2009 Professional Practices Program

Mail/Absentee Ballot Remote Dropoff Sites
Pinellas County, Florida

Submitted by:
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Need to Increase Mail Ballot Voting

- The Florida Legislature mandated that all Florida voters use paper ballots effective July 1, 2008. Consequently, elections officials in the 15 largest counties representing more than half of voters in the state were faced with conducting two statewide elections – the August 26 Primary and November 4 General Election – with new voting systems.
- In addition to the purchase of a new voting system, decreased property taxes and double-digit county budget cuts required us to reduce the number of remote early voting sites to meet our budget goal. The cost and logistics of offering numerous remote sites were just not feasible.
- The optical scan voting system increased early voting costs from $25,000 to $57,000 per location. In addition, the use of paper ballots requires the leasing of two ballot-on-demand printers per early voting site at $11,300 per printer in order to provide all ballot styles at each location. Early voting does not increase voter turnout. In short, early voting is not cost effective.
- Because all voters now use paper ballots – whether voting early, by mail or at the precincts on Election Day – we began a very aggressive *Vote Early - by Mail* campaign that provides all of the conveniences of early voting at a greatly reduced cost.
- Florida is a “no-excuse” absentee ballot state. Any registered voter can sign up to receive ballots by mail without providing a reason.
- Voters have always had the option to drop off their mail ballots at one of our offices if they chose not to mail it back. However, since Pinellas County stretches approximately 30 miles north to south, we wanted to provide additional secure ballot dropoff sites to voters in all parts of the county. So, we developed the Ballot Dropoff Program.

Ballot Dropoff Program Groundwork

- Eleven mail ballot dropoff locations were secured throughout the county to allow a locked ballot box and staff member stationed during office hours, during the dates of early voting, which begins 15 days prior to an election. There was no cost for the sites.
- Paid staff were scheduled, two shifts per day, to cover all regular office hours at each location - including Saturdays if applicable.
- Using equipment already on hand for Election Day, we delivered locked ballot boxes to each location and allocated ballot transfer cases for the program.

Ballot Dropoff Program Elements

- Mail ballot instructions included a list of dropoff locations, including dates and hours.
- Voters had the option of dropping off their ballots at any of the 11 dropoff locations or one of our three offices – or they could mail their ballots to our office.
- The locations included five Tax Collector’s offices, five public libraries and one community center and were located throughout the county.
- Dropoff locations were available during the sites’ office hours, during the dates of early voting, which begins 15 days prior to an election.
- Paid staff remained with the ballot box at all times, and delivered the mail ballots to the Elections Service Center at the end of each shift.
Ballot Dropoff Program Summary

- By state law, all Florida voters must use paper ballots, which can be time-intensive to vote at an early voting site 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 gained an additional 11 dropoff sites throughout the county for their mail ballots.
- More voters are choosing to vote by mail, which alleviates some of the crowds at early voting sites and 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 asking voters to help us manage costs by trading one voting method for another.
- Program was easy and inexpensive to implement and provided a substantial convenience to voters.
- Ballot dropoff sites cost approximately $1,700 per location for the entire two-week period; the only costs were staff time and travel.

Ballot Dropoff Program Results

- 51,222 voters used the ballot dropoff locations during the 2008 General Election.
- Overall mail ballot requests increased almost 400% - from 43,259 requests for the 2008 Presidential Preference Primary in January to 206,803 requests for the General Election.
  - More than doubled the county’s ballot request record of 100,103 for the 2004 General Election.
  - Currently, more than 233,000 of our 611,000 registered voters are signed up for all mail ballots – more than one-third of all voters.
  - This increase in mail ballot requests has translated into increased turnout for subsequent municipal elections.
    - One town’s turnout increased from 8% to 40% from the previous election, while several cities doubled or tripled turnout.
    - 66% of voters in our March 2009 municipal elections voted by mail.

Ballot Dropoff Program Contact - Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections

Julie Marcus, Deputy Supervisor of Elections
13001 Starkey Rd., Largo, FL 33773
(727) 464-6108
Locked ballot box ready for ballots

Ballot box for DS200 optical scanner was used; the divider for the auxiliary bin was removed from inside and the drop slot was opened; a sticker stating “INSERT BALLOT HERE” was added; bowl of “I Voted” stickers placed on top.
Voting by Mail: Easy as 1-2-3!

1. Request a mail ballot — by calling (727) 464-6788 or visiting www.votepinellas.com
   (Deadline to request a ballot to be mailed: 5 p.m. October 29)
2. Vote your ballot — in the comfort of your home
3. Return your ballot — by mailing your ballot to the Elections Office or delivering it to any
   designated ballot dropoff location throughout the county between October 20 and November 1

Mail Ballot Dropoff Locations — Open October 20—November 1

All Supervisor of Elections Offices:
Mon-Fri, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sat, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Pinellas County Courthouse
315 Court St., Room 117, Clearwater

Election Service Center
13001 Starkey Rd., Largo

County Building
501 1st Ave. N., St. Petersburg

Selected Public Libraries:
Hours Vary by Location

East Lake Community Library
4125 East Lake Rd., Palm Harbor
Mon-Sat, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Oldsmar Public Library
400 St. Petersburg Dr. E., Oldsmar
Mon-Sat, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Seminole Community Library
9200 113th St. N., Seminole
Mon-Fri, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Sat, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Pinellas Park Library
7750 52nd St., Pinellas Park
Mon-Sat, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

James W. Johnson Branch Library
1059 18th Ave. S., St. Petersburg
Mon/Wed, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Tues/Thurs/Fri/Sat, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Palm Harbor Community Activity Center
Mon-Fri, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Sat, 8 a.m.-Noon
1500 16th St., Palm Harbor

Selected Tax Collector Offices:
Mon-Fri, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Closed Saturdays

Tarpon Springs
743 Pinellas Ave. S., Tarpon Springs

North County
29399 US Hwy 19 N., Clearwater

Gulf to Bay
1663 Gulf to Bay Blvd., Clearwater

South County
1800 66th St. N., St. Petersburg

Skyway Plaza
1067 62nd Ave. S., St. Petersburg

Ballot dropoff boxes will be inside these locations during the days and times listed, Oct. 20 - Nov. 1.
Be sure to use the Ballot Dropoff Box.
### Mail Ballot Dropoff Sites Daily Log - 2008 General Election

#### 9/22 - 10/21: Three Elections Offices

#### 10/22 - 11/1: Eleven Additional Ballot Dropoff Sites Open

#### 11/2 - 11/4: Three Elections Offices

### MAILED BALLOTS RECEIVED AT

#### DROP OFF SITES

2008 General Election (342)

November 4, 2008

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### Additional Data

- **X:\AUGUST342 2009 General Election/EARLY VOTING/BALLOT DROP OFF.xls mbl 1 9/2009**

- **Drop Off Date | Total Ballots | Cleburne | Eaton | Election Service Center | St Petersburg SOE | Tarpon Springs Tax Collector | East Lake Comm. Library | PH Comm Activity Ctr | North County Tax Collector | Osceola Library | Gulf-Fla-Eay Tax Collector | JW Johnson Library | Skyway Tax Collector | Seminole Library | Pinellas Park Library | South County Tax Collector**
BALLOT DROPOFF LOCATIONS for NOVEMBER 4 GENERAL ELECTION

DATES OF OPERATION: OCTOBER 20—NOVEMBER 1
*Includes Saturdays for some locations
(See specific days and hours of operation for each location below)

Ballot dropoff boxes will be INSIDE these locations, during the following days/times, with an elections staff person nearby for the safety of your ballot. Be sure to use the Ballot Dropoff Box INSIDE these locations. DO NOT put your ballot in any box outside these locations.

Tarpon Springs
Tax Collector Office
743 Pinellas Ave. S., Tarpon Springs
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

East Lake Community Library
4125 East Lake Rd., Palm Harbor
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.
*Saturday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

Palm Harbor Community Activity Center
1500 16th St., Palm Harbor
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.
*Saturday, 8 a.m.—Noon

North County
Tax Collector Office
29399 US Hwy. 19 N., Clearwater
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

Oldsmar Library
400 St. Petersburg Dr. E., Oldsmar
Monday—Friday, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.
*Saturday, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.

Gulf to Bay
Tax Collector Office
1663 Gulf to Bay Blvd., Clearwater
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

Supervisor of Elections
Clearwater Office
315 Court St., Room 117, Clearwater
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
*Saturday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

Supervisor of Elections
Election Service Center
13001 Starkey Rd., Largo
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
*Saturday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

Seminole Library
9200 113th St. N., Seminole
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.
*Saturday, 10 a.m.—4 p.m.

Pinellas Park Library
7750 52nd St., Pinellas Park
Monday—Friday, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.
*Saturday, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.

South County
Tax Collector Office
1800 66th St. N., St. Petersburg
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

Supervisor of Elections
St. Petersburg Office
501 1st Ave. N., St. Petersburg
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
*Saturday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

James Weldon Johnson
Branch Library
1059 18th Ave. S., St. Petersburg
Monday & Wednesday, 11 a.m.—4 p.m.
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday &
*Saturday, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.

Skyway Plaza
Tax Collector Office
1067 62nd Ave. S., St. Petersburg
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.—4 p.m.