on other factors (including those listed above);
- Strategies to address “over-scheduling” by ensuring alternate election judges to accommodate potential shortages, breaks, or last-minute challenges which impact the expected pool of election judges.

For the 2012 General Election, the analysis on election judge deployment also accounted for the significant variation caused by redistricting. Given projected voter turnout, anticipated problems created by changes in political boundaries and new polling places, the deployment strategy for 2012 used the turnout from the 2008 Presidential Election as a baseline. Using data on turnout from that election, the Elections Division planned a base increase of 30 percent in election judge deployment, as follows:

- Planned 15 percent increase in election judges to address challenges related to changes caused by redistricting and the consolidation/reduction of precincts and new polling places;
- Planned 15 percent increase in election judges to accommodate anticipated increased voter turnout, including additional greeter election judges and additional registration judges; and
- In addition to the 30 percent overall increase in election judge deployment, 50 additional election judges were deployed strategically to provide enhanced support for special needs in the polling places, such as language assistance and translation and access assistance.

A survey conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office⁹ found a majority of jurisdictions experienced problems recruiting and training sufficient election judges. These problems included the long hours associated with the work, low pay, workday conflicts that limit the pool of potential applicants, and the increasing technological demands for the position. These problems tend to be greatest in large election jurisdictions where most voters reside. In Minneapolis, one of the three full-time, permanent employees in the Elections Unit is assigned to manage all personnel aspects of the City’s election judge corps, a pool of approximately 2,500+ workers, which includes recruiting, scheduling training, assigning and confirming deployment to a specific precinct, entering election judges into the City’s human resources systems, processing payroll for all election judges, and other human-resource functions incidental to managing a workforce of that size and complexity.

TRAINING OF ELECTION JUDGES

Minnesota Rules establish the minimum content for any training program for election judges, including course content and minimum length of class time. Election judges must be re-certified during every two-year cycle.

The Secretary of State is responsible for training county auditors and election administrators, who in turn are charged with training and certifying municipal election officials. Each year, a new Minnesota Election Judge Guide is prepared by the Secretary of State’s Office. As part of the process, municipal election officials must complete training covering the following subjects:

- Candidate filings;
- Campaign practices;
- Campaign finance requirements;
- The election calendar and key dates and timelines;
- Ballot preparation;
- Election judge recruitment and duties;
- Notice requirements;

⁹ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), 2006. *Elections: The Nation’s Evolving Election System as Reflected in the November 2004 General Election*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

- Voting systems, if used in the municipality;
- Mail elections;
- Absentee voting; and
- Post-election duties.

As the state’s largest municipality, the Minneapolis Elections Division has one full-time, permanent employee to handle all training and communications functions. In addition to the base training described above, this employee must qualify through more extensive training and be certified to train election judges who themselves will train election judges, including topics such as election information and adult education methods.

Training for election judges can begin up to 60 days prior to the scheduled primary. In 2012, Minneapolis conducted 36 team election judge classes; this included: 9 new/first time election judge classes, 25 veteran election judge classes and 2 City employees-as-election judge classes. In addition to these team classes, a total of 12 classes were conducted for chair election judges, 3 classes were conducted for precinct support judges, and 10 classes were conducted for student election judges. One training class specifically for health care election judges was also conducted. Due to the extensive trainings required to sufficiently train all election judges, the City of Minneapolis hires two temporary training assistants to help conduct the various training classes. In addition to these extensive training responsibilities, the Elections Division also conducted 9 post-primary debriefings with chair election judges that focused on “lessons learned” and provided feedback for future improvements.

Given the diversity of this community, Minneapolis ensures that special attention is paid to train its election judges on the extra steps necessary to ensure proper service to new and first-time voters and voters with special needs, including accessibility and mobility issues and language translation needs. The Elections Division has a long-standing, strong partnership with the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities, and the input of this Committee and its members has been critical to ensure election judges are sufficiently trained on how to serve disabled voters.

Finally, to close the loop on training, the Elections Division also uses a 360-degree performance evaluation among all of its election officials to evaluate the performance and capabilities of its corps. This feedback is carefully reviewed to determine where election judges can best be utilized in order to maximize on their individual skills and strengths within the larger team of 2,500+ election judges.

SPECIAL NEEDS: ACCESSIBILITY & TRANSLATION

In addition to the overall increase in election judge deployment at all precincts, a total of 50 election judges were assigned to key polling places to enhance capacity for target populations; this included translation assistance (ESL support), accessibility assistance, and ‘traffic/greeter’ support. If a scheduled interpreter election judge was not available, or if there was a need for language support in a less common language, Minneapolis 311 provided supplemental support. Working together, the election judge, the 311 Customer Service Agent, and the 311 language interpretation vendor assisted the voter so that he or she could participate in the election and cast a ballot. In the 2012 General Election, Minneapolis 311 provided language support and interpretation services for 23 voters at the polls.

STUDENT JUDGES: ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF VOTERS

The Minneapolis student election judge program deployed a record number of student judges in 2012. A total of 9 public, private, and charter schools participated in this year’s program, accounting for 260 student participants. 146 student judges worked the full day, representing an equivalent of 203 FTEs—an increase of 14 percent compared to the 2010 Gubernatorial Election. Of the student judges deployed on Election Day, 53 student judges were fluent in a second language—which further enhanced our capacity to provide translation

support in polling places. In all, 25 student judges spoke Hmong, 13 spoke Spanish, 9 spoke Somali, and 6 spoke some other language. As demonstrated by other City departments, the Elections Division continues to benefit from this type of investment in our youth.

VI. Absentee Ballots

A total of 15,143 voters participated in the 2012 General Election via the absentee balloting process, which represents approximately 7 percent of the total voter turnout in Minneapolis. Absentee balloting for the 2012 General Election began Friday, September 21, and concluded Monday, November 5. This included extended in-person absentee hours conducted on Saturday, October 27, and again on Saturday, November 3¹⁰. Initially, the City received between 150-200 absentee ballot applications per day. That rate picked up as the absentee period drew to a close. On Monday, November 5, the final day for in-person absentee voting, Minneapolis processed several hundred in-person absentee ballots in addition to the volume of mailed absentee ballots. When combined, the City accepted a total of 1,144 in-person and mailed absentee ballots on that single day.

Details about the volume of absentee ballots processed by the City of Minneapolis are shown in the following chart for reference:

WARD	Total # AB 11/05/12	FINAL # AB 11/06/12	CHANGE # / %
1	972	1,009	+37; 4%
2	883	908	+25; 3%
3	1,444	1,500	+56; 4%
4	604	621	+17; 3%
5	517	539	+22; 4%
6	843	863	+20; 2%
7	2,010	2,092	+82; 4%
8	936	965	+29; 3%
9	500	533	+33; 6%
10	1,197	1,242	+45; 4%
11	1,336	1,372	+36; 3%
12	1,418	1,458	+40; 3%
13	1,974	2,041	+67; 3%

Minneapolis received more than 500 absentee ballots—through the mail or by agent delivery—on Election Day. In total, the City served 15,143 absentee voters

¹⁰ Under State law, all election jurisdictions are required to be open for in-person absentee voters on the Saturday preceding the date of the election, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The City of Minneapolis provided in-person absentee voting hours on Saturday, October 27 (not required by law), and extended hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) on Saturday, November 3. During the 2008 Presidential Election, the City processed more than 1,000 absentee voters on the Saturday preceding the date of the scheduled election. Based on that experience, the City's elections team prepared for a similar turnout. Unfortunately, the volume of in-person absentee voters on this date in 2012 was significantly lower—only 220 ballots were cast at the City, with an additional 500 absentee ballots cast by Minneapolis voters at the Hennepin County Government Center. Thus, the total count of Minneapolis in-person absentee voters for that one day (Nov. 3) was approximately 720—less than the projected turnout based on experiences in 2008.

On Election Day, the Elections Division received a total of 509 absentee ballots by mail and through agent delivery. These absentee ballots were received until the legally required cut-off of 3 p.m. Once the last ballots were received, they had to undergo extensive processing.

First, each ballot had to be reviewed and either accepted or rejected and entered into the State Voter Registration System. Next, each precinct had to be notified—by phone—of any updates to the listing of absentee voters in the poll rosters so that election judges in the precincts could manually update their polling place roster books. Additionally, staff attempted to notify voters whose absentee ballots were rejected, to give them an opportunity to get to their assigned polling place to cast a new ballot before they closed at 8 p.m.

After all of this initial processing, all absentee ballots received from the previous day—in addition to those received on Election Day through 3 p.m.—had to be opened, processed, and transported to Hennepin County for tabulating. At Hennepin County, all absentee ballots had to be fed through the M100 tabulators to be counted, since the large-capacity M650 central count equipment had malfunctioned. Unfortunately, the memory cards were programmed to tabulate all precincts within each ward. The M100 tabulators, therefore, could only count ballots one ward at a time, which significantly slowed the counting of absentee ballots on Election Night. Several M100 tabulators were required to tabulate 13 wards, requiring additional labor to process or feed the ballots into the machines. This unanticipated limitation, caused by the malfunction of the M650 central processing equipment combined with the large number of absentee ballots received on Election Day, meant that tabulating entire wards—precinct by precinct, then ward by ward—delayed tabulation of results and reporting to Hennepin County.

Across the State of Minnesota, a total of 267,464 absentee ballot requests were reported by the Secretary of State. That means the City of Minneapolis represented about 6 percent of the total absentee ballots that were processed in the State of Minnesota. Many of the smaller, rural precincts in Minnesota are, under state law, authorized to conduct mail-ballots only. In 2010, two major changes to absentee voting were implemented. First, the absentee voting period was expanded from 30 to 46 days, giving voters an additional 16 days to cast their votes via absentee ballot. Second, a centralized process was implemented for counting absentee ballots in Hennepin County. The 2012 Presidential Election was the first presidential election to be conducted in Minnesota after the implementation of these two major process improvements. In the 2008 Presidential General Election, 17,000 absentee ballots were cast; in the 2012 Presidential General Election, 15,143 absentee ballots were cast.

HEALTH CARE FACILITY ELECTION JUDGE TEAM

Voters who are unable to cast their ballots at an assigned polling place on Election Day because they are hospitalized or residents of a health care facility are served by a special team of health care election judges beginning 20 days before Election Day. The Minneapolis health care election team consisted of 18 judges, working under the direction of a health care coordinator. During the 20-day period, this team of election judges visited 20 health care facilities and 3 hospitals in order to assist 1,125 voters cast their absentee ballots. At the facility, it is treated as if it were Election Day, with all the requirements of a polling place enforced, with pre-registered voters and Election Day Registration available. The health care facility election judges work in teams of two, of differing major political parties, in order to be able to assist voters who may require extra help. The ballots collected by the health care facility election team are mixed with all other absentee ballots for centralized processing of all absentee ballots.

VII. Election Day Registration

Minnesota consistently achieves voter turnout rates above the national median in part because it is one of a handful of states that authorize the use of Election Day (Same Day) Registration. In fact, it is estimated that Election Day Registration accounts for between 5 and 10 percent of the total voter turnout statistics in Minnesota. In the 2012 General Election, 50,668 voters used this method. That means 1 in 4 voters were registered at the polls and cast ballots on Election Day. In a broader context, the total volume of Election Day Registrations for Minneapolis exceeded the total population of the city of Minnetonka¹¹.

Election Day Registration was targeted for elimination under the proposed constitutional amendment on voter identification. The Minneapolis City Council took a strong position in opposition to that proposed amendment¹², stating that, among other matters, the use of constitutional amendments to stifle, prevent, or restrict voting in any way was inappropriate, which would be the result of substitution provisional balloting in lieu of Election Day Registration. Minneapolis voters rejected that amendment on a 3-to-1 margin, which seems to indicate a large majority of Minneapolitans agreed with the position expressed by the City Council.

Still, the time required to assist and process a single voter using Election Day Registration can challenge the ability of election judges to manage an efficient polling place. The simple, uncomplicated act of signing-in a pre-registered voter takes less than a minute; conversely, registering a voter on Election Day in a busy environment requires a considerable amount of time—ranging from 3 or 4 minutes, assuming the potential voter has all the necessary and appropriate forms of identification, up to 10 or 15 minutes (or longer) depending on how much information and assistance is required by the voter. For each voter who registers at the polls, an election judge must take the following steps:

- Check the individual precinct finder to verify that the voter is in the correct precinct;
- Check the absentee ballot list to confirm the voter has not already voted by absentee ballot;
- Review the completed Voter Registration Application submitted by the voter to assure accuracy, completeness, and legibility;
- Check the voter's proof of residence and compare it with the information on the Voter Registration Application;
- Complete the Voter Registration Application by documenting the proof of residence provided by the voter to register and vote on Election Day
- Direct the voter to fill-in the Election Day Registration roster and sign-in;
- Review data the voter has added to the green roster; and
- Provide the voter a receipt and direct the voter to the demonstration election judge.

The additional time required to register a voter at the polls can be further compounded if there are language barriers or other factors that must be addressed. As a consequence, Election Day Registration is one of the leading factors contributing to increased wait times and long lines at the polls. In short, a higher volume of Election Day Registrations generally equals longer lines and wait times.

In an effort to alleviate long lines and voter wait times linked to Election Day Registration, the City could choose to increase the number of its polling places, add additional election judges, or both.

To illustrate the additional cost of adding election judges only, assume a base processing time of 5 minutes per Election Day Registration—a very conservative estimate. With 50,668 Election Day Registrations in 2012, that

¹¹ Minnetonka is the seventh largest city in Hennepin County with a 2010 population certified by the U.S. Census Bureau as being 49,734.

¹² The Minneapolis City Council adopted Resolution No. 2012R-248 at its regular meeting on May 11, 2012, in opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment related to voter identification. In its resolution, the City Council expressed its position that constitutional amendments related to the voting rights of the citizenry should be used only to expand and guarantee voting rights and to encourage voter engagement and participation.

amounts to 4,222 hours of total processing time, or an average of 36 hours for each of the 117 polling places. Each polling place would, on average, need to have a minimum of three election judges dedicated exclusively to registering same-day voters continuously for the entire 13-hour period that polls are open to receive voters on Election Day. Certainly, some locations processed far more than an average amount of Election Day Registrations, and some locations had more than three judges to assist with that work; however, if the number of registration judges (those that process same-day registrants) were doubled (that is, adding three more judges) across all 117 polling places, the fiscal impact would be just under \$50,000; to triple the number of registration judges (that is, to add six more judges) across all 117 polling places, the fiscal impact would be about \$98,000. These estimates account only for the hourly pay for the additional judges and do not reflect any extra costs for training time and materials, which would be additional expenses to the City. This underscores the necessity of budgeting for each particular type of election, and not budgeting the same amount across all types of elections or based on the experiences of previous elections, since turnout and the need to flexibly respond cannot be accurately predicted.

VIII. Technical Problems

Polls opened at 7 a.m. on Election Day. Almost immediately, problems began to be reported to Election Headquarters (HQ) at City Hall. These technical problems ranged from the mundane to the very complex, with simple solutions being offered over the phone and on-site visits required as the nature of problems escalated. The bulk of these “escalated technical problems” centered on equipment and ballots. In a few instances, problems in the polling places that remained unresolved continued to intensify—and sometimes multiply—while solutions were being developed. Away from the polls, the HQ team experienced a different set of challenges; specifically, trying to juggle timely response to calls for help from polling places while finding enough time to analyze the nature of problem calls in order to identify patterns, define the nature of problems, and develop solutions. In short, HQ was inadequately staffed to meet the demands placed upon it—resources were prioritized in favor of serving voters at polling places, but this left too few resources to manage the overall ebb and flow of activities on Election Day. As with the impact of Election Day Registrations, described above, the unintended consequence of these technical problems was the increase in wait times and the long lines experienced by voters in some polling places.

Equipment Malfunction

The most significant technical challenge experienced on Election Day was the failure of some tabulators to accept ballots. In the majority of cases, equipment malfunction is the result of operator error and the problem can be analyzed and resolved through a series of specific questions-and-answers via phone contact with HQ. When this approach does not resolve the problem, or if further diagnostics are needed, a precinct support judge is dispatched to either fix the problem or swap out machines.

Prior to Election Day, the Elections Division conducts a comprehensive testing of every tabulator, all memory cards, and a series of test ballots to ensure proper functioning of equipment to accept ballots on Election Day. Following that, the Elections Division also conducts a Public Accuracy Test (PAT) for its fleet of elections equipment to demonstrate the accuracy of the computer program and the voting system that is to be used in the polling place.¹³ The City of Minneapolis conducted its PAT on October 30, 2012, just seven days before the General Election. As required by law, the PAT was open to the media and interested members of the public. Four teams of two election judges from different parties, along with three members of the City’s Election Division, conducted testing of equipment from eleven different precincts. Teams tested the ballot reading capability of the machines by running a “test deck” of ballots through the machines with four different ballot

¹³ MINN. STAT. §206.83

orientations. Judges also tested to ensure that incorrectly marked ballots were not accepted by the machines. Finally, after all ballots were cast, a review of the machine's results tape was tested against the predetermined results to ensure accuracy.

Because of the accurate results from the PAT on October 30, when equipment malfunctions began to be reported early on Election Day, it was initially difficult to determine whether the error was related to the equipment or whether the problem was caused by the ballot. Some problems were corrected right away; other errors persisted. As staff at headquarters attempted to diagnose the nature of the malfunctions that were being reported by precincts, the interim strategy was to direct election judges to have voters put their completed ballots into the auxiliary compartment on the tabulator. The auxiliary compartment is designed and incorporated into the overall construction of the tabulator for just this type of instance: to provide secured storage for completed ballots in the event of equipment malfunction. In the majority of polling places, staff was able to resolve the problem and all ballots were then removed from the auxiliary compartments by teams of two elections judges (representing different parties) and scanned into the tabulator in the precinct on Election Day.

Looking to 2013, Hennepin County is preparing to purchase new election equipment. The current fleet is over 10 years old, and needs to be replaced. Hennepin County Commissioners and election administrators had deferred the purchase in order to give Minneapolis a chance to determine if any vendor had market-ready equipment that could satisfy the unique processing requirements for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), which is used by the City for its municipal offices. The Minneapolis Elections Division has continued to collaborate closely with the Hennepin County Elections Office to identify equipment options that not only meet the requirements of federal and state elections, but which also may satisfy some of the processing details associated with RCV. To-date, there is no equipment that is available meeting federal certification requirements that will satisfy the RCV requirements of the City of Minneapolis. The County's Elections Division has indicated a preference for completing the purchase of new elections equipment for all cities within Hennepin County in the first quarter of 2013 in order to have the new machines ready for use in the 2013 municipal and other odd-year elections.

Ballot Errors

In addition to equipment malfunctions, Minneapolis also experienced some challenges related to the design and printing of the ballots. Because many of the equipment issues were resolved throughout the day, the assumption was that swapping out tabulators could be the best and quickest solution. Unfortunately, after swapping multiple tabulators in some of the key problem precincts, the problems remained. Small white speckles along the timing bars that edge each ballot were rejected by the tabulators; in other instances, misaligned timing bars created the error. Unfortunately, it was late in the day before this error was identified. A representative from the equipment vendor was called in and conducted some on-site evaluation to determine if the problem was related to equipment or ballots. As soon as the determination was made that the problem—in some instances—related to errors in the design and printing of ballots, the City—in conjunction with the Hennepin County Elections Office—immediately deployed all remaining ballots from headquarter operations to replace the bad ballots. Unfortunately, the bad ballots predominately impacted three precincts—specifically 10-1 (Lowry Hill East – north); 10-2 (Lowry Hill East – south); and 10-8 (Whittier). Despite every effort, the tabulators in these three precincts would not accept the ballots. As a result, a hand-count process was necessitated to complete the counting of ballots from these three precincts. That hand-count process was completed on Friday, November 9, 2012, and the final results from the City of Minneapolis were sent to Hennepin County and the Secretary of State.

Other Problems

In addition to the major challenges associated with malfunctioning equipment and ballots, the City also had reports of voters who were not listed on the registered voter rosters in their polling place. This is a challenge

related to the accuracy of registration processes, which is not a function performed by the City of Minneapolis. Fortunately, any voter not included on the roster as a pre-registered voter had the option to register same-day and cast a ballot.

IX. Public Outreach & Education

Recognizing the “perfect storm” caused by the combination of redistricting and a presidential election, and hoping to minimize voter confusion about new wards, precincts, and polling places, the Elections Division actively sought a number of opportunities to engage and inform voters in the lead-up to the 2012 Primary and General Election.

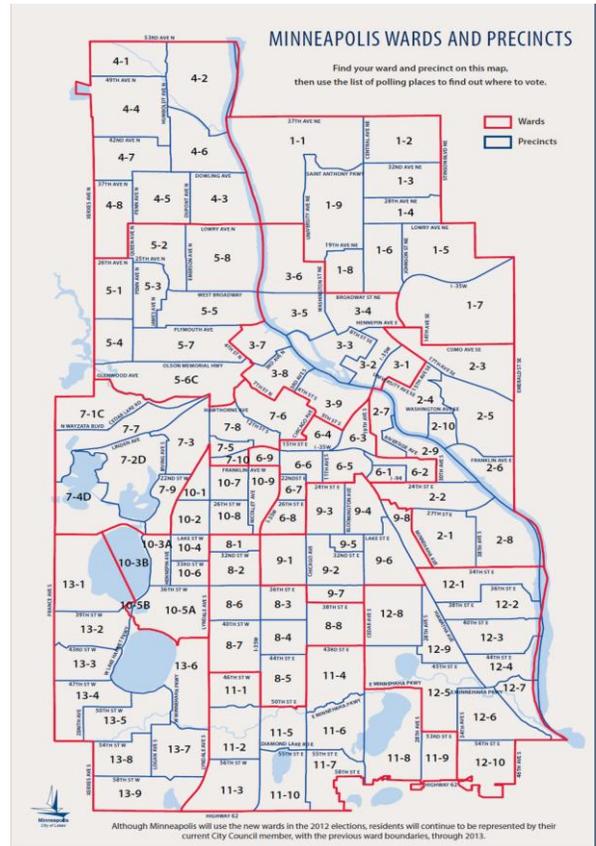
The centerpiece to these efforts was the “2012 MINNEAPOLIS VOTING MAP,” a two-sided, 11” x 17” full-color brochure developed in partnership with the City’s Communications Department. The brochure (shown right) displayed a detailed map showing all wards and precincts on one side, with a full listing of each of the 117 polling places on the other side, along with contact information and useful reminders for voters. The brochure was created so that it could be printed for personal distribution, posted in locations across the community, accessed on-line from the City’s website, or distributed electronically to media outlets for further publication and distribution.

With help from the City’s Neighborhood & Community Relations Department, copies of the Voting Map were distributed at neighborhood centers, parks, libraries, and other community gathering spaces. Additionally, the brochure was provided to neighborhood organizations and political parties for distribution to their members.

Finally, the Elections Division worked with a number of outside partners—including Common Cause, Election Protection, and Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG)—to distribute copies of the Voting Map and to build general awareness about voting, electioneering, restrictions related to polling place access, vouching, Election Day Registration, and other information of particular interest to college campuses.

In addition to the new 2012 Voting Map, the Elections Division worked to increase public awareness about the 2012 Primary and General Election through a variety of news releases and announcements, articles, and social media posts. Regular updates were provided through a variety of outlets, including *Minneapolis Matters*, local and state newspapers, college and university lists, and Minneapolis 311. Additionally, the seven major post-secondary schools in Minneapolis received election information by phone, regular news releases, and emails.

The nation celebrated September 25, 2012, as the first-ever National Voter Registration Day—and the Elections Division joined with a variety of community partners to help promote Get Out The Vote (GOTV) events throughout the community. Several of the City’s election judges participated in events by distributing information packets, staffing voter pre-registration tables, and posting or distributing pre-registration materials. According to Hennepin County’s Elections Division, approximately 6,000 registration applications resulted from these efforts.



THE 2012 MINNEAPOLIS VOTING MAP.

The City's Elections Division also worked to encourage pre-registration through the creation of flyers, and a second poster to explain proof of residence requirements for Election Day. These flyers were posted on the Elections website, distributed to CCP/SAFE landlord and property manager email lists and to the Minnesota Multi-Housing Association website.

One of the most successful outreach activities was with election interest groups. As a result of early and regular contact—as well as education about election regulations and processes—the Elections Division was successful in avoiding any adversarial disputes in polling places on Election Day. This was in stark contrast to the activities that were experienced in prior years, particularly with young, college-aged voters. In fact, the polling place at Grace University Lutheran Church in the Second Ward, which historically was a source concern to the City's elections administrators, had no complaints during the 2012 General Election. Issues were resolved faster and with more positive outcomes due to the efforts put into developing collaborative, mutually-beneficial working relationships with some of these key stakeholders earlier in the year. Because of the success these efforts were able to achieve, fostering these and other partnerships will be a high priority for the future.

X. Clerk's Office: Elections & Voter Services Unit

Elections administration in the 21st Century continues to rely on and use methods developed in the 19th Century; fundamentally, our elections are based on serving a pre-industrial, largely agrarian population using geographically-determined polling places on a single day using a cumbersome, labor-intensive paper system prone to errors and inaccuracies. Over time, those systems and processes have been refined, but not completely changed.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Federal, state, and local officials—eager to ensure the availability, accessibility, and accuracy of elections—have enacted a complex web of laws dictating who may vote, when, where, and under what conditions votes may be cast, how ballots are tabulated and results calculated, etc. Federal law alone imposes crucial mandates and restrictions on state and local election offices: the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986 (UOCAVA), and the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA, also known as the Motor-Voter Act) have placed significant legal responsibilities on election officials—and strained the budgets of state and local governments.

Since 2000, the body of federal election law has increased considerably with the enactment of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act of 2009, along with the reauthorization of the VRA in 2007.

At the same time, states and local governments have made changes to election laws, both to implement federal laws as well as to reflect state and local policy preferences and to further refine and dictate—within federal law—the conditions which stipulate how voters may register and identity verification requirements, if any; the establishment of political boundaries and assignment of voter representation (redistricting); the location of polling places and regulations governing conduct within polling places, etc.

This ever-evolving, interwoven backdrop of federal, state, and local laws and regulations—combined with the rulings and decisions made by courts to clarify points of law or resolve disputes and the political disputes that can and do ensue—has made the work of elections administrators even more daunting and difficult. And that does not begin to touch on the escalating levels of intense scrutiny to which the work of elections administrators is exposed—by policymakers, the media, and the public.

TECHNOLOGY & SYSTEM IMPLICATIONS

After the fall-out from the 2000 Presidential election, policymakers at all levels of government rushed to “improve” the elections system, looking primarily to new and emerging technologies from the private sector to provide the answers. In response to HAVA, states were flooded with federal funds to purchase new, electronic voting systems. The consequence of these decisions, and the complexity of the new technology systems that have been implemented to “fix” perceived problems, forced elections administrators to increasingly rely on private sector companies, consultants, and vendors to handle much of their work—or at least to dictate how that work can and will be accomplished in the future.

Experiences in other states demonstrated that this heavy reliance upon technology and computerized-only voting systems can increase risk to the integrity and accountability of the elections process. To preserve the integrity and transparency of any election, it is essential that election administrators be able to recreate the election definitively—which is most easily accomplished using a paper-based system. Moreover, the optical-scan approach combined with paper ballots, as used in Minnesota, provides a verifiable paper trail for election audits, recounts, and hand counts, among other post-election procedures.

At the same time, the face of the nation has changed. Traditional election methods increasingly do not fit with the mobile, global, technology-savvy, creative, knowledge-based society. More Americans use the Internet and mobile devices to access news, information, and commerce; these facts have necessitated election administrators to adapt and add new technology skills and competencies to their repertoire.

FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

The recessionary economy has forced states and municipalities across the nation to make budget cuts—often deep and painful—to government programs across the board. Election offices have not been immune from these reductions; in fact, the Office of City Clerk has experienced an overall reduction of 40 percent in its workforce since 2000¹⁴, and these cuts were primarily absorbed in its Elections Division.

The Elections Division budget follows a planned four-year cycle; specifically:

Cycle Year	Election Type	Funding Level Required
Year One	Presidential (Federal & State)	Very High
Year Two	Municipal	Moderate ¹⁵
Year Three	Gubernatorial (Federal & State)	High
Year Four	No scheduled elections	Low ¹⁶

¹⁴ The core services and functions of the Office of City Clerk are regulatory in nature and are dictated by federal, state, and local laws, policies, and regulations, primarily related to the administration of elections and the management of official records. As reported in its 2007-2011 Business Plan, the Clerk’s Office experienced a reduction of 40% in personnel in the years 2000-2010.

¹⁵ Prior to 2009 when the Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) methodology was implemented, planned municipal elections required the lowest funding level, reflecting a lower voter turnout as well as the impact of off-year elections which do not include federal or state races. Due to several factors, the 2009 RCV Municipal Election was actually the most expensive election administered by the City of Minneapolis during the period 2000-2010.

¹⁶ Although no elections are programmed in Year Four, it is possible special elections could be called. The Elections Division must ensure the infrastructure, resources, and corporate support for 100 percent elections readiness even in the “off year” of the cycle.

Because staffing and resource levels, programmatic costs, and other factors fluctuate widely based upon projected voter turnout and other factors pertinent to each election cycle, it is impossible to develop a consistent budget from year to year. Consequently, the elections budget is unique from all other department budgets in the City of Minneapolis; and this is true for every jurisdiction that is responsible for conducting (and funding) elections in the United States. As a result, more flexible financial strategies are needed to address the elections unit as the budget is developed each year.

Elections are expensive, it's true. But that is because elections are inclusive. Assuring all citizens can rely upon elections that are available, accessible, and accurate so that they can exercise their constitutionally-protected voting rights cannot be conditioned upon a good budget year. Elections—like public safety—are a fundamental function of government.

OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

As demonstrated throughout this report, Minneapolis has some of the most engaged voters in the United States. Voters consistently demonstrate higher participation rates—reflecting the value residents place on elections as a democratic principle. Those consistent high participation rates, however, reflect an expectation on the part of voters that the City assure adequate resources are maintained to plan, organize, and conduct elections as scheduled or whenever required. Consequently, tough economic times aside, investments in elections must be made to maintain service levels that meet expectations of state and local policymakers and voters alike as well as to assure continued compliance with federal and state legal requirements.

As reflected in the foregoing paragraphs, the administration of elections is an emerging profession. It is subject to some of the most complex, interconnected legal frameworks and set of requirements in the nation; intense public and media scrutiny; a near-constant schedule of federal, state, local, and special elections; evolving methodologies and technologies; and a steady decrease in available funds as budgets shrink nationwide.

While the nation's collective attention tends to be captured by and focused almost exclusively on presidential elections, the fact of the matter is that local election administrators are in a constant state of preparing for, conducting, or wrapping-up one election or another. And for every single election that must be conducted, regardless of type, elections administrators must:

- Produce a list of eligible voters;
- Identify adequate polling sites, and provide appropriate notice to all voters;
- Build and produce a ballot, then order sufficient quantities to meet projected turnout;
- Recruit, train, and deploy election judges;
- Program and test voting machines and coordinate delivery of machines, ballots, and supplies to each polling site;
- Collect and count all voted ballots and generate returns; and
- Certify the official election results.

In 2011, a comprehensive analysis of the City's Elections Division was conducted¹⁷. That report found that the City of Minneapolis was under-resourced for elections, particularly in regard to staffing. The average staffing deployment in comparable jurisdictions was 6 full-time positions; Minneapolis has 3 full-time positions reporting to an Assistant City Clerk who has supervisory oversight of three units in the Clerk's Office. While all three staffers bring extensive education and experience to the job, all may be eligible for retirement in the near future. That presents a serious business risk to the Clerk's Office and, by extension, the City of Minneapolis.

¹⁷ A report by Connie J. Schmidt, an independent elections consultant affiliated with National Association of Elections Officials, was presented to the City Council on June 17, 2011, entitled "Analysis & Recommendations Report on the Minneapolis Elections Division – Office of City Clerk." That report included a full review of the staffing, budget, and resources of the City's Elections Division and provided comparisons to other election jurisdictions, including the cities of St. Paul/Ramsey County, MN; Duluth and Rochester, MN; Milwaukee, WI; Long Beach and Sacramento, CA, among others.

XI. Lessons Learned from 2012: Recommendations for Future Improvement

There are 10,499 local election jurisdictions in the United States; that is, local government units that administer elections and serve voters. These local election jurisdictions can be divided into large jurisdiction (50,000+ voters), medium jurisdictions (between 1,000 and 50,000 voters), and small jurisdictions (less than 1,000 voters). The median precinct size across all three categories of local election jurisdiction was slightly more than 1,000 voters in the 2008 Presidential election. That year, roughly two-thirds of all voters who participated in the election were served by just 457 large jurisdictions—what equates to about just 4 percent of the total number of local election jurisdictions in the nation. In context, that means that 4 percent of the nation’s local election jurisdictions served more than two-thirds of the total number of voters who participated in the 2008 Presidential election. Minneapolis is a part of that 4 percent of large-sized local election jurisdictions, and it is imperative that the City take a leading role in advocating for election reform.

The experiences of the 2012 General Election provided many lessons that can be used as the basis for future improvements, whether those improvements can be made independently by the Clerk’s Office under the direction of the City Clerk, or if those improvements would require action by the City Council, including policy issues, if appropriate. In addition to these “local” improvements, a number of improvements that could further streamline and enhance key objectives for the future of elections administration—both in the City of Minneapolis and the State of Minnesota—would necessitate formal authorization by the State Legislature.

Following is a summary of the major recommendations, whether local or state-wide, to be considered for future improvement offered by staff.

IMPROVEMENTS BY THE CITY

1. ELECTION JUDGE RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

- 1) The City should develop a plan to diversify the composition of its standing corps of election workers (including election judges, precinct support judges, seasonal staff, etc.), to reflect differences in age, race/ethnicity, language, physical capability, etc. This plan should tie to larger accessibility goals, including the creation of an Elections Accessibility Plan.
- 2) In general, but especially with regard to high-turnout elections, like the 2012 Presidential General Election, the Elections Division should designate a dedicated team of election judges to focus exclusively on processing and counting absentee ballots. The practice of using full-time and seasonal staff to primarily manage this function while serving as back-up for all other election-related needs causes a significant strain on the Election Division’s capacity to manage absentee processes within tight timeframes.
- 3) Election judge training—though of an excellent caliber—needs to be enhanced, particularly for chair judges and precinct support judges, to empower them to function as the “manager” of their respective polling place or ward. Management of the polling place and coaching and developing team election judges are critical functions, and they require time and attention. It is a disservice to voters when chair judges assure duties that are intended to be performed by other election team judges in the polling place. The chair judge must be focused on the “big picture” of serving to voters and the efficiency of his or her assigned precinct.
- 4) Provide precinct support judges with supply and equipment bins for easy transport of materials and polling place supplies to minimize trips to headquarters and to keep them closer to their assigned precincts in the field on Election Day.

- 5) The City needs to consider alternatives that encourage higher levels of participation by its workforce serving as election judges. This would potentially allow for the creation of a “reserve corps” of election judges that could be strategically deployed, based on demand, to precincts that have heavy turnout, long lines, extended wait periods, or also to simply cover breaks and lunches, or to fill-in as necessary, under the direction of the precinct’s chair judge.
- 6) The Elections Division is an operating unit of the Office of City Clerk; however, the number of full-time positions dedicated to elections administration is approximately 3.25, which is insufficient for the volume of voters in Minneapolis—the largest city in Minnesota and the 48th largest municipality in the nation. To enhance internal capacity, all staff positions in the Clerk’s Office should be fully cross-trained and considered members of the Elections Division and capable of filling-in whenever and as needed.
- 7) Continue to target multi-lingual individuals for service as election judges—particularly as language support judges in those precincts where high voter turnout requiring such translation assistance is a known factor.
- 8) Continue to expand on the City’s successful student election judge program. The program encourages civic engagement amongst the next generation of future voters (and election judges), and it is a critical tool for early participation to foster a lifelong awareness about the importance of elections in our democracy.

2. POLLING PLACES

- 1) As part of a comprehensive Elections Accessibility Plan, the City should engage with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate polling places that fully meet the projected needs of voter turnout, which would address such issues as potential barriers and/or challenges for accessibility, mobility, parking, size/capacity of space, proximity to public transportation options, internal queuing space (no outside lines), and identifies strategies to address these needs encompassing physical, language, facility, and other types of challenges.
- 2) The City needs to give greater attention to the selection, layout, and annual re-evaluation of all its polling places. This would include a customized layout—using computer-assisted design technology—for each precinct to maximize floor space and traffic flows. It would be a benefit to the City’s Elections Division to have a dedicated resource (FTE) for this function, given the significant time that should be invested in reviewing all 117 polling places on an annual basis. This also would include responsibility for managing contracts with polling place facilities and coordinating the delivery of election equipment and supplies to polling places prior to Election Day.
- 3) Recruit and have available additional “runners” on Election Day who can deliver supplies to precincts and facilitate communications between precincts and headquarters.
- 4) The deployment of at least one precinct support judge to function as an “equipment technician” on Election Day in order to provide timely assistance to precincts in addressing and resolving technical and mechanical problems in the field. In addition, the Clerk’s Office should advance plans to have its Operations Technician position cross-trained on all aspects of managing election equipment to provide a dedicated, in-house resource.

3. VOTER EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- 1) It is imperative that the City orchestrate an ongoing outreach and education program, across all four years of the election cycle, to build broad community-based awareness and support for elections. Outreach should specifically include strategies to address youth/first time voters; new

residents; non-English speaking voters; renter/tenants; and other special populations. This comprehensive program could include some or all (or more) of the following:

- a. Develop a “How to Vote” booklet, simple explanation of voting in State of Minnesota and City of Minneapolis, including details on traditional and RCV methodologies, voting equipment (including AutoMark), dates/four-year cycle, etc., to be used as a general-purpose handout for speaking engagements, handouts, etc.
 - b. Develop a Voter Academy, possibly in conjunction with outreach and education programs developed by the Neighborhood & Community Relations Department.
 - c. Increase departmental involvement/engagement in voter registration initiatives and drives, independently and in partnership with other community groups.
 - d. Consider strategies to engage younger voters, including social media outlets.
- 2) Based on the fact that Election Day registration is often the reason for long lines, look into additional options to encourage pre-registration including more outreach to populations who are less likely to register.
 - 3) The Elections Division needs to consider all options to pursue translation of election materials into other various language (non-English), possibly through partnerships with the Neighborhood & Community Relations Department and other local institutions. Given the existing populations and the projected expansion of non-English speaking residents, the ability to communicate accurately and effectively with these potential voting populations is critical.

4. RESOURCES

- 1) Partner with Hennepin County on the selection and purchase of new voting equipment, especially giving consideration to any options that may help to streamline and automate the unique counting processes associated with Ranked Choice Voting. Any technology initiatives pursued by the City will need the engagement (and support) of Hennepin County to assure success, so regular communication will be essential.
- 2) The City’s existing HRIS (human resources system) requires multiple data-entry tasks, which multiplies the time required to enter 2,500+ election judges, each of whom must be entered and then removed from the system prior to and immediately following each election. This is unnecessary, duplicative work that eats into precious resources for functions that should be (and could be) better streamlined and managed with better technology.
- 3) The Elections Division needs to evaluate options for its Elections Management System (EMS), which was developed in-house approximately 20 years ago and is the central system used to plan and manage election functions. That system may need to be upgraded or entirely replaced.
- 4) The Elections Division should pursue development of an internship program. Elections administrators are “born on the job,” and there is no schooling that prepares someone to pursue this career. As the largest municipality in Minnesota, with connections to recognized educational institutions, the City should be actively producing the “next generation” of election officials in Minneapolis.
- 5) The Elections Division needs to make improvements to the navigation, content, and overall design of its website, which is used as the primary source for election information. The website needs to be able to address multiple functions: information for voters and the general public; information for the news media on voting statistics, election laws, and other details; information for election

judges, which might include on-line testing, instructions, and targeted communications; and information for policymakers about performance and key metrics.

- 6) The Elections Division needs to consider improvements to its Election Day headquarters operation—possibly utilizing the experiences of colleagues in Emergency Management. Those techniques are applicable to the call center management environment and the need for pattern recognition, problem definition, and analysis under very difficult and stressful conditions. This also might include the use of specialized project tracking software to help identify, analyze, and generate reports on issues throughout Election Day.
- 7) Utilize the City’s wireless access at polling places throughout the community to allow voters to look up utility bills and facilitate faster contact with headquarters.

IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRING LEGISLATIVE AUTHORIZATION

Across the nation, local election jurisdictions have implemented or are considering a number of reforms to improve the delivery of elections for voters; these reforms primarily reflect greater voter convenience and options to assure more opportunities to participate in elections. Of these various reforms, the Minneapolis Elections Division recommends that the City Council consider a reform “package” to advocate with State lawmakers. These reforms are described below.

EARLY VOTING

Early voting, also known as “advance polling” or “advance voting”, refers to a period of time prior to the election during which voters can cast a ballot, by mail or in-person at designated early voting centers. The goal of early voting is to provide a voter convenience along with overall relief in polling place congestion on Election Day, with voting spread over numerous locations over several days, in addition to votes cast on Election Day. Currently 32 states and the District of Columbia offer some form of early voting.

Minnesota is one of 15 states which allow absentee voting, seen as a form of early voting. However, an absentee voter in Minnesota must still identify one of a narrow list of statutorily-prescribed reasons that he or she is opting to vote absentee. Other states provide “no-fault” absentee voting, which allows a voter to opt to cast an absentee ballot without identifying any reason to justify the use of the absentee ballot. Similarly, early voting does not require a voter to indicate why he or she is choosing to vote prior to Election Day. But early voting processes are better than absentee voting. That’s because early voting operates in the same manner as what a voter would experience in his or her polling place on Election Day—just earlier. For voters who choose to use early voting, they are able to complete a ballot and immediately enter that ballot into the tabulator. This means that an early voter is notified of any potential errors or problems with his or her ballot. Absentee voters do not receive this additional level of service. Absentee voters must complete an application, identify one of the permitted reasons for requesting an absentee ballot, and then submit their completed ballot. But the absentee ballots are verified for eligibility and counted at a later time—and the voter using the absentee process does not have the benefit of putting his or her completed ballot into the tabulator to assure its accuracy and completeness. In Minneapolis, the processing of absentee ballots may begin on the Friday prior to Election Day.

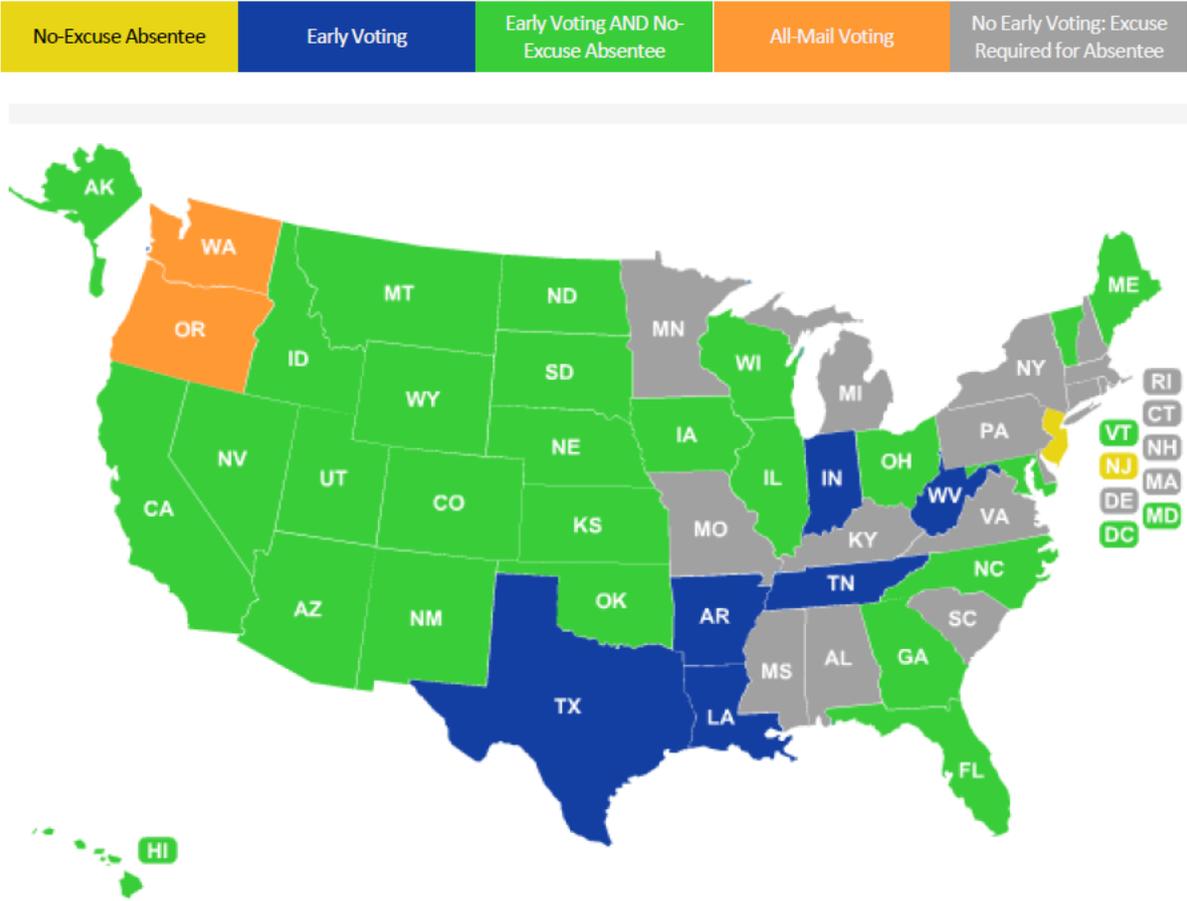
The time period for early voting varies from state to state¹⁸:

- The date on which early voting begins may be as early as 45 days before the election, or as late as the Friday before the election. The average starting time for early voting across all 32 states is 22 days before the election.

¹⁸ Source: ©2012 National Conference of State Legislatures. All Rights Reserved See: <http://www.ncsl.org/legislatures-elections/elections/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx>

- Early voting typically ends just a few days before Election Day: on the Thursday before the election in three states, the Friday before in nine states, the Saturday before in five states, and the Monday before Election Day in 11 states.
- Early voting periods range in length from four days to 45 days; the average across all 32 states is 19 days.
- At least 12 of the 32 early voting states require that early vote centers be open on at least one Saturday or Sunday during the early voting period. Others give county or local officials the authority to determine the hours for early voting.

The following picture graph details where absentee and early voting is available across the nation. This chart was prepared by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).



VOTE CENTERS

Simply put, vote centers, sometimes referred to as “super precincts,” are locations where eligible voters in a given election jurisdiction (county or city) are allowed to vote on Election Day, regardless of precinct. Common vote center locations include schools, churches, libraries, community centers, and even grocery stores. Instead of the traditional paper precinct voter lists, vote centers utilize an electronic poll book—as voters sign in, the electronic poll book (discussed in the next section) is updated, with the same information available across all polling locations.

First implemented in 2003 in Larimer County, an urban and suburban Colorado county north of Denver, laws allowing vote centers now exist in nine states, including Texas, Washington and North Carolina. Indiana is the

first state to use vote centers on a large scale, beginning with a pilot program in 2007 in three counties. In 2011, legislation passed making vote centers an option for any Indiana county.

In the 2008 Presidential election, Larimer County, comprised of 143 precincts, operated 33 vote centers, processing approximately 167,000 voters. The average level of poll workers per vote center was 23, with a range of 5-37 workers per vote center. All centers had at least one ballot counter, with the busiest centers using 2 or 3 counters.¹⁹

A small number of vote centers could also be utilized as satellite vote centers, serving as additional locations for in-person absentee voting (or potentially early voting if that were to be implemented) prior to election day.

In conjunction with the City's recommendation to move to a vote center model for elections, we should pursue adoption of ballot-on-demand technology. Typically, vote centers are supplied with ballot on demand printers, so only the number of ballots needed get printed, rather than printing an excess of ballots and stocking each vote center with every one of the many styles of ballots used across the multiple precincts served.

There are several benefits associated with the vote center model²⁰, which includes:

- Voter convenience – there is no “wrong” place to vote; voters can go to the polls with family or friends who may reside in different precincts, sharing in transportation to & from the centers.
- Fewer polling locations, leading to savings in maintaining, storing, & transporting a smaller number of voting machines to the polling locations.
- Smaller staffing levels required; with a smaller number of polling locations, the cost and difficulty in obtaining a large number of poll workers is reduced, and more resources can be devoted to training the smaller number of staff needed to serve the vote centers.

ELECTRONIC POLLBOOKS

Electronic poll books (EPBs) function like the paper poll books that are currently used, but with additional capabilities. The core functions of a poll book are to provide each precinct with a list of registered voters eligible to vote at that location and to record that the voter has cast a ballot. Utilizing an electronic platform for providing that information is essential for incorporating models such as vote centers, by providing the capability to access data for multiple precincts and to identify the appropriate ballot forms for voters.

Electronic poll books also offer a number of other potential advantages, including:

- Faster check-in for pre-registered voters, in 30 seconds or less, either by entering a name in a search field or scanning an ID card.
- Reducing human error associated with looking up voters in paper books.
- Quick voter redirection by providing election judges access to information about registration status and precinct location of any voter in the City.
- No printing costs for paper books and elimination of the need for supplements for last minute updates.
- Can pull information directly from SVRS (the statewide voter registration system), and after Election Day voter history can be quickly and accurately uploaded.
- Connectivity and updating within the city's poll book system possible during an election, including in early voting or with the use of vote centers, to ensure election integrity.

¹⁹ Source: Larimer County, Colorado Election Dept., see: <http://www.co.larimer.co.us/elections/votecenter/>

²⁰ See the 2010 report, VOTE CENTERS AND ELECTION COSTS: A Study of the Fiscal Impact of Vote Centers in Indiana, produced by the Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute: http://www.in.gov/sos/elections/files/IFPI_Vote_Centers_and_Election_Costs_Report.pdf

- Real-time tracking of voter information and statistics to assist administrators in deploying resources throughout Election Day.
- Potential for expanded use of EPBs to accomplish electronic Election Day registration.

EPBs have been used in jurisdictions in 27 states and the District of Columbia, including Minnesota. Larimer County began using EPBs in 2003 in conjunction with the use of vote centers. In 2005, Georgia and Maryland became the first states to deploy EPBs statewide. Minnetonka is thus far the only Minnesota city to use EPBs, piloting their use in 2009. Their City Clerk David Maeda reports that the return on investment relative to the upfront equipment costs demonstrates EPBs can pay for themselves in a matter of years, potentially in as few as three elections.

The exact capabilities of EPBs depend upon the needs and specifications of the jurisdiction using the equipment. Costs are also dependent upon the options chosen for hardware and software. EPBs can run on laptops, tablets, or handheld computers operating one of a variety of potential software solutions to receive voter registration data from a secure master database. A number of vendors offer customizable software solutions and equipment add-ons, such as signature pads. Larimer County created their own solution, utilizing a Microsoft Access database they also make available at no cost to other jurisdictions to use, allowing modifications or manipulations of the existing platform as needed. From a security stand point, EPBs can use the same 128-bit encryption used in electronic banking transactions, for secure connections to private servers. Multiple back-ups would be put in place with any system to ensure continuous service. Under the typical model used for electronic poll books, data would be downloaded from the State Voter Registration System just prior to Election Day, either over a secure connection or from a storage device to each individual poll book. It is possible for the poll books to be networked within the city, enabling real time sharing of data and updated voter information throughout the election. Following Election Day, voter information and updates could be uploaded back to the state system.

In addition to the advocacy of Minnetonka's City Clerk after his city's successful experience, key state officials have offered support for moving to electronic poll books. In March of 2012, both Secretary of State Mark Ritchie and Governor Mark Dayton proposed their use as an alternative to photo ID requirements to verify voter information. Secretary Ritchie's bipartisan Election Integrity Task Force suggested linking voter registration information with photos from the state DMV using EPBs, a possibility with modifications to existing software solutions.

VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Voter registration is the "front door" to the entire election process. Improvements to registration will have positive, rippling effects on the rest of the system²¹. Technology offers a significant opportunity to improve voter registration processes, including greater use of Internet registration processes and automated databases. Although voter registration is not a city elections function, it is the core building block for successful elections. Proposals for Voter Registration Modernization have been put forward by multiple organizations and interest groups, including the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law and the Pew Center on the States. These plans build on the computerized statewide voter registration databases that exist in each state, as required by federal law. Key components can include:

- Utilizing reliable information from available governmental databases to keep voter registration lists current;
- Portability to allow voters to remain registered when moving within a state while updating their information;

²¹ See: http://www.brennancenter.org/content/pages/voter_registration_modernization and <http://www.pewstates.org/research/featured-collections/upgrading-voter-registration-85899376407>

- Online access for registration, checking registration status, and updating records, all through a secure online portal.

Leveraging this existing technology is possible and can result in savings that will quickly outweigh initial costs.

ADVANCING A RELATED PLATFORM

The implementation of these recommendations is highly interrelated. Vote centers rely on the technology of electronic poll books to provide city-wide data to poll workers and to ensure there is real time updating of voter status across all centers. Early voting is generally deployed within a limited number of vote centers, but can therefore require some form of electronic poll books to ensure election integrity if more than one voting location is in use. It is also possible to expand the use of electronic poll books to accommodate electronic Election Day registration.

As an example, the City of Minnetonka piloted processing same day registrations electronically utilizing the data from electronic poll books by scanning State IDs to import data, eliminating paper forms, and ensuring no validation steps were missed. Registration data could also be input electronically with the poll books, saving the use of paper forms and the issue of trying to enter the data after Election Day. Because of the significant synergies between these four recommendations, developing a package of these solutions that would work in tandem allows Minneapolis to present a state legislative platform with the potential to significantly increase efficiencies for voters and administrators.

NOTE ON FEDERAL EFFORTS

On November 15, Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) announced his sponsorship of H.R. 6590, a bill that would create the Louis L. Redding Fair, Accurate, Secure and Timely (FAST) Voting Act of 2012. If enacted, this legislation would provide incentives (grants) to States to invest in practices and technology designed to increase registration options nationwide as a greater convenience to voters, including mandated same-day registration, early voting for a minimum period of days, no-fault absentee balloting, and greater assistance for ESL voters, among other things.

That same day, Representative George Miller (D-CA) announced his sponsorship of a companion bill, H.R. 6591, titled the Streamlining and Improving Methods at Polling Locations and Early (SIMPLE) Voting Act of 2012. If enacted, this legislation would amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to mandate early voting periods of at least 15 days prior to the scheduled date of the general election in all states for federal elections. The bill would also “require” states to ensure all voting precincts have adequate resources to assure no voter must wait more than one hour to cast a ballot. The legislation comes in response to nationwide reports of hours-long wait times and long lines at polling places on Election Day (Tues., Nov. 6).

Both of these bills will likely face a substantial uphill battle given the current make-up of the United States House. However, these federal bills do recognize that states and localities need additional assistance in reforming election processes to better serve voters.

XII. Conclusion

During the 1976 American League championship series, one sportscaster quipped: “Everything is magnified in the playoffs.” While the comment was prompted by a wild throw by Kansas City Royals’ third baseman George Brett, it rings equally true for election administrators: Presidential elections are the “playoffs” in our profession. And while long lines and wait times at polls have become the dreaded but expected feature of presidential elections across the nation, they are the bane of election administrators everywhere. Presidential elections can—and do—expose the stress points in election administration. Still, in many ways the problems experienced in Minneapolis on Election Day in 2012 were largely the result of an exceptionally high voter turnout—something generally considered to be a point of pride for both the City of Minneapolis and the State of Minnesota.

In his acceptance speech Election Night, President Barak Obama thanked voters for their persistence and steadfast resolve to cast their ballots, noting that many states experienced long lines and wait times of several hours. After a beat, he then said, “We have to fix that.”

He’s right.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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