

# The Election Center

national association of election and voter registration officials

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## **Stress Relieving Joke of the Day:**

### **The Captain**

Observing a light across the water,  
the captain had his signalman instruct the other vessel to change her course ten degrees south.

The response was prompt:

Change your course ten degrees north."

"I am a captain," he responded testily.

"Change your course ten degrees south."

The reply: "I'm a seaman first class--change your course north."

The captain was furious.

"Change your course now.

I'm on a battleship."

"Change your course ten degrees north, sir--

I'm in a lighthouse!"

Which are you? Battleship or lighthouse?

## **Election Tip of the Day:**

**FROM DOUG LEWIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

### **STICK TO YOUR PROCEDURES**

Take a few moments to go over your procedures: do you see a flaw or a loophole that could hurt you? If so fix it now but be careful that you don't create an unintended consequence and cause more problems than you fixed. **NO MATTER what happens in this election, stick to your procedures.** When media and lawyers and partisans descend on you is not the time to change your procedures; doing so creates confusion and also appears that you don't know what you are doing. Instead of reacting to demands, start off telling all concerned what the procedures will be in counting; what constitutes a vote in your state; what will happen on mismarked ballots (which can be re-made and which cannot); how counting teams will work; how observers can observe the process; how a recount will be conducted and what will – and will not – be allowed. If a write-in campaign is underway, what constitutes a proper vote for the write-in?

Make sure your procedures are IN WRITING and if necessary have them available to lawyers, political party leaders, and interested groups. The most common error that has gotten election officials into trouble is when they did not follow their own rules and procedures; usually either the media or lawyers for one or more candidates convince the election official to change the procedures which then almost always results in larger problems. **The time to change your procedures is after an election, not during one.** Take nothing for granted; claiming that this was the way you have *always* done something is not a defense nor is it sufficient to claim that therefore staff or pollworkers or candidates should have known. If it is not in writing you have no defense. Print clear, step-by-step instructions not only for pollworkers but for full time staff as well. If you

have given oral instructions in the past, make sure they are in writing this year. And make it in plain English, not legal jargon.

Provide written handouts for the pollworkers to give to anyone who chooses to vote a **provisional ballot**. Do not leave it to the pollworker to tell them what will happen to their ballot if they choose to vote from a legally incorrect polling site. Have the procedure in writing and give it to each and every provisional voter so the voter is informed BEFORE they vote what the process will be and under what conditions their vote will be counted and what conditions it will not be counted. Your defense from lawyers is that you allowed the voter to make an informed choice on provisional voting. This is one place where quoting the law may be a good idea.

You will have a very fine election if you stick to good basics. Remember this: you are likely to be the only group of people whose sole job is to look out for the voters and the process; everyone else is likely to have a partisan interest. Referees have to take charge, and while you can listen and sympathize with any and all, the process and the voters are well served only if the process is fair to all. We take pride in the people who serve in this profession because you do look after the voters interests and not the partisan interests.

And we can all hope that we run the most boring election in history!

### **Stress Relieving Tip of the Day:**

*Take a deep breath!*

Stress Reduction in a Minute. (Meditation, deep breathing yoga,) 5 minutes twice a day (morning and evening). Studies show that this lowers blood pressure, releases healing hormones into your body, increases creativity, increases productivity and increases your ability to handle stressful situations.

*\* Remember to get some sleep a tired mind makes mistakes and can impair decision-making.*

### **Quote of the Day:**

Excellence is the result of dreaming more than others think is practical and expecting more than others think is possible.

### **New on the Website: You Need to See This!**

Thank you to all the jurisdictions that responded to the Poll Worker Communication Survey. The survey asked; “What methods do you have to communicate with poll workers in case of an emergency? How do poll workers notify you of problems?” We thought the answers were full of great ideas and have created a page on the Election Center website ([www.electioncenter.com](http://www.electioncenter.com)) called *Good Election Ideas*, the compiled survey results can be found there.