



2009 Spring Election Debriefing prepared by the City Clerk for the Madison Election Advisory Committee

Overview

The City of Madison had a voter turnout of 23 percent on April 7, 2009. There were 44,649 votes cast. Election Officials registered 828 voters at the polls.

Turnout varied greatly city-wide, and the highest turnout was generally in areas with uncontested Aldermanic seats. Ward 84 had the highest voter participation, with 46 percent turnout. The highest turnout was in Aldermanic District 20 (38% turnout), Aldermanic District 19 (35% turnout), Aldermanic District 11 (35% turnout), Aldermanic District 10 (33% turnout), Aldermanic District 6 (31% turnout), and Aldermanic District 16 (30% turnout). The contests with the fewest under-votes were for Supreme Court Justice and County Executive.

Many wards had to count paper ballots by hand at the end of the night because we did not anticipate that turnout in these areas would be greater than 30 percent, given turnout statistics from past elections.

For comparison, the City of Madison had a voter turnout of 17 percent in April 2005, with 32,010 votes cast. Election Officials registered 547 voters at the polls in April 2005.

Training

The City Clerk's Office offered 32 training sessions over a two-week period, including eight Power Point presentations on opening and closing the polls.

Ten training sessions provided hands-on tabulator training to a total of 47 Election Officials. There were 98 Election Officials who took hands-on tabulator training in 2009, and the Clerk's Office has already seen a dramatic reduction in the number of Election Day calls for tabulator troubleshooting.

We also offered eleven sessions of hands-on AutoMark training. A total of 27 Election Officials selected this training option. Many other Election Officials received hands-on AutoMark training from City Clerk staff as they encountered paper jams on Election Day.

The final training opportunities were at the Board of Canvassers meeting, where 16 Election Officials participated.

Canvassers Reports

Eighteen polling places submitted perfectly complete paperwork in November, and 69 polling places submitted perfectly complete paperwork in February.

On April 7, there were 75 polling places that submitted perfectly complete paperwork—94 percent of all polling places! Four polling places did not list the ballot bag seal numbers on the

Inspector's Statement, one polling place did not sign the last page of the poll book, and one polling place did not fill in the number of voters on the Inspectors' Statement.

Absentee Ballots

The City of Madison issued 6,367 absentee ballots for the Spring Election. Because the Madison Metropolitan School District and other school districts in the City of Madison were going to be on Spring Break on Election Day, the Clerk's Office extended its hours for voting to 6 p.m. the week before the election, and was open for voting the two Saturdays prior to the election. A total of 1,657 people voted absentee in the Clerk's Office, accounting for 43 percent of all absentee ballots sent to the polls.

The City Clerk's Office revised its absentee ballot instruction letter before the Spring Election to read, "Ten to fifteen percent of absentee ballots are rejected for failure to follow the instructions below. To make sure that your ballot is counted, please read this entire letter." Our new Elections Clerk also put a red X by each signature line on the absentee certificate, and used a highlighter to draw even more attention to the signature lines.

Of the 3,825 absentee ballots returned to the Clerk's Office, 120 (three percent) were rejected at the polls. Fifty-seven percent of the absentees rejected at the polls were rejected because the voter did not sign the certificate envelope. Twenty-eight percent of the absentees rejected at the polls were rejected because the voter did not have a witness sign the certificate envelope.

One percent of the absentee ballots issued by mail could not be counted because they were returned to the Clerk's Office after Election Day. Fifty-three percent of the absentee ballots issued by mail were not returned to the Clerk's Office at all; we mailed out a total of 2,496 absentee ballots that were not returned to our office.

There were 2,509 absentee ballots requested via mail specifically for this election or election cycle (not permanent, nursing home, or military absentee recipients), and only 25 percent (a total of 624) of those absentee ballots were returned to our office.

Post-Election Projects

Within three weeks of the Spring Election, the City Clerk's Office submitted 145 statistical reports to the Government Accountability Board, processed all Election Day voter registrations, and recorded voter participation in the Statewide Voter Registration System.

Shortly after the Spring Election, the Government Accountability Board suspended the voter registration of approximately 25,000 City of Madison residents (or former residents) who had not voted in the past four years.

With the help of the County Clerk's Office, we have been reviewing over 20,000 potential voter matches in the Statewide Voter Registration System, and merging voter records where appropriate. We are approximately halfway through this database management project.

The Clerk's Office is updating its Election Day Guide to make it more comprehensive and user friendly. We will be holding some Election Official focus groups this summer to gather feedback and suggestions.