

Election Logistics 101

1. **Voter Registration / Signature Verification** – All first-time voters, voters who are new to the jurisdiction and voters who were removed from the active voter logs, must register to vote. New legislation requires that all voters provide identification and provide a verifiable signature. **[6 months to 4 weeks before the election]**

Issues: Voter Registration Drives – Elections official must review and verify all voter registration material before the information is input into the voter registration database. During the last presidential election, voter registration drives inundated election officials with tens of thousands of duplicate and/or false applications, requiring the hiring temporary staff and increasing costs substantially. We will probably face the same problem in 2008.

Signature Verification – Some jurisdictions require that the elections staff review and verify the attestation signature that is on the back of all mail ballots. If the signature is missing, or does not match, the elections official must notify the voter and allow the voter a short period of time in which to resolve the matter. In order to comply with this requirement, election officials must have the technology and the budget to input the signature of every voter into the voter registration database.

2. **Ballot Set-up** – After the candidates and issues are formally placed on the ballot, elections officials must input the data into the elections systems so that the registration software, voting machines, optical scanners and tabulation machines count the appropriate votes and give credit to the appropriate voters. **[Ballot must be certified 30 days before election]**

Issues: Election Systems – The election systems that are utilized by elections officials are not easily replaceable or interchangeable. The vendors of voter registration software, voting machines, optical scanner and tabulation software and hardware provide a comprehensive elections system. Counties with expertise, training and investment in particular voting system will be reluctant to change. They may not have the budget to purchase an entirely new system or the time for their staff to train on a new system. All systems must be certified by the federal government.

3. **Voting; Machine Set-up / Testing** – After the ballot is certified, set-up and arranged, it is loaded on every voting machine and tested. The voting machines are put through a pre-logic and accuracy testing to make sure that they are properly recording votes. **[30 days before election]**

Issues: Training and Support – Because of issues that arise with programming, maintenance and training, election officials must develop comprehensive expertise on the voting machines. Changing standards, mandating new equipment and processes, make it difficult to develop expertise and, in turn, to train election judges. All voting machines must be certified by the federal government.

Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) – New state and federal legislation require the implementation of VVPAT equipment on voting machines. Election officials must develop a process to maintain equipment and replenish the paper without impacting voting machine usage. Election officials must develop a records management protocol for the storage, retention and disposition of the paper record.

4. **Mail / Absentee Ballot / Overseas Ballots** – Mail ballots are typically sent to voters 30 days before the election. So that ballots will work with the vendor's optical scanner, mail ballots are typically prepared by the vendor, at the vendor's printing operations. The mail ballots may be mailed to voters from the vendor's location, based on the voter mailing list prepared by the election official. **[30 days before election]**

Issues: Voter Mailing List – A mail ballot election is only as good as the voter mailing list. Incorrect addresses will result in absentee ballots being returned, incorrect voter information may result in a voter receiving multiple ballots.

United States Post Office – The United State Post Office must be aware and be capable of coordinating the mass mailing of absentee ballots. Election officials must work with officials from the Post Office to assure that ballots are properly prepared, timely delivered to voters and received by the election official before 7:00 p.m. on election-day.

5. **Customer Service** – As the election becomes closer, election officials must hire temporary employees to provide customer service for the high volume of telephone, e-mail, facsimile and in-person inquiries concerning elections operations. **[15 days before election]**

Issues: Training – Temporary employees must be trained concerning all elections operations, including, but not limited to, operating the voter registration

database, voting locations and hours of operations, absentee ballots, provisional ballots, early vote and how to handle questions from the election judges on election-day.'

Facilities & Technology – High volume telephone and computer usage may require that the election official set-up a temporary call center. The call center will also require the use of temporary employees and the temporary utilization of computers, telephones and the data transmission lines that they require.

6. **Early Vote** – To alleviate overcrowding on election-day early voting locations are opened at least ten (10) days before the election. The early voting locations must be ADA compliant and are operated by trained election judges. The early vote locations should be opened on at least one Saturday. **[15 days before election]**

Issue: Underutilization – Although early voting provides the most convenient access to the polls, it is the most underutilized. Efforts must be made to market the early vote option so that the costs-per-vote is decreased.

7. **Election Day** – Election-day voting includes the operation of numerous precincts by trained election judges. All facilities must be ADA compliant. Machines are taken from the election's warehouse by an independent contractor (moving company) and placed in every precinct.

Issues: ADA compliance – It is difficult to find facilities that comply with all of the ADA requirements including, but not limited to, curb cuts, door width and accessibility, parking accessibility, ramp grades and accessibility to public transportation. Voting machines must provide an "independent voting experience" for blind and disabled citizens.

Security – Because of the logistics involved with moving voting machines from the election's warehouse to precincts, voting machines may be sitting, unsecured, in facilities for more than two days. It would be impossible to guarantee that machines are not tampered with while they sit in these facilities.

Judge Training – Election judges must be trained to utilize new technology and comply with newly adopted regulations including, new voting machines, WPAT, handicapped accessible technology, identification, provisional ballots and voting machine security protocol.

Voter Logistics / Capacity – Election officials must estimate the time it will take for a voter to move through the line, through the voter registration table and the time it will take to vote. Election officials have calculated that it takes voters at least 4 minutes to vote a normal sized ballot. Therefore, on average, one voting machine can handle no more than 180 voters during a 12 hour period. Voter turnout, facility capacity and equipment reliability must all be adequately predicted to avoid long lines.

8. **Provisional Ballots** – Election-day voting requires the utilization of provisional ballots for those voters who are not in the proper precinct, do not have the proper identification or are otherwise unable to vote on the machines. Provisional ballots must be counted before the election is certified. **[15 days after election]**

Issue: Judge Training – Election judges must be trained to provide voters with the appropriate provisional ballots and provide correct instructions. Judges should know that no voter should be turned away at the polls.

9. **Election Audit** – Post election audit of machines and optical scanning unit are completed to verify that election system was working properly. In Colorado, the Secretary of State randomly identifies machines / precincts that must be audited. Audit must occur before election is certified. **[15 days after election]**