



2008 General Election Debriefing prepared by the City Clerk for the Madison Election Advisory Committee

Overview

The City of Madison had 141,456 votes cast in the November 4, 2008, General Election. Voter turnout was 81 percent of the total number of voters registered for the September Primary, or 77 percent of the total number of voters registered the day before the election. Election Officials registered approximately 25,000 voters at the polls. The Clerk's Office has processed 24,858 of those registration forms, with just a few hundred forms left to process. The office processed approximately 30,000 registration forms between the September Primary and the General Election.

The Clerk's Office issued 32,012 absentee ballots, with 17,808 of those ballots issued at our front counter. All absentee ballots were in the mail by the Thursday before the election. Absentee oversight was especially challenging because our Elections Clerk retired right after the September Primary. The Clerk's Office extended its hours for voting until 7 p.m. Monday – Thursday the three weeks prior to the election, and was open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. the four Saturdays before the election. The office was open for voting on a Sunday for the first time ever the last Sunday before the election, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The City of Madison filled 1,850 election official shifts in record time. Election Officials were able to select their shift and polling location online. Volunteers signed up for an additional 480 two-hour time slots on the Quality Assurance Team, filling 48 percent of the slots available.

The Clerk's Office did not go over-budget, but did need to transfer some money from permanent salaries to overtime wages as a result of having so many vacancies in the office this year.

For comparison, the City of Madison had a voter turnout of 80 percent in November 2004, with 138,452 votes cast. Election Officials registered 31,261 voters at the polls in November 2004. The Clerk's Office issued 25,258 absentee ballots for the November 2004 General Election, extending its hours for voting one weeknight before the election, and opening for voting from 9 a.m. to noon the Saturday before the election.

Training

We offered 27 training sessions for Election Officials the week before the election, with different sessions targeted toward beginners, veterans, and Chief Inspectors. Madison City Channel taped the first training session and aired it multiple times before the election. Madison City Channel will play this video prior to other elections until election law changes to such an extent that the information in the video is no longer accurate.

Election Day Challenges

We had problems with the tabulators at Olbrich, Elvehjem, Madison Public Library, Jefferson Middle School, Holt Commons, Oakwood Village East, Whitehorse Middle School, Trinity United Methodist Church, Lake City Church, Warner Park, Memorial Union, East High School, Glendale Elementary, Van Hise, Boys & Girls Club, Blessed Sacrament, and Lapham Elementary. At the end of the night, we did not have a single tabulator to spare. The tabulators were serviced right before the election, and all tabulators that broke down on Election Day have been repaired by Command Central since the election.

A box of ballots for The Jefferson retirement home on Old Sauk Road was inadvertently delivered to Jefferson Middle School the week before the election. We hope to move the Jefferson Middle School polling location to the new Lussier Community Center, avoiding such confusion in the future.

Post-Election Tasks

The City of Madison was selected by the Government Accountability Board to conduct a hand count audit of the tabulator counts for three of its wards. It took six people five days to complete the audits.

The Government Accountability Board now requires clerks to complete separate statistical reports for every ward within 30 days of each election. It took two weeks to complete all 145 reports for the City of Madison. This will be particularly challenging between a February Primary and a Spring Election.

Our Elections Clerk position will soon be posted by Human Resources. We are hopeful that the vacancy can be filled before ballots are mailed out for the February Primary.