2011 Professional Practices Program

Check Your Voter Status

Martin County, Florida

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Check Your Voter Status!

**RESEARCH/SITUATION ANALYSIS:** During the 2006 election cycle, the Martin County Supervisor of Elections office found that more than half of the registered voters were unaware of their voter registration status during the primary election. In 2006, the elections office received a significant number of telephone calls from voters after the voter registration deadline, asking the questions: **Am I a registered voter; Where do I vote on Election Day; and What is my political party?** Understanding the importance of voters knowing their voter status, Martin County’s Supervisor of Elections conducted a campaign to raise voter awareness among all registered voters in Martin County. Primary and secondary research performed by the Supervisor of Elections, staff, poll workers, and her community advisory committee in January of 2010 identified a need to encourage a voter to “Check Your Voter Status” prior to Election Day. This awareness led to great excitement and more knowledgeable voters during the 2010 elections.

**OBJECTIVES:** To increase awareness among all of Martin County’s registered voters, objectives were established to reduce/eliminate the number of phone calls to the Elections Center from unaware voters in Martin County on Election Day: (1) Increase the number of registered voters making necessary changes to their voter records by **10%** (2) Reach voters through television, radio commercials, street pole banners, and brochures as new forms of media with the “Check Your Voter Status” campaign message and reach **20%** of the registered voters.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** The first phase of our campaign was to review all data received from our focus groups (community advisory committee, student advisory committee, poll workers, and Elections Center staff) and move forward in developing a campaign that would grab the attention of all voters. From the youngest registered voter to the oldest, our goal was to have everyone take a minute to “Check Your Voter Status.” After receiving approval from the Supervisor of Elections, the elections staff quickly moved forward with the first phase of the campaign by creating a **“Check Your Voter Status” brochure** that was distributed at nursing homes, banks, after school programs, political parties, community events, and Chambers of Commerce. Next, the Elections Center partnered with Indian River State College to create a **“Check Your Voter Status” video** that was shown in all public libraries, Indian River State College’s website, Elections Center website, and the local government access channel over **1,000** times, during the election cycle.

The second phase of our campaign was to find a way to reach voters who might not visit the local libraries or pick-up a brochure to read. With that, the Elections Center created **festive street pole banners** in English and Spanish to be placed throughout the county. Four banner designs were created with simple messages to catch the attention of a voter to encourage him to take action and “Check Your Voter Status.”
Messages were: 1) **Has your address changed? Check Your Voter Status**, 2) **Has your name changed? Check Your Voter Status**, 3) **Do you need to update your signature? Check Your Voter Status**, 4) **Would you like to change your political party? Check Your Voter Status**. In addition, “**Check Your Voter Status**” flyers were printed and inserted in county and city utility bills reaching over 94,000 residents.

The final phase of our campaign was to find a way to continue to drive home the message to voters the importance of “Checking Your Voter Status.” **Voter drives** were conducted that focused on voters “Checking Your Status,” and many news releases, including a **Guest Column** by the Supervisor of Elections flooded the local papers reminding voters to “Check Your Voter Status” now. Also, the Elections Center produced a “**Check Your Voter Status**” **commercial** with the Supervisor of Elections encouraging voters to take a pro-active role prior to Election Day. The “Check Your Voter Status” commercials were shown on Comcast during prime hours at a reduced rate and on the Elections Center’s Website. Election Center’s Facebook fan page received responses from young and old regarding the “Check Your Voter Status” campaign. Also, **radio commercials** were created with step-by-step instructions to guide a voter to “Check Your Voter Status.”

**EVALUATION:** At the completion of the campaign, all objectives were successfully achieved and the “Check Your Voter Status” campaign outreach efforts proved to be a great success in Martin County! Election Day phone calls from voters asking: **Am I a registered voter; Where do I vote on Election Day; and What is my political party?** were few. (1) From January 1st-July 26th of 2010 **18%** of Martin County’s 100,000 registered voters made necessary changes to their voter records prior to Election Day, as compared to the 2006 elections where only **0.06%** of the voters updated their information. (2) Advertising was also boosted dramatically and received positive community feedback, through the implementation of **five new creative forms of media** (street pole banners, television and radio commercials, brochures, and a video). This media was designed to encourage a voter to take a pro-active role to check their voter information. In addition, over **60%** of the registered voters received the “Check Your Voter Status” message through **94,000 utility bill inserts** compared to previous elections where only media releases and voter drives were conducted.

**BUDGET:** Street pole banners-$4,500; “Check Your Voter Status” utility insert flyers $1,201.07; Comcast Commercials and radio advertising $2,500.00; Indian River State College video and use of college website **no cost**; “Check Your Voter” Status brochure design $375.00 (printing in house); Total cost of campaign **$8,576.07**. Voters aware of their voter status on Election Day= **Priceless**!