

# The Election Center

*national association of election officials*

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A message from Doug Lewis, Executive Director:

Members:

I know this is one of the most stressful elections in history. Since control of Congress is up this year and it appears many of those races may be close, there will once again be major attention of news media, lawyers, voter groups and all kinds of politicians to our efforts.

Today begins our attempt to provide simple reminders of how to protect yourselves in this election. Each time we do what we call our Election Notes it is with a reminder of something you very likely have already done or considered but may need your memory jogged to check and recheck.

I honestly believe that 98% of the elections in America will come off just fine because we have so many good and dedicated professionals doing it. But in a handful of cases where there are close elections, the process will once again be under attack. I have tried to explain to media, academicians, lawyers and partisans that HAVA requirements come due this year and, along with major changes ordered by many states, the process is stretched thin this election year. So many new processes or equipment all due in one year makes for an “exciting” time in election administration.

Along with each reminder we will try to provide something to bring a smile to your face. Some of it will be funnier than others but it is our attempt to find kind and gentle humor you can share with your own office. Laughter is a great stress reliever – and Lord knows we need as much stress relief as possible. I don’t want us to be wasting your time...that is not our intent so we will discontinue the stress relief humor when the election is over. But until Election Day, enjoy Election Notes! Tell us what you think.

## **TODAY’S ELECTION NOTE: FIND OUT WHO IS/ARE THE REPORTER(S) COVERING YOU FOR ELECTION 2006**

Invite them in immediately to go over voting equipment and what issues can be related to it. Go over paper ballot issues if you are using paper ballots. Talk about what you have done to make sure voters know how to vote and what to do if they make a mistake. Talk about what you have done to prepare poll workers for this election cycle. Talk about changes mandated by HAVA or your state legislature and how it has complicated your job and what you have done to make implementation go as smoothly as possible. Talk about backup plans you have developed in case something goes wrong. Talk about what you will do if a recount is held. NOW, not Election Day, is the time to get the reporter’s attention to how you have prepared. It may also be the very thing that saves you in case of a close election or an election problem happens in your jurisdiction. Reporters who have established a relationship with you before an election and have talked about some of these issues prior to an election can more intelligently report on it if something does occur. MAKE THE TIME NOW to see and work with the reporters so they know what you are facing in this election. This is a preventative measure. Be sure to give each reporter full contact information so that they have office and private numbers...and make sure you are available to them if questions develop. You may also want to go over with staff who is the person that will be speaking for your office? Will that be you or a designated staff person? AND, if something happens who is going to be the Rapid Response Team? Departmental managers? Or specialists within the office who then brief the boss and/or the media contact person? Make sure your staff knows who to direct inquiries to and be sure that no inquiry falls through the cracks.

Media relations now will give you better protection (notice I didn’t say complete protection) from unusual events and, in some cases, the media may alert you to significant matters before they become public.

**Attached is a something to make you smile. It is a tad long but staff should enjoy some of these reviews. Happy Election!!**