



2012 Spring Primary Election Debriefing for the Madison Election Advisory Committee

Overview

The City of Madison had a voter turnout of 10.7 percent on February 21, 2012. There were 17,632 votes cast. Election Officials registered 811 voters at the polls. Thirty-five eligible voters were not able to register on Election Day under the new registration requirements, and had to leave the polling place without voting. Twenty-four of the eligible voters who were unable to register on Election Day were in campus wards.

Voter turnout did not follow its typical pattern of doubling between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., and doubling again between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. We had 2 percent turnout at 11 a.m. and 6 percent turnout at 4 p.m.

There were 16 provisional ballots cast on Election Day. Some of the provisional voters had ID, but wanted to test the Election Officials on the provisional voting process. There were 28 voters without ID who could have voted a provisional ballot, but chose to leave the polling place without voting.

Six provisional voters provided ID to the Clerk's Office by 4 p.m. the Friday of election week. Five provisional ballots were counted by the Municipal Board of Canvassers. One was rejected because the certificate lacked a voter signature.

Election Official Recruitment

Of the 1,043 individuals who worked at the polls, 1 was age 16-17 (0.1%), 19 were ages 18-25 (1.8%), 76 were ages 26-40 (7.3%), 322 were ages 41-60 (30.9%), 402 were ages 61-70 (38.5%), and 223 were ages 71 or older (21.4%). 670 Election Officials were female and 373 were male. For comparison, 9.6 percent of Madison residents are age 65 or older.

Of our 1,043 Election Officials, 16 were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (1.5%), 12 were Asian (1.2%), and 51 were African-American (4.9%). For comparison, 6.8% of City of Madison residents are of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 7.4% are Asian, and 7.3% are African-American.

The number of Election Officials who worked at this election was nearly double the number of Election Officials who worked at the polls in February 2011. In the fall of 2011, City of Madison bartenders were recruited to become Election Officials.

Training

The City Clerk's Office offered 40 training sessions for Election Officials from February 9 through February 20. Training took place at the City-County Building, Madison Water Utility, Oakwood Village West, Warner Park, Olbrich Gardens, Alicia Ashman Branch Library, Sequoya Branch Library, Hawthorne Branch Library, and Lakeview Branch Library.

Absentee Ballots

The City Clerk's Office issued 2,858 absentee ballots for this election. There were 221 absentee ballots issued to voters at the counter (7.7 percent of absentees issued were issued to voters at the counter). 1,806 absentees (63 percent) were returned to be counted.

Twenty-three absentee ballots were rejected at the polls: 11 had no voter signature, 2 had no witness signature, 1 absentee envelope did not contain a ballot, 3 absentee envelopes were not sealed, and 6 decided to vote at the polls instead of absentee. Of the ballots sent to the polls to be counted, 1.5 percent were rejected.

There were 1,276 outstanding absentee ballots as of 8 p.m. Election Day. 224 of those ballots were returned to the City Clerk's Office by 4 p.m. the Friday of election week. The Municipal Board of Canvassers counted 217

absentee ballots and rejected 7 absentees. Four absentees were rejected for lacking a voter signature, and 3 were rejected for lacking a witness signature. Of the absentee ballots received after 8 p.m. Election Day and by 4 p.m. the Friday of election week, 3.1 percent were rejected.

Challenges

Nearly all Election Day materials needed to be reprinted because of the many changes in state elections law. Election Officials were forced to learn more new procedures and regulations than they could reasonably be expected to grasp in one training session.

Redistricting changes in the Statewide Voter Registration System delayed the printing of absentee labels for this election by over a week. The City Clerk's Office sent postcards to every Madison address that had a new polling place. Hundreds of people called the Clerk's Office to complain that they felt redistricting was not necessary.

The day before the election a polling place was quarantined with the Norovirus. Arrangements had to quickly be made to move voting to another location. Dozens of Election Officials from all areas of Madison were unable to work at the polls due to flu symptoms.

Many ballots were shuffled between polling places as voter turnout dramatically increased in the afternoon. Although the city had over 6,000 more ballots than it needed overall, it was particularly challenging to handle calls from polling places after they had completely run out of ballots. Because we had so many new Election Officials, many Chief Inspectors were not notified in advance that ballots were running low.