2011 Professional Practices

Early Voting
Ballot Tracking System

Citrus County, Florida

Submitted by:
Susan Gill
Supervisor of Elections
120 North Apopka Avenue
Inverness, Florida  34450
352-341-6740
vote@elections.citrus.fl.us
www.votecitrus.com
The Issue

✓ The statutory requirement to report election results by precinct and by voting method (early, mail and election day voting) necessitated the ability to track the many ballot styles assigned to Early Vote Sites.

✓ To insure an adequate ballot supply is maintained at all sites throughout the Early Voting period.

✓ Budget considerations (over/under) ordering the numerous ballot styles needed for each site.

✓ Excessive staff time tracking ballot stock at each of the Early Vote Sites.

The Solution

A warning system was developed that would be the eyes of the ballot supply and usage at the Early Vote Sites. During the day, the Poll Worker enters ballot information into the live database at the Early Vote Site. The data can be monitored live at the elections office by remote access. Reports can quickly be run to see if any ballot stock has fallen below our guidelines listed below:

✓ easy access and usage in “real” time with a minimal training period
✓ calculate how long current inventory will last based on daily usage to date
✓ incorporate an early warning system – a color coded alert
  o blue – monitor closely - 60% of supplied ballots used
  o red – determine if transfer is needed as 80% of assigned ballots used
  o decide to transfer or not depending on the day of early voting
✓ ease of transferring ballots from one site to another – including a “chain of custody” form to use for the actual ballot transfer
✓ out of sequence usage problem eliminated
✓ daily reporting allowing the match of machine voting totals with Ballot Tracking System to ensure we are in balance
✓ repository of historical data (for future ballot ordering and savings)

Developing the Program

A database expert was contracted to analyze how to manage a large number of ballots. Through collaborative efforts, a proprietary database was created. The system is password protected and authorization level defined which maintains the integrity of the recorded data and delineates input access.
Testing

To help ensure the program would be easy to use and debug any areas missed, Poll Workers were invited to test the Ballot Tracking System.

They were encouraged to use the system and to test scenarios they would encounter at the Early Vote Sites. Sensitive areas of the database were identified, secured and their suggestions were incorporated to make the program more user friendly for the staff.

Example: Poll Workers have the option to present their ballot distribution information by precinct order or by ballot style. Depending on how the Poll Worker chooses to group their ballot data (signed Voting Certificates) during the day (by precinct or ballot style); they may input the data on the Ballot Tracking System either by precinct or ballot style.

By enlisting the Poll Workers' help in the testing phase, they played an important role in the design of the system.

By Products of the Process (enhancements)

- It made sense to incorporate the Ballot Tracking System into the Ballot Order Form. Downloading the Ballot Order Form directly into the Ballot Tracking System database eliminated clerical input errors.
- Pre-defining the ballot order numbers, the Ballot Tracking System can be pre-loaded with set parameters that create the total ballot distribution for each Early Vote Site. Example – Ballots for Precinct 100 are numbered from a low of 1 to a high of 500. The Ballot Tracking System can show individual ballot assignment to the location such as: 1 – 50, 51 – 100, etc.
- The data defined above provides an inventory report of all ballots shipped by style and precinct for verification at the Early Vote Sites prior to the first day of Early Voting.
- Each day after reconciliation, the list is locked down by date and individual Early Vote Site so no erroneous entries can be made. A new list by Early Vote Site is generated each day listing the ballots remaining for use and tracking begins anew.
- At the end of the Early Voting period, final ballot reconciliation can be accomplished in one-third of the time that was spent prior to using the Ballot Tracking System. A system report details information by Early Vote Site, by precinct, by ballot style, by ballot number showing: original distribution, (including adjustments for transfers in or out), number voted, used, spoiled and provisional ballots processed and the number remaining for use. (A simple manual count of the unused ballots are matched to the report.) Discrepancies are easily and quickly identified for research.

Result

The result is an easy to use, powerful database to make ordering, tracking, transfers, distribution and reconciliation a great election tool for now and the future. As things change within the election world, this database can be enhanced to meet our needs.
1. Each Early Vote Poll Worker will enter their Username and Password.

2. Upon entering the database, choose what you want to do. For this scenario “Record Ballot Usage” has been chosen.

3. Select today’s Voting Date for the current election from a drop down list to view a list of today’s sheet.
After touching “View Ballot Usage” button, the pre-loaded ballot numbers for the Early Vote Site will be displayed. In the example below the ballots are listed in Precinct order. However, the Poll Worker may choose to display the list by party, then in Precinct order.

First Day of Early Voting

A. Record 131 indicates the start of ballot usage for precinct 202

Last Day of Early Voting

B. Shows complete ballot usage (in ballot pads of 50)

C. Shows partial pad of 50 ballots used between records 152 and 154
First Day of Early Voting

D. First Day – “Spoiled” column indicates three were spoiled in Precinct 202; while 12 were spoiled for the day. (The same type of information is available on the Last Day.)

E. Note the far right column indicates the data was locked so no additional entries can be made to the sheet; thereby ensuring the integrity of the system

F. The “Total” column displays the number of ballots used at the site for the day

Resolving the Out of Sequence Issue

When a ballot number is issued out of sequence, the database can keep an accurate track of the information. An administrative step allows the out of sequence ballot pad of numbers to be split into separate records in the database to account for the out of sequence ballot number.

Before Sequence Number Pad Split

After Sequence Number Ballot Pad Split

Now you are able to see that the ballot pad for Precinct 106 no longer goes from a low of 5901 to a high of 5950; it was split into three pads to accommodate the usage of ballots out of sequence for this Precinct.
Transferring Ballots from One Early Vote Site to Another

Early Warning System
By the numbers turning “blue” it is easy for the Poll Worker to see that 60% of the assigned ballots were used. Monitoring is now important.

On 10/18/10 ballot pad 5901-5950 was listed on the inventory sheet for Homosassa (HOM) Early Vote Site – prior to transfer

On 10/19/10 ballot pad 5901-5950 is no longer shown on the inventory sheet for the Homosassa (HOM) Early Vote Site – after the transfer

On 10/19/10 ballot pad 5901-5950 is shown on the inventory list for Inverness City Hall (InvCi) – after the transfer

By the numbers turning “red” it is easy for the Poll Worker to see that 80% of the ballots assigned were used. Contact with the SOE Office is important so that a proper decision is made on whether a transfer is indicated.
Ballot Reconciliation Report

At the end of Early Voting, it is important to reconcile the ballots used and unused for the sites. This report is segregated by Early Vote Site, by precinct and by ballot style. The report quantifies the data in one document by columns showing:

(Blue box indicates the column headers)

The precinct, style, low/high initial distribution, total used, spoiled, provisional and available (unused).

(Green circle indicates)

The blank line for staff to write the first ballot number of the unused ballots received back from the Early Vote Site.

(Purple box indicates)

The “Running Total Available”, is the number of ballots available according to the report. A manual count of the unused ballots should agree with the running total number in this column to complete ballot reconciliation.

---

Ballot Reconciliation Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>BH</th>
<th>Precinct</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Spoiled</th>
<th>Prov</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Running Total Available By Precinct/Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>for this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precinct</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>for this</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precinct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>for this</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precinct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Supporting Documents