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2008 Professional Practices Program

Mail Ballot Remote Dropoff Locations Pinellas County, Florida

Submitted by:

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Mail Ballot Remote Dropoff Locations Make Voting by Mail Even Easier

*Submitted By Deborah Clark
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Ballot Dropoff Program Need

- The Florida Legislature has mandated in House Bill 537 that all voters in Florida use paper ballots effective July 1, 2008. The first statewide election after that date will be the August 26 Primary Election.
- Furthermore, the passage of Florida's Amendment 1, which rolled back property taxes, has resulted in decreased county revenues and the need for significant budget cuts. Pinellas County Constitutional Officers were required to reduce their FY09 budgets by 10% from the previous year. And, we had already cut our FY08 budget by 7.8% from the year before that.
- Budget cuts and the requirement to use paper ballots have led to decreased early voting sites for economic and logistical reasons.
- Early voting is very expensive and has not increased voter turnout. So, even if we had unlimited funds, it still would not be right to continue spending taxpayers' money for something we know is not cost effective.
- Because all voters will be using paper ballots, whether voting early, by mail or at the precinct on Election Day, we have put into action a very aggressive *Vote by Mail* campaign that provides all of the conveniences of early voting at a greatly reduced cost.
- However, some voters choose not to mail back their voted ballot; they prefer to drop off their ballot to one of our office locations – Clearwater, Largo and St. Petersburg.
- Pinellas County stretches approximately 30 miles north to south, and we wanted to provide additional ballot dropoff locations to voters in all parts of the county.
- The ballot dropoff locations needed to be secure, convenient and staffed.

Ballot Dropoff Program Groundwork

- Nine mail ballot dropoff locations were secured throughout the county to allow a dropoff box and staff member to be stationed there during office hours, during the dates of early voting, which begins 15 days prior to an election.
- Paid staff members or temporary workers were scheduled, two shifts per day, to cover all regular office hours at each location - including Saturdays if applicable.
- Locked ballot containers are being purchased for each location.

Ballot Dropoff Program Elements

- Voters will be notified of all dropoff locations, along with dates and office hours in their mail ballot instructions when they receive their ballot kits.
- Voters may drop off their ballots at any of the nine dropoff locations or one of our three offices.
- Voters may still choose to mail their ballots to our office.
- The locations include five Tax Collector's offices, three public libraries and one community center. The sites cover the northern and southern tips of the county. Additional sites may be added.
- Dropoff locations will be available during the sites' office hours, during the dates of early voting, which begins 15 days prior to an election.
- A paid staff member or temporary worker will stay with the ballot dropoff box at all times, and then bring the box to the Elections Service Center at the end of each shift.

Ballot Dropoff Program Summary

- By state law, all Florida voters will be using paper ballots, which can be time-intensive to vote at an early voting or precinct polling place.
- Voters can avoid waiting in line by requesting a mail ballot and voting in the comfort of their homes.
- Voters have the option of mailing or delivering their ballots to any Supervisor of Elections office.
- Voters gain an additional nine dropoff locations throughout the county for their mail ballots.
- As more voters choose to vote by mail, this will alleviate some of the crowds at early voting or Election Day precincts – especially when voters realize that they will get the same paper ballot no matter which way they choose to vote.
- By encouraging more voters to vote by mail instead of waiting in line at early voting or their precinct, we are simply asking voters to help us contain costs by trading one convenience for another.

Ballot Dropoff Program Contact - Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections

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Locations Throughout Pinellas County

The stars indicate office locations for Tax Collector's offices. Three of the eight locations coincide with Supervisor of Elections offices [Courthouse, Mid-County and 501 1st Ave. N.] and will not be needed as ballot dropoff locations. Three libraries and a community center will cover the remaining areas of the county.

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Hours: 8:00am-5:00pm, Monday-Friday

TARPON SPRINGS

743 S. Pinellas Avenue
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689-3711

COURT HOUSE

315 Court Street
3rd Floor in Courthouse
Clearwater, FL 33756-9874

MID COUNTY

13025 Starkey Road
Largo, FL 33773-1416

SOUTH COUNTY

1800 - 66th Street N.
St Petersburg, FL 33710-4799

NORTH COUNTY

29399 U.S. 19 N., Suite 100
Clearwater, FL 33761-2167

GULF TO BAY

1663 Gulf To Bay Blvd.
Clearwater, FL 33756

501 1ST AVENUE

501-1st Avenue N, Suite 110
St. Petersburg, FL 33701-3710

SKYWAY

1067-62nd Avenue S.
St. Petersburg, FL 33705-5617