

electionline.org

Briefing



Helping Americans Vote: Poll Workers

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Every two years – and usually far more often – a massive one-day work force must be recruited, trained, organized and mobilized. America’s poll workers number two million per federal election, nearly double the number of people who work for America’s largest private employer. They work days that typically exceed 12 hours and receive minimum wage or only slightly higher in most of the country.

Yet few jobs could be considered more critical to the health of America’s democracy; after all, voting machines, registration databases and polling-place procedures are as effective and fair as the people administering the vote can make them.

A well-staffed polling place with well-trained workers functions smoothly, allowing the maximum number of voters to cast ballots in a convenient fashion. Voters who need assistance can get it, and polls open and close in accordance with state law.

Conversely, late-arriving precinct captains disenfranchise voters. Poorly-trained poll workers wrongly ask for identification in states where none is necessary. Machines break down or are taken offline when poll workers lack the know-how to correct problems. Voters who need help because they need accessible voting systems to be adjusted, speak languages other than English, require provisional ballots or have other issues, do not receive it from indifferent or untrained poll workers.

Edward Hailes, an attorney for the Advancement Project, said poll workers can be seen in two ways.

“Sometimes they’re referred to as the weakest link in our democracy, but they are also the backbone of our democracy...we need sufficient numbers of well trained [people] available on election day to prevent any potential train wrecks,” he said.¹

“Train wrecks” are often blamed on poll workers, whether or not they are the culprits.

Much like the U.S. military, the American election system is reliant on an army of volunteers. Unlike the military, however, the training, abilities and compensation of that army is far from uniform. And that has led to problems at the polls.

“Election Reform Briefing 20: Poll Workers” examines a number of facets of America’s one-day workforce, including training requirements, compensation, specialization and absenteeism, attitudes and what innovations are underway in states and localities to recruit, train and retain poll workers.

Pay rates vary around the country, but are almost universally low by most standards. A number of states peg the pay to the state or federal minimum wage or slightly higher. Some cap pay at little more than \$100 a day for a shift that usually starts before 7 a.m. and ends well after 10 p.m. Tack on two to four hours of mandatory training and the rate of pay can fall well below single digit dollars per hour – even in urban areas where poll workers tend to earn the most.

Morale problems plague poll workers after bad elections and absenteeism is common nationwide. A scramble to find replacements has led to a number of different strategies around the country, from cross-trained experts in polling places who can perform numerous jobs to pulling any voter available in a precinct and putting them to work in whatever task they can handle doing.

Poll-worker training varies greatly between and even within states. Most jurisdictions require poll workers to attend two or three hour training sessions before each election.

That training is vital. With provisional ballots, audio/sip-puff access for people with disabilities, voter-verified paper audit trails, changing voter ID requirements in a number of states and complex electronic voting systems, the job is getting harder.

Specialization is one solution. Given only a few hours to instruct poll workers, the people who handle machines are trained differently than those handling provisional ballots in some jurisdictions. But that can lead to poor performance when the provisional ballot clerk fails to arrive at the polling place and the

The American election system is reliant on an army of volunteers. Unlike the military, however, the training, abilities and compensation of that army is far from uniform.

registration clerk, who is an expert at the electronic poll book but has no training in any other facet of election administration, is forced to take over.

The League of Women Voters concluded that problems with poll workers can be attributed at least partially to constraints in state and local law and procedure.

“Poll worker laws and procedures vary tremendously from state to state and even from county to county...some laws require, prohibit or are silent on issues such as allowing persons under 18 years of age or persons living outside the voting jurisdiction to work at the polls. The conditions under which poll workers are to perform, including pay, hours to be worked and the amount of training needed also vary widely. Lastly, election officials function in an environment like no other – there are no ‘time outs’ or ‘instant replays’ – making them understandably cautious about introducing factors that might result in mistakes or unintended consequences or lawsuits.”²²

Regardless of the cause, there is no argument that poll workers have become more scrutinized and more specialized since the 2000 election, and with more changes on the horizon to voting systems, polling place procedures and state and federal law, the task won’t be getting any easier.

Executive Summary

Poll worker training, pay and allocation vary greatly across state lines. While America's one-day army of poll workers numbers around two million people – exceeding the payroll of the country's largest employer – training and compensation are far from uniform.

An electionline.org survey of election directors nationwide and research of state laws found key differences in how poll workers are qualified for service, trained in tasks and paid for training and election-day work.

Training

There is no national uniformity in poll-worker training. Yet with federal requirements for databases, accessible machines, provisional ballots and ID requirements for some first-time voters, the job has become more specialized and complex. Whether state or local election departments are responsible for training varies from state-to-state, for reasons including geography – trainers from Providence and Dover can easily reach any point in Rhode Island and Delaware to conduct training; to voting equipment – Georgia's uniform voting system lends itself to a uniform, state-sponsored curriculum. In states including Texas and Pennsylvania, where a wide variety of voting systems are used, local training programs are devised by county election officials.

- 18 states leave poll-worker training and curriculum to local jurisdictions
- 22 develop training materials for every jurisdiction. Some have state trainers lead sessions.
- 10 states have training programs that employ elements of state-mandated curriculum in locally-designed training programs
- (Information about Massachusetts could not be found and they did not respond to the electionline.org survey.)

Compensation

Poll worker pay is almost universally low when the length of the work day is taken into account. A number of states base compensation on the federal or state minimum wage. The lowest-paid poll workers are in some Vermont jurisdictions. They are volunteers. Some New York jurisdictions boast the highest paid poll workers, some of whom earn \$325 per election day.

- 7 states dictate exact pay for poll workers
- 14 states tie pay to the state or federal minimum wage – some localities can elect to pay more
- 13 states establish minimum pay for poll workers not linked to the minimum wage
- 17 states do not specify

Absenteeism

No-shows at the polls are common throughout the country. Strategies for coping with shortages vary.

- 23 states allow either the highest-ranking poll worker or a number of poll workers to pick replacements from eligible voters
- 6 states have trained substitutes ready to fill in at precincts
- 4 states impose penalties on absent poll workers, from a five-year ban from service (Kentucky) to potential prosecutions (Indiana, Nebraska and Tennessee)
- 17 states have no requirements



Key Findings

Problems with elections focus largely on technology or rules – the machines, registration databases, voter ID rules or provisional ballot access. However, whether elections run smoothly or disastrously can be a function of the performance of the poll workers who are charged with administering the vote.

“If you don’t have those people inside the polls to help, no policy and no machine will matter. The election process breaks down without poll workers, and you can’t have a democracy without them,” stated DeForest “Buster” Soaries, former chair of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC).³

Questions about the quality of poll-worker training have arisen in troubled elections across the country.

Numerous problems plagued the May 2006 primary in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, after nearly 20 percent of poll workers did not show up. Polling places opened late – in one particularly egregious case at 1:30 p.m.⁴ Other problems, according to a review panel, included: “Poorly trained polling personnel; insufficient staffing for certain duties; polling place personnel who had a poor work ethic being returned repeatedly to poll worker positions; error-filled or ambiguous manuals for poll workers; [and] lack of board of elections interest in broader recruitment or hiring of others who wanted to be poll workers.”⁵

The League of Women Voters defended the poll workers, and blamed the election administration system writ large for the failures.

“After the most recent federal election cycle, stories abounded of polls opening late as poll workers struggled with new voting technologies; voters being turned away by poll workers over confusion about ID requirements; equipment malfunctions and paper ballot shortages; and voters walking away from polls as wait times became insufferable. While it may be easy to point the finger at poll workers for these problems, it’s really the ‘system’ that is letting down these dedicated public servants by not providing the tools necessary for success.”⁶

Poll workers themselves have expressed concern. A post-primary survey of Cuyahoga poll workers found 53 percent reported the training did not prepare them to work with the new touch-screen voting machines and only 42 percent said they were satisfied with their own performance.⁷

Training

Poll-worker training is typically a local affair, but states have varying levels of involvement when it comes to preparing training materials and conducting training at the state level.

On one end of the spectrum are Utah and Washington where both the development of training materials and the training sessions are left entirely to county election officials.

Other states have greater involvement in developing training materials, providing mandated uniform training materials and training county officials who will in turn train poll workers.

In Oklahoma, “The State Election Board designs the training program and produces and distributes all the training materials. The State Election Board also provides instructor training for all county officials who conduct poll worker training. A group of trained instructors provides all poll-worker training. There is a set curriculum, but county officials are given some flexibility to adapt it to their own circumstances. County officials, both trained poll worker instructors and others, provide frequent suggestions for design of the training program materials. Local instructors are now required to attend a more extensive two-day training program before they can conduct training in their own counties or in other counties.”⁸

Several states have or will develop training programs in conjunction with local universities.

“The Iowa Secretary of State has partnered with county auditors and the Iowa State Association of Counties to form an organization. There is a set curriculum for this training and a guidebook prepared by the secretary of state’s office. Trainers for the program come from Iowa State University in Ames and travel throughout the state training on a county by county basis, which is voluntary. Over 2,000 officials have been trained so far and more training sessions are scheduled throughout the remainder of 2007 and through 2008.”⁹

And while some states might not have mandated roles in training, they are nonetheless involved. In South Dakota, Secretary of State Chris



Nelson's office trained an estimated one-quarter of all poll workers in the state on the new AutoMark voting machines. (See South Dakota's listing on p. 24 for more information.)

Several states are using online training for poll workers. The Texas Secretary of State's office has developed web-based training which it has made available to counties. The online materials were created by a private firm and in consultation with county clerks and election administrators. Other states that are considering developing online training include Hawaii, Maryland, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Poll Worker Compensation

Low pay (or no pay) and long work day – sometimes upwards of 16 hours is an oft-cited reason for difficulties recruiting and retaining poll workers. The survey found a wide array of state-mandated pay requirements, including 15 states that do not require minimum pay. Daily wages are left to local jurisdictions, some of which elect to pay nothing. Alaska poll workers are paid \$9.50 per hour. Other states pay by the day. In New York, compensation ranges from \$75 to \$325 per day based on rates set by the county boards of elections.

In Vermont, local governments decide whether to pay poll workers. "Each town select board decides if it will pay, and if so, how much. It varies from all volunteer to minimum wage to various hourly rates to a flat stipend per meeting or per election

day," said Kathy DeWolfe, the state's election director.¹¹

Staffing Minimums

Forty-eight states require a minimum number of poll workers. Only Idaho and Vermont lack state minimums. In Idaho, "the counties may determine how many poll workers are needed."¹²

Minimum staff ranges from three to six or more poll workers per precinct. Beyond the minimum, local jurisdictions can fill poll worker needs as they see fit.

No-show poll workers

Absenteeism among election-day workers is a national problem, causing lines, confusion and forcing some poll workers to take on responsibilities during the course of an election day that they might not have been trained to do to fill in for no-show colleagues.

The majority of states have laws or regulations in place to deal with such situations. Among the 15 that do not, officials in Idaho and Vermont said no-show poll workers have never been a significant issue.¹³

In some states alternate poll workers are trained and may be called on to serve on an election day. "The state requires the training of alternate poll workers to fill the vacancy of any poll worker who does not show," according to Mississippi's survey response.¹⁴

Qualified voters can become poll workers on the spot in some states. For example, Nevada law says, "If a vacancy occurs in any election board on the day of the election and no

reserves are available, the election board may appoint, at the polling place, any registered voter who is willing to serve and satisfies the qualifications required to perform the services required."¹⁵

A handful of states make absenteeism a crime.

In Indiana, inspectors who fail to show up for work can be convicted of a felony.¹⁶ And in a May 2007 Marion County primary, approximately 150 poll workers did not show, a number of precincts opened late and five never opened. It was unclear how many voters were unable to cast ballots due to the missing poll workers.¹⁷

Student poll workers

Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have laws that allow students under the age of 18 to serve at the polls in some capacity. Generally the laws require the student poll workers be either at least 16 or 17 years old and meet other requirements including citizenship and residency requirements that all poll workers must meet.¹⁸

In Mississippi, two students per precinct can serve as "student interns" at the polls. To qualify they must be recommended by a principal or other school official; be at least 16 at the time of the election; be a resident of the county or municipality; and be enrolled in a school. The students cannot, among other tasks, tally the votes or operate or maintain any voting equipment and they must attend all required training.¹⁹

	Minimum Poll Worker Pay	Minimum Number of Poll Workers	No-show poll workers
Alabama	\$75-\$100 per day	Not specified. "Officials...necessary for each precinct."	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Alaska	\$9.50 per hour	At least three qualified voters to serve in each precinct	Not specified
Arizona	\$30 per day	Six – one inspector, one marshal, two judges, and not less than two clerks	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Arkansas	Federal minimum wage	Four - a minimum of two election clerks, one election judge, and one election sheriff per polling place	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
California	Stipend fixed by the governing body of the jurisdiction	Three - a minimum of one inspector and two clerks	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Colorado	Not less than five dollars for services provided as judge at any election.	At least three	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Connecticut	No state-mandated minimum	Five for general election; four for primary election.	Not specified
District of Columbia	\$100-\$150 per day	Not specified	Not specified
Delaware	\$15 per day; \$25 for attending training	One inspector; two judges of election, one from each of the two principal parties; and two clerks of election, one from each of the two principal parties. Whenever an election district is provided more than one voting machine, two additional clerks, one from each political party, shall be appointed for each additional voting machine.	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Florida	No state-mandated minimum	At least two (clerk and inspector cited in state code)	No state-mandated regulations other than a replacement poll worker must meet the qualifications of the absent poll worker. If there is no person with prior training available, then the supervisor may appoint someone who has not received training.
Georgia	No state-mandated minimum	A chief manager and two assistant managers assisted by clerks	Not specified.
Hawaii	\$85-\$175 per day	Not less than three precinct officials for each precinct	Not specified
Idaho	Not less than the state minimum wage.	Counties determine how many poll workers are needed	Not specified
Illinois	\$35-\$60 per day	Five judges	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Indiana	No state-mandated minimum	Seven poll workers in most situations, or at most nine poll workers per precinct	An inspector who negligently or knowingly fails to appear at the county election board commits a Class D felony.
Iowa	\$3.50 per hour	Three per polling place	Not specified
Kansas	\$3 per hour if voting machines not used; \$40 per day where voting machines are used. This is a 1923 law - most poll workers receive minimum wage or slightly more	The county election determines the number of poll workers for each polling place. It is supposed to be "three members or some greater number of members"	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Kentucky	\$60 per election served	Four precinct officers	Any person appointed to serve but who knowingly and willfully fails to serve and who is not excused is ineligible to serve as an election officer for five years.
Louisiana	\$250 for a trained commissioner-in-charge or \$300 if they work more than one precinct on Election Day; \$200 for commissioners with two training classes; \$100 for commissioners with one training class and \$35 for non-trained commissioners	The range is two to four commissioners and one commissioner-in-charge per precinct depending on the type of election	Not specified
Maine	No state-mandated minimum	At least two election clerks	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Maryland	No state-mandated minimum	Minimum of four	Not specified
Massachusetts	No state-mandated minimum	One warden, one deputy warden, one clerk, one deputy clerk, two inspectors and two deputy inspectors	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Michigan	No state-mandated minimum	At least three inspectors for each election	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place precinct
Minnesota	At least the Minnesota prevailing minimum wage	Minimum of three	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Mississippi	\$75 for an election, or after approval by the County's Board of Supervisors, an additional \$50 dollars per day	Minimum of three per precinct	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place

	Minimum Poll Worker Pay	Minimum Number of Poll Workers	No-show poll workers
Missouri	No state-mandated minimum	At least two judges from each major political party per polling place	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Montana	Federal minimum wage	Three or more election judges for each precinct	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Nebraska	No less than the minimum wage	Three judges and two clerks of election	Unexcused absences may be prosecuted.
Nevada	No state-mandated minimum	At least three	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
New Hampshire	No state-mandated minimum	Two inspectors	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
New Jersey	\$200 per election	Four to six members	Not specified
New Mexico	Not less than the federal minimum hourly wage rate nor more than \$150 for an election day	Depending on the number of voting machines in use, three to six poll workers	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
New York	No state-mandated minimum poll-worker pay. Minimum for training is \$25. Election-day pay ranges from \$75 to \$325 per day	Four inspectors per election district	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
North Carolina	The state minimum wage	Three judges are assigned to each precinct	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
North Dakota	No less than the minimum wage.	At least two clerks, two judges, and one inspector	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Ohio	Not less than the minimum hourly rate established by the Fair Labor Standards Act and not more than \$95	Four per precinct	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Oklahoma	\$85-\$95 per day	Three poll workers for each precinct	State law does not address this issue. However, all county election boards have trained substitutes who are available on short notice.
Oregon	Not less than the federal or state minimum wage whichever is higher	Three or more clerks	Not specified
Pennsylvania	\$75-\$200	Three	Not specified
Rhode Island	Minimum compensation is \$60 for the day and \$25 for training	Six	Regulations are in development
South Carolina	Poll managers are paid \$60 for Election Day plus \$60 for training. Clerks (head poll managers) receive an additional day's pay at \$60 for a total of \$180.	General elections and primaries: three managers for the first 500 registered voters, then three additional poll managers for every 500 registered voters, or fraction of 500, thereafter.	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
South Dakota	No state-mandated minimum	Three	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Tennessee	\$15 is the minimum compensation. An additional \$10 for those who attend instructional school	Four	Requires the chair of the county election commission to furnish the names of all appointed election officials who failed to serve in the election and who did not notify the commission in advance that they could not serve.
Texas	Federal minimum wage	Three - an election judge and two clerks	Not specified
Utah	No state-mandated minimum	Three	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Vermont	No state-mandated minimum	Not specified	Not specified
Virginia	At least \$75 for each full day's service rendered on each election day	Not less than three	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Washington	Minimum wage	Three poll workers, one inspector and two judges are mandated	Not specified
West Virginia	No state-mandated minimum poll-worker pay, but maximum pay not exceeding \$125 for one day's services for attending training if the commissioner or poll clerk provides at least one day's service during an election and a sum not exceeding \$175 for his or her services at any one election	Five	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Wisconsin	No state-mandated minimum	Seven election inspectors	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place
Wyoming	Not less than the state minimum wage	At least three judges	Regulations to replace no-show poll workers in place

Election-Day No Shows: Absenteeism among Poll Workers

All of the careful planning, well-designed training programs or expert instruction cannot help salvage an election if poll workers fail to show up to their assigned precincts on election day, or if enough poll workers cannot be recruited in the first place.

But it happens with regularity nationwide.

Before the last presidential election, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) estimated the nation would be short at least a half million poll workers, further noting that for every three poll workers trained, only two showed up at their precinct.²⁰ A report issued in 2006 by Demos, a non-partisan public policy research and advocacy organization, found that “qualified poll workers are least available where most needed.” Predominantly minority jurisdictions had a far higher percentage of precincts (17 percent) lacking necessary numbers of poll workers compared to the national average of 6 percent.²¹

When polls do open at their allotted time, those who do show up must carry out multiple tasks, in some cases performing functions for which they have not been trained. Precinct captains scramble to find replacements, sometimes pulling aside a registered voter to fill in.

It’s such a common problem that in one Pennsylvania county, frequent shortages have election board members paying poll workers double for doing two different jobs on election day.²²

Strategies to cope with absenteeism vary by state.

According to *electionline.org*’s survey and research:

- *Twenty-three states allow either the highest ranking official at a polling place to pick replacements or require a vote among all of the poll workers present. Sometime states, including Massachusetts, require the replacement be a member of the same political party as the no-show worker.*
- *Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Oklahoma and West Virginia have trained substitutes available to fill in at precincts.*
- *Seventeen states have no requirements on the books, leaving the problem to be dealt with at the local level.*
- *Four states – Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee and Nebraska – try to reduce absenteeism with possible penalties for failing to show up on election day. Those penalties can include a five-year ban from election-day employment in Kentucky, prosecution in Nebraska and Indiana and a potential grand jury investigation in Tennessee.*

For those stuck working at understaffed polling places, shortages cause more than just a scramble to administer the vote shorthanded. It often means a person must take on a job for which he or she is not trained.

As polling places work has become more complicated the tasks performed by poll workers have become more specialized. Training in many localities is tailored toward a specific task.

To cope with the focused training, backup judges in some localities get a far more broad-based education pre-election so they can

come into a situation and fill in wherever they are needed.

An official in Larimer County, Colo., said those assigned as troubleshooters on election day are trained on every function performed in a vote center.²³

More traditional precinct-based systems have similar programs.

In Franklin County, Ohio, presiding judges – the top-ranking precinct officials, are “cross trained” in all of the various jobs on election day, from machine maintenance to assisting with provisional voting.²⁴

Still, shortages arise. In 2004, Matt Damschroder, Franklin County’s election director, said 10 people, or about less than a quarter of 1 percent of the poll workers on election day, were recruited “on the spot” at precincts where shortages occurred. Presiding judges offered quick lessons to the qualified voters, who filled in as necessary.²⁵

In Cook County, Ill., election judges are cross-trained during their three-hour training period, said Jan Kralovec, deputy director of elections. In addition, she said, a new position of equipment manager was created when the county rolled out its dual voting system.²⁶

The specialized managers, assigned to each precinct in the county, receive 12-hours of intensive training on troubleshooting, poll opening and closing procedures and other polling place functions, Kralovec said.

Poll Worker Attitudes

Poll workers have been referred to as the “foot soldiers for democracy,” the front-line grunts who have the often thankless job of waking early, working late, earning peanuts and sometimes bearing the brunt of the blame if things go wrong.

Researchers including David Magleby, senior research fellow at Brigham Young University’s Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy (CSED) say that poll workers’ confidence on the job correlates strongly with the voters’ confidence that their votes will be counted correctly.²⁷

“There is a consistent relationship in the rating of job performance and the confidence a vote will be counted accurately,” Quin Monson, CSED assistant director, told the board of elections in Summit County, Ohio at a February meeting.

Monson surveyed poll workers in Cuyahoga County, Ohio after the May 2006 primary election, the first in which touch-screen voting machines were used, and found that 53 percent of poll workers felt their training did not prepare them to use the machines. Further, only 42 percent said they were pleased with their performance on election day.

Monson also queried voters in Summit County, Ohio after the November 2006 election and found that those who ranked their poll workers as excellent were more likely to believe that their votes would be counted than those who ranked their poll workers lower.²⁸

In 2004, Thad Hall, a political science professor at the University

of Utah, found that nearly three quarters of voters who ranked their interaction with their poll workers as excellent were also very confident that their vote would be accurately counted compared with fewer than 41 percent of voters who ranked the experience lower. Even when controlling for socioeconomic class and partisanship, a voter who has a positive experience with their poll workers is more likely to feel confident that a vote will be tabulated properly.²⁹

“Training makes a difference on a variety of levels,” including voter perceptions, Hall said.³⁰

Hall, R. Michael Alvarez, co-director of the MIT/Cal Tech Voting Technology Project and Lonna Rae Atkeson, a University of New Mexico political science professor surveyed randomly

selected poll workers from Bernalillo, Doña Ana and Santa Fe counties in New Mexico as part of a review of the state’s November 2006 election. They found that less than 43 percent of poll workers said the training included enough hands-on work with the voting machines and about 35 percent of poll workers said that the training did not spend enough time on election laws and procedures.³¹

About 73 percent of poll workers said the instructions they received for opening the polls were clear compared to 68 percent for closing the polls and 75 percent said they were given clear direction on how to secure the voting machines, ballots and ballot box. However, the report warns, “it could be viewed as highly problematic that a large minority of poll workers did not

Across the board, a more positive training experience increased the poll worker’s confidence that ballots would be counted accurately, satisfaction with the poll worker experience, and a higher opinion of electronic voting.



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agree that the instructions were clear for conducting these activities.”³²

Poll workers who said their training prepared them well for election day were less likely to say they had problems setting up and closing down the polls and vice versa, Hall found.

Poll workers who said their training was very easy to understand and participated in multiple trainings were more likely to work in precincts where there were problems with machine set-up or shutdown.

Poll workers may not have paid attention during the training because they thought it was easy, been paired with less experienced poll workers or were more diligent

about reporting problems.³³

Across the board, however, a more positive training experience increased the poll worker’s confidence that ballots would be counted accurately, satisfaction with the poll worker experience, and a higher opinion of electronic voting.³⁴

Hall wrote about a program called “Practice Makes Perfect” in Salt Lake County that allowed poll workers to repeat their training as election day neared. More than half of the poll workers participated in the program.³⁵

The League of Women Voters recommends “required but flexible training opportunities” including nights and weekends to accommodate potential poll workers

facing constantly changing rules in election administration.³⁶

The New Mexico report suggested making the training more like the experience poll workers will face on election day. Almost 40 percent of poll workers said their training did not mirror their experiences at the polls.³⁷

“This disconnect may be responsible for other problems poll workers reported, such as problems opening and closing the polling place or problems with identification. Election officials should examine their training processes and methods to see if they can address the issues identified by the poll workers in this study,” according to the report.³⁸

Alternative Language Training



Poll workers trained to assist voters who speak languages other than English receive the same training as anyone else performing a job at the polls. Finding them, however, is far more difficult.

Sections 203 and 4(f)4 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) require that nearly 300 political jurisdictions in 31 states offer voting materials and assistance at the polls in more than 25 different languages.

Spanish is the predominant required language, triggering coverage in 84 percent of the jurisdictions covered by Section 203 of VRA. In addition, Spanish-language assistance must be provided statewide in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas. American Indian coverage is the second most common “language,” (16 percent) broadly defined as there are more than 17 unique languages.³⁹

Many elections officials said they use the same practices for recruiting poll workers with diverse language skills as they do for all poll workers, including radio, newspaper and television ads, public service announcements, handing out literature, attending community meetings and word of mouth from other poll workers.

However, in many jurisdictions that fall under Section 203, a number of elections officials have leaned heavily on outside organizations to help recruit bilingual poll workers.

Yvonne Reed, public information officer for the Maricopa County, Ariz. elections and county

recorder’s office, said that her office takes a proactive approach to recruiting bilingual poll workers in their everyday duties.⁴⁰

Valle del Sol is a part of Maricopa County elections’ community network and runs programs that train participants for leadership roles, according to Anita Luera, vice president of corporate relations and leadership development. Luera said her organization has been working to share information about opportunities to work at the polls. “We can get that info out to a good segment of the Latino community.”⁴¹

Similarly, the elections department in Suffolk County, Mass. (Boston) has an advisory committee that includes executive directors and employees from community organizations that help find poll workers with language skills, Helen Wong, language coordinator said. Boston was the target of a U.S. Department of Justice lawsuit in 2005 for failing to provide enough poll workers to assist Hispanic and Asian-American voters in their native languages.⁴²

Wong’s outreach to the Office of New Bostonians, Boston Housing Authority, Office of Neighborhood Services and more than 100 different ethnic media outlets have helped recruit poll workers.⁴³

Poll worker retention helps make recruitment easier from year to year. Wong said that she is building a poll worker database and has sent postcards to past poll workers asking if they can help with

the
upcoming
election.⁴⁴

In 2006, the University of Texas-El Paso was awarded a \$20,000 grant from the United States Election Assistance Commission to establish a program that would help the surrounding community recruit and hire bilingual poll workers.⁴⁵

Some jurisdictions provide sensitivity training for poll workers with regard to a voter’s ability to speak English. For instance, in California, the statewide manual for training poll workers says that all poll workers must be trained in cultural sensitivity.

The statewide guidelines go on to say that poll worker training should include instruction on: respect for differences; not treating specific needs groups as special populations; offering assistance and communicating with voters who have an assistant; voter privacy; how and when a poll worker should ask for help; cultural competency training; and to use the three tools of “Wait — Recognize — Listen.”⁴⁶

And in some counties, it pays more, however slightly, to be a bilingual poll worker. San Bernardino County, Calif. pays its bilingual poll workers — who must be fluent in English and Spanish — an additional \$10 a day.⁴⁷

New Approaches to Staffing the Polls

One solution to the widespread shortage of poll workers is allowing teens to serve before they reach voting age. Many states have made provisions in allowing them to work at the polls. County boards of election have teamed up with schools across the country to recruit new poll workers.

“By developing the relationship with schools, we have developed a continuing source of young people every year... Each year, new high school seniors become involved,” said Deborah Koch, who helped coordinate the Youth at the Booth program in central Ohio.⁴⁸

High school poll workers have also eased the transition to electronic voting machines.

“Besides becoming a valuable new source of workers, students adjust easily to the new technology at polling stations,” Kathy Dent, supervisor of elections for Sarasota County, Fla. said.⁴⁹

Allowing high school seniors to work the polls also gets young people involved in the democratic process at an early age.

“It provides them with an authentic civic experience that we hope will grow into a lifetime of voting and civic involvement,” Koch said.⁵⁰

Election officials have also looked to colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations to recruit young poll workers.

In 2004, as a part of the Help America Vote College Program, the United States Election Assistance

Commission (EAC) began distributing grants for the development of poll worker recruitment initiatives.⁵¹

Since the program began, the EAC has awarded nearly \$1 million to 34 colleges, universities and nonprofit organizations.

The Citizens Union Foundation (CUF), a nonprofit organization, received \$19,000 from the EAC in 2006 to recruit student poll workers from New York schools, including CUNY colleges, New York University, Columbia, St. John’s, Baruch, Fordham and the New School.⁵²

Through flyer distribution, online networks such as *craigslist.org* and *Facebook.com* and direct outreach to career counselors and campus organizations including the Young Democrats and Young Republicans, the CUF elicited 1,326 applications from college-aged students.⁵³

In August 2006, the University of Virginia Center for Politics (CFP) also received funding from the EAC to expand its Student Poll Worker Program. Students received t-shirts that read, “Hug Me I’m a Poll Worker!” and all of the University of Virginia participants said that they were likely to serve as poll workers again in the future.⁵⁴

Prior to the distribution of EAC money, many local jurisdictions had established, and continue to sponsor, “adopt-a-polling-place” programs in which civic clubs, church groups, and nonprofit organizations adopt a polling site

and staff it with their poll workers.⁵⁵

In Johnson County, Kan., more than 50 organizations have adopted polling places. Adopters include local churches, Pilot Clubs and the local Cub Scouts.⁵⁶

In 2004, the EAC launched a federal appeal to corporations, federal government agencies, and private organizations, asking them to allow their employees “to be released from work to volunteer for Election Day service without having to take a personal or vacation day.”⁵⁷

In response, some corporations and federal agencies adopted new poll worker policies. California permits all state employees to take time off, without loss of pay, to serve as poll workers.⁵⁸ The United States Department of Agriculture has also changed its policy to allow employees to serve as poll workers without penalty.⁵⁹

Some states have made it law that businesses cannot penalize employees for taking time off to serve as a poll worker.⁶⁰

Programs like “Official Election Sponsors” in Salt Lake County and “Champions of Democracy” in Franklin County, Ohio, have successfully recruited poll workers from corporations including State Farm Insurance and American Electric Power Company Inc.

“It is an opportunity for [corporations] to provide a public service to their employees and be a good public citizen,” said Jason Yocum, deputy clerk for Salt Lake County.⁶¹

State-by-State

Information for the snapshot of the states was compiled through both an electionline.org survey of state election officials, administered from June- August, 2007 and a review of state laws. Officials from 37 states responded to the survey. Details on the source of each state's information can be found in the endnotes.

Alabama

Pay: \$50 for inspector and clerks. Each clerk is entitled to supplemental compensation to ensure the total pay is \$75 per day and each inspector shall be entitled to supplemental compensation to ensure the total pay is \$100 per day. Upon completion of being certified as a qualified poll each clerk and inspector is entitled to receive an additional \$25 per day.⁶²

Qualifications: Voters who reside in the precinct.⁶³

Training: Locality oversees training. If an electronic voting system is used the election official receives instruction within 60 days prior to the election.⁶⁴

Number of poll workers per polling place:

"Officials...necessary for each precinct."⁶⁵

No-show poll workers: If the inspector appointed is not present, other precinct election officials present choose one to serve as inspector and find a qualified voter from the polling place to serve as a clerk. If there are no election officials present by 7 a.m. any four qualified electors may open the polls and act as precinct election officials.⁶⁶

Alaska⁶⁷

Pay: \$9.50 per hour; election board chairpersons are paid \$10 per hour. Total compensation depends on hours worked (training and election day combined).

Qualifications: Must be a qualified voter in the state. Attempts are made to recruit election workers who are registered within each precinct or district in which the worker will be serving.

Training: Curriculum training materials are established by the four election supervisors and the division director. Training typically lasts between three and four hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least three per precinct.

No-show poll workers: No state-mandated regulations.

Arizona⁶⁸

Pay: \$30 per day minimum. Local jurisdictions can elect to increase daily pay.

Qualifications: Qualified voters of the precinct for which appointed, unless there are not enough poll workers. The inspector, marshal and judges shall be members of the two political parties which cast the

highest number of votes in the state at the last preceding general election.

Training: Mandated by the state, includes instruction in the voting system to be used and the election laws applicable to such election. Consulting with each county, the state prescribes rules to achieve and maintain the maximum degree of correctness, impartiality, uniformity and efficiency on election procedures. There is no set number of required hours for training.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Six – one inspector, one marshal, two judges, and not less than two clerks. In elections precincts with less than two hundred qualified electors there shall not be less than one inspector and two judges.

No-show poll workers: The inspector may appoint judges, clerks and a marshal if a poll worker does not show up on election day.

Arkansas⁶⁹

Pay: Minimum of the prevailing federal minimum wage. This will change to the prevailing state or federal minimum wage, whichever is greater. \$25 for training.

Qualifications: Must be a qualified elector of the state, able to read and write English, be a resident of the precinct, and two election officials per polling site must have attended training.

Training: County trainers have a day of instruction at the SBEC Training Center. The trainers conduct poll worker training at the county level. Training for poll workers specific to voting systems is coordinated through the office of the secretary of state. Training hours vary by jurisdiction.

Number of poll workers per polling place: A minimum of two election clerks, one election judge, and one election sheriff per polling place.

No-show poll workers: The law allows for their replacement.

California

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.⁷⁰

Qualifications: Must be a voter of the state; reside in the precinct and be able to read and write English.⁷¹

Training: State issued uniform poll-worker training guidelines in 2006.⁷²

Number of poll workers per polling place:

Determined by the elections official based on precinct size. Consists of a minimum of one inspector and two clerks. Additional clerk positions may be allocated in proportion to the number of registered voters within the precinct.⁷³

No-show poll workers: The voters present, including members of the board, appoint a voter to fill the vacancy. If none of the members appointed appears at that time, the voters of the precinct present at that time may appoint a board.⁷⁴

Colorado

Pay: \$5 minimum. Jurisdictions can elect to increase daily pay.⁷⁵

Qualifications: Registered electors who reside in the political subdivision, unless otherwise excepted; physically and mentally able to perform the assigned tasks; must attend a class of instruction; no election fraud convictions, any other election offense, or fraud; neither a candidate in the precinct nor a family member of a candidate whose name appears on the ballot in the precinct that they are appointed to serve.⁷⁶

Training: The county clerk and recorder or the designated elector oversee training not more than 32 days prior to each election.⁷⁷ No specific amount of training time is specified in state law.

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least three.⁷⁸

No-show poll workers: If a vacancy occurs by failure of any election judge to appear at the polling place by 7:30 a.m., the vacancy may be filled by the designated election official.⁷⁹

Connecticut⁸⁰

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.

Qualifications: Must be registered voter in town, except 16 and 17-year-olds citizens who may serve as checkers, machine tenders, challengers and translators.

Training: All moderators (the chief official in each polling place) must attend a training class, pass a test and be certified. Training is four hours. In addition, with the implementation of optical scanners, up to five workers per polling place are receiving training by teams of vendor representatives and local election officials selected by the state. Moderator training based on a

moderators' handbook prepared by the state. Optical scanner training is based on a manual developed by vendor and the state with input from a committee of local officials.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Five for general election; four for primary election.

No-show poll workers: No state-mandated regulations.

Delaware

Pay: \$15 for each day of service. Election officers are required to attend an additional training session for \$25.⁸¹

Qualifications: Registered to vote in the election district or in the absence of such persons, the representative district.⁸²

Training: The departments of elections train election officers on their duties. This includes instruction on applicable election law, the proper conduct of the election and operation of the voting machines.⁸³

Number of poll workers per polling place: One inspector, two judges of election, one from each of the two principal parties; and two clerks of election, one from each of the two principal parties. Whenever an election district is provided more than one voting machine, two additional clerks, one from each political party, are appointed for each additional voting machine.⁸⁴

No-show poll workers: The departments of elections shall appoint replacements for election officers who are unable to perform their duties due to illness, disability or for any other reason.⁸⁵

District of Columbia

Pay: Captain - \$150; captain trainee - \$125; other team members - \$100; training only - \$10.⁸⁶

Qualifications: Qualified registered electors.⁸⁷

Training: Training classes are held prior to each election. Trainings are held in July and August for the September primary election and in October for the November general election. Training notices are sent out one month in advance and offer a flexible schedule.⁸⁸

Number of poll workers per polling place: No information available.

No-show poll workers: No information available.

Florida⁸⁹

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.

Qualifications: Must be able to read and write English and be a registered voter in the county.

Training: There is a statewide poll worker curriculum that is required to be used by the counties. The curriculum covers all aspects of voting on election day and is developed cooperatively with local supervisors of elections. A number of the counties have purchased and are using online training for their poll workers. There is a minimum of three hours training for the clerk and a minimum of two hours for inspectors.

Number of poll workers per polling place: State law specifies two, a clerk and inspector, but does not provide a minimum number.

No-show poll workers: A replacement poll worker must meet the qualifications of the absent poll worker. If there is no person with prior training available, the supervisor may appoint someone who has not received training.

Georgia⁹⁰

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.

Qualifications: Poll officers “shall be judicious, intelligent, and upright citizens, residents of the county or municipality, 16 years of age or over, and able to read, write, and speak English.” Poll workers cannot run for political office nor be family members of candidates.

Training: The election superintendent oversees training. The state-developed poll worker training manual is available for each county. Counties develop additional training materials. The state’s Center for Election Systems at Kennesaw State University conducts training on the electronic voting equipment. No specified number of hours for training.

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least three. “All elections and primaries shall be conducted in each precinct by a board consisting of a chief manager, who shall be chairperson of such board, and two assistant managers assisted by clerks.”

No-show poll workers: No state regulations.

Hawaii⁹¹

Pay: \$85 per day for precinct officials; \$100 for voter assistance officials; \$115 to \$175 per day for chairpersons.

Qualifications: Registered voters of the precinct. Voters from outside the precinct work at polls if there is a shortage. Must be able to read and write the English language, must attend training and pass an exam.

Training: Training includes instructions on each station that a voter proceeds through in the polling place. An additional hands-on training is required for the voter assistance officials and chairpersons. County clerks and their election administration staff are involved in the development of the materials. The state is in discussions to provide online poll worker training. Precinct official trainings are approximately 1-1/2 to 2 hours. Hands-on training for voter assistance officials and chairpersons is an additional 1 to 1-1/2 hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Not less than three precinct officials for each precinct one of whom shall be the chairperson; provided that in precincts where more than one voting unit has been established, there shall be three precinct officials for each unit.

No-show poll workers: No state regulations.

Idaho⁹²

Pay: No less than the state minimum wage. Determined by jurisdiction.

Qualifications: Must be at least 17 and a U.S. citizen.

Training: The Secretary of State trains county clerks who in turn train their poll workers. The state provides model training and the counties may expand on training. The state is developing online training. There is no set number of training hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Counties determine how many poll workers are needed.

No-show poll workers: There are no state regulations; this has not been a problem.

Illinois⁹³

Pay: At least \$35 a day for counties with populations of less than 600,000; counties, population of at least 600,000 but less than 2,000,000, not less than \$45 per day; counties, population of 2,000,000 or more, not less than \$60 per day. All judges who satisfactorily complete training receive additional compensation not less than \$10 per day in counties with a population of less than 2,000,000 and not less than \$20 per day in counties with a population of 2,000,000 or more.

Qualifications: Citizens, of good repute and character; able to speak, read and write English, skilled in the four fundamental rules of arithmetic; of good understanding and capable, not candidates for any office and not be elected committeemen in the precinct and in each precinct, not more than one judge of each party may be appointed from outside such precinct but from within the county.

Training: The county clerk establishes a training course for judges of elections. The curriculum is approved by the county clerk. The State Board of Elections provides a manual of uniform instructions, prepared in consultation with representatives of the election authorities throughout the state. There are at least four hours of instruction and an exam testing reading skills, ability to work with poll lists, ability to add and knowledge of election laws.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Five election judges.

No-show poll workers: The judges present may appoint some other qualified elector having the same qualifications and who is affiliated with the same political party to serve in his place. If there are no judges present, the electors of the precinct may fill the places.

Indiana⁹⁴

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdictions.

Qualifications: Must be able to read, write, and speak English; cannot have any property bet on the result of the election; cannot be a candidate for election or a family member of a candidate; must attend training.

Training: State-mandated training requires training on accessibility requirements for the elderly and voters with disabilities and training on the voting systems used in

the county. The state provides an optional poll worker training curriculum, including training video and training manual. The state provides “Train the Trainer” workshops for election administrators of each county to assist counties in their training of poll workers. For each election new election protocol is taught, in addition to teaching training techniques and general election day requirements. These workshops are meant to model an ideal training class conducted on the county level. There is no minimum requirement for a number of hours of training.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Seven poll workers in most situations or at most nine per precinct. One inspector, two judges, two poll clerks (two assistant poll clerks, though they are not common) and two sheriffs. However, only three, the inspector and two judges are required.

No-show poll workers: An inspector who negligently or knowingly fails to appear at the county election board commits a Class D felony.

Iowa⁹⁵

Pay: \$3.50 per hour; however each county’s board of supervisors can set its own rate. The minimum right now is about \$4.50 per hour - many counties pay \$6-\$7 per hour and a few pay as much as \$10 per hour. Some counties pay by the day at a rate of \$120 per day for a regular official and \$140 per day for a chairperson of the precinct. Most counties pay their officials an additional \$10 for attending training, and they are also paid mileage at various rates, for attending the training and for working on election day.

Qualifications: The only state-mandated requirements are concerned with party affiliation for partisan elections. Poll workers are required to be trained prior to partisan elections and may be trained before all elections. Seventeen-year-olds may work at the polls as well. All other workers must be registered voters in the county in which they are working.

Training: Two-hour training is mandated prior to each partisan election. The secretary of state has partnered with county auditors and the Iowa State Association of Counties to launch an additional training program which includes three separate sessions for a total of 16 hours -

two 6-hour sessions on procedures, and one 4-hour session on voting equipment. Instructors from Iowa State University train on a county by county basis. Over 2,000 officials have been trained so far and more training sessions are scheduled throughout the remainder of 2007 and through 2008.

Number of poll workers per polling place: A minimum of three workers at each polling place, however it is up to the county commissioner to appoint as many additional workers as needed. In Presidential elections there may be as many as nine workers in the metro areas.

No-show poll workers: No state regulations.

Kansas⁹⁶

Pay: \$3 per hour minimum in areas where voting machines are not used and \$40 per day in areas where voting machines are used. The supervising judge can receive an additional \$2 an hour as well as mileage reimbursement. Local jurisdictions determine (and provide) additional pay.

Qualifications: Poll workers must be qualified electors and residents of the area where they serve.

Training: The county election officer is to “provide instruction for election board judges and clerks before each election.” The secretary of state provides a basic curriculum, but county election officers determine the final curriculum. The state training curriculum is developed in consultation with an education working group composed of county election officers. The secretary of state’s office has worked closely with county election officers to improve their training programs, first by proposing the law that requires them to train their poll workers and by developing a curriculum. Before passage of the law, poll worker training was optional. The law also requires county election officers to receive training from the secretary of state’s office. There is no minimum number of training hours required.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Determined by the county. It is supposed to be “three members or some greater number of members.” There may be as few as two members in precincts with fewer than 50 registered voters which are more than 10 miles from another polling place. Most election boards are three members.

No-show poll workers: State law authorizes the county election officer to maintain a pool of trained poll workers in case some appointed poll workers are not qualified or fail to report.

Kentucky⁹⁷

Pay: \$60 minimum per election served; mileage reimbursement for delivering election supplies to and from the polls; and a minimum of \$10 for attendance at the required training session.

Qualifications: Qualified registered voter. Candidates and their family members may not serve.

Training: Training is mandatory before each primary and general election. The State Board of Elections creates a precinct officer training guide customized for each election. State and local offices work together to produce these guides. Local jurisdictions may supplement this material. There is no minimum number of training hours required.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Four precinct officers. Up to two additional officers may be appointed if approved by the State Board of Elections.

No-show poll workers: Any person appointed to serve but whom knowingly and willfully fails to serve on election day or attend training and who is not excused is ineligible to serve as an election officer for five years.

Louisiana⁹⁸

Pay: \$250 for a trained commissioner-in-charge or \$300 if they work more than one precinct on election day; \$200 for commissioners with two training classes; \$100 for commissioners with one training class and \$35 for non-trained commissioners.

Qualifications: Qualified voter who is not entitled to assistance, not a candidate in the election nor an immediate family member of a candidate and not convicted of an election offense.

Training: State-mandated poll worker training. General areas covered by clerk of court and state provided training video and informational pamphlet that has a set curriculum. The secretary of state provides a printed informational pamphlet as required by law and provides hands-on training video. Local clerks of court who are responsible for training commissioners often provide

their own training materials to supplement the state's materials. Input received from the locals is usually incorporated into state materials. At least one hour of training is required for commissioners (two provides more pay) and two for commissioners-in-charge.
Number of poll workers per polling place: Two to four commissioners and one commissioner-in-charge per precinct depending on the type of election.
No-show poll workers: No state regulations.

Maine

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.⁹⁹
Qualifications: Registered voter who live in the municipality. The municipal officers may consider persons who are 17 to serve as student election clerks for a specific election.¹⁰⁰
Training: Municipal clerks must attend a training session that is approved by the secretary of state at least once every two years. The secretary of state offers training sessions regionally at least once every two years at no fee and encourages municipalities to provide training biennially to all election officials.¹⁰¹
Number of poll workers per polling place: At least two election clerks. Additional election clerks may be appointed as needed.¹⁰²
No-show poll workers: Municipal officers appoint alternate election clerks who can be called on.¹⁰³

Maryland¹⁰⁴

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.
Qualifications: Registered voter in the state, unless 17 years of age and would, but for the individual's age, be qualified to register to vote; must reside in county for which appointed, unless the appointing local board of elections is unable to find qualified individuals to serve. Speak, read, and write English.
Training: The State Board of Elections is required to develop a program of instruction for election judges. These include an instruction manual and other written directives, and training curriculum for each type of election judge. The election judges' manual is written in consultation with local election officials. Each election cycle, a committee is formed to review the manual and make the necessary changes and improvements. The

training curricula are based on the manual. Online poll worker training might be used for the 2010 elections. No minimum number of training hours. The curricula include an estimated time to complete the training: chief judges – 4 hours 20 minutes; check-in judge – 3 hours 15 minutes; provisional judges – 2 hours 30 minutes; voting unit judges – 3 hours 10 minutes.
Number of poll workers per polling place: With one exception, at least four judges assigned per precinct. If the precinct has fewer than 200 registered voters, there must be at least two judges.
No-show poll workers: No state regulations.

Massachusetts

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.¹⁰⁵
Qualifications: Registered voters.¹⁰⁶
Training: Not specified.
Number of poll workers per polling place: One warden, one deputy warden, one clerk, one deputy clerk, two inspectors and two deputy inspectors.¹⁰⁷
No-show poll workers: The city or town clerk may appoint a person to fill a vacancy from the same political party as the absent poll worker, if any competent person enrolled in such party is present and willing to serve.¹⁰⁸

Michigan

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.¹⁰⁹
Qualifications: Must be a qualified and registered elector of the county.¹¹⁰
Training: County clerks direct training.¹¹¹
Number of poll workers per polling place: At least three inspectors of election for each precinct.¹¹²
No-show poll workers: The electors present may choose, viva voce, such number of said electors as, with the inspector or inspectors present, which constitutes a board of three in number.¹¹³

Minnesota¹¹⁴

Pay: State-mandated minimum wage.
Qualifications: Eligible to vote in the state; affiliated with a major political party; able to read, write and speak English; trained and certified.
Training: Materials are provided to county auditors/municipal clerks who determine the training

plan. Secretary of state develops guides/materials through working groups with local officials and provides copies to county auditors/municipal clerks. Workers must complete a two hour training course every two years. (The head worker must complete an additional hour)

Number of poll workers per polling place: Minimum of three. In paper-ballot precincts, there must be one worker for every 150 voters who voted in the last general election. In optical-scan precincts that had over 400 voters in the last general election, must be a minimum of four workers.

No-show poll workers: The municipal clerk can fill vacancies as they occur. The other workers in the polling place may select a qualified person from the precinct to fill a vacancy.

Mississippi¹¹⁵

Pay: For training, no less than the federal hourly minimum wage; not to exceed \$10 per hour. Paid training for the first two hours; over two hours is not compensated. Poll workers are to be paid \$75 for an election, or after approval by the County's Board of Supervisors, an additional \$50 dollars per day.

Qualifications: Not specified.

Training: The appropriate election officials are responsible for conducting training sessions. The secretary of state's office, along with a focus group including circuit clerks and election commissioners, develops training materials. There is no required number of hours of training.

Number of poll workers per polling place: A minimum of three persons per precinct. Additional poll workers may be appointed depending on the number of registered voters per precinct.

No-show poll workers: The state requires the training of alternate poll workers to fill the vacancy of any poll worker who does show.

Missouri

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.¹¹⁶

Qualifications: Registered voter in the state; a person of good repute and character; able to speak, read, and write English.¹¹⁷

Training: Local election authorities establish training

courses which include substantially the curriculum developed by the secretary of state's office in accordance with HAVA.¹¹⁸

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least two judges from each major political party to serve at each polling place.¹¹⁹

No-show poll workers: The election authority or the election judges present appoint another judge from the same political party as the judge failing to act or to appear.¹²⁰

Montana¹²¹

Pay: At least the prevailing federal minimum wage. The chief election judge may be paid at a rate higher than the other election judges.

Qualifications: Registered electors of the county and of the precinct in which they serve, unless none can be found in the precinct. Cannot be a candidate or a spouse, ascendant, descendant, brother, or sister of a candidate or a candidate's spouse or the spouse of any of these in an election precinct where the candidate's name appears on the ballot. However, this does not apply to candidates for precinct offices.

Training: The exact curriculum is not specified in law, but election judge handbooks are provided by the state to all county election administrators. These are developed in consultation with county election officials, often incorporating their best practices. In precincts where voting systems are used, instructions must cover both how to operate the voting system and how to manually process any paper ballots. There is online training for voting systems equipped for people with disabilities, and a plan to increase this option in the future to include other trainings. No set amount of training hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: The county governing body appoints three or more election judges for each precinct, one of whom must be designated chief judge.

No-show poll workers: Spots are filled on an emergency basis. The election administrator may appoint a judge to replace an excused judge.

Nebraska¹²²

Pay: No less than the minimum wage, with some jobs paying more based on duties.

Qualifications: Be of good repute and character, able to read and write English, reside in the precinct unless necessity demands otherwise, be a registered voter unless serving as a 16 or 17-year-old youth poll worker able to serve for 2 years.

Training: Local election officials provide training to include instruction as required by the secretary of state. There is a set curriculum. Materials are developed in compliance with federal and state laws by members of the election division with assistance from a consultant and a poll worker focus group made up of nine local election officials from counties of varying size across the state. A required number of hours of training have not been set, but a minimum of three to four hours is anticipated. Online training resources are provided to the election official on a secured website. There is not online training available directly to the poll worker.

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least three judges and two clerks.

No-show poll workers: Unexcused absences may be prosecuted.

Nevada

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.¹²³

Qualifications: Registered voters not all of the same political party. No candidate for nomination or election or his relative within the second degree of consanguinity or affinity may be appointed as an election board officer.¹²⁴

Training: The county or city clerk shall conduct or cause to be conducted, at least five days before the date of the election for which the boards are appointed, a school to acquaint the chairmen with the election laws, duties of election boards, regulations of the secretary of state and with the procedure for making the records of election and using the register for election boards.¹²⁵

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least three.¹²⁶

No-show poll workers: If a vacancy occurs in any election board on the day of the election and no reserves are available, the election board may appoint, at the

polling place, any registered voter who is willing to serve and satisfies the election board that he possesses the qualifications required to perform the services required.¹²⁷

New Hampshire

Pay: No information available.

Qualifications: Registered to vote at the polling place where they serve.¹²⁸

Training: The secretary of state prepares an up-to-date manual on state election laws and procedures for conducting elections. The manual shall be distributed to each moderator, board of selectmen, city council, board of supervisors of the checklist, to each town, city and ward clerk.¹²⁹

Number of poll workers per polling place: Two inspectors. If the number of voters qualified to vote at a polling place exceeds 2,000, one additional inspector for each 1,500 qualified voters or fraction thereof in excess of 2,000 can be appointed.¹³⁰

No-show poll workers: There may be a designated list of alternates.¹³¹ If any of the appointed inspectors of election is absent, the selectmen shall appoint some person qualified, using the list of alternate appointees unless no person on said list is available.¹³²

New Jersey

Pay: \$200 per election.¹³³

Qualifications: Good moral character; not convicted of any crime involving moral turpitude; eyesight, with or without correction, sufficient to read nonpareil type; ability to read English; ability to add and subtract figures correctly; ability to write legibly; reasonable knowledge of the duties to be performed; health sufficient to discharge the duties as an election officer; U.S. citizen.¹³⁴

Training: The Attorney General establishes guidelines for the design of training manuals and designs, prepares and distributes training manuals for county boards of election and county clerks. The county board of elections designs, prepares and distributes training manuals for district board members, pursuant to guidelines established by the Attorney General. All district board members are required to attend instructional sessions at least once every two years.¹³⁵

Numbers of poll workers per polling place: The

district boards in each election district consist of four members, except that where electronic voting systems are in use any election district in which there is more than 900 registered voters the district board shall consist of six members.¹³⁶

No-show poll workers: Not specified.

New Mexico¹³⁷

Pay: No less than the federal minimum hourly wage rate and not more than \$150 for an election day.

Qualifications: Resident of the district and county; able to read and write; have capacity to carry out functions with acceptable skill and execute the oath of office. Must receive training and cannot be a candidate or family member of a candidate.

Training: The secretary of state may supervise and the county clerk holds a public school of instruction for poll workers. All details of the conduct of elections shall be covered. The secretary of state shall provide instructions for the precinct board and a single training manual containing guidelines for statewide elections.

Number of poll workers per polling place: One voting machine in use - a presiding judge, two election judges of different parties and one election clerk of a different party than the presiding judge. Two voting machines in use - a presiding judge, two election judges of different parties and two election clerks of different parties. Three voting machines in use - a presiding judge, two election judges of different parties and three election clerks, not more than two of whom belong to the same party. The county clerk may appoint such election clerks as deemed necessary.

No-show poll workers: Presiding judge vacancy - remaining board members fill with election judge. Election judge vacancy - presiding judge appoints an election clerk of a different party (or a voter if no clerk of a different party). Election clerk vacancy - presiding judge appoints any voter of the precinct of a different party than the remaining election clerk. No vacancy will prevent the remaining board members from proceeding to open the polls and conducting the election.

New York¹³⁸

Pay: \$25 minimum for training. \$75 to \$325 per election as set by county boards of elections.

Qualifications: Registered voter, live in county or New York City, certified by county has met training requirements and not an office holder, candidate or spouse, child or parent of such candidate.

Training: State Board creates core curriculum for use by county boards. County boards committee involved in development of core curriculum and can augment for local procedures or format. A vendor has been selected to develop online poll worker training. The state has not chosen new voting systems yet and there may be multiple systems in use. Training materials will be developed with that in mind and with the expectation of completion by September '08. No set number of training hours, but must train every year.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Four inspectors per election district, two from each major party. Additional required at site if more than one machine.

No-show poll workers: There are emergency provisions in law.

North Carolina¹³⁹

Pay: The state minimum wage. However, counties can pay more. Precincts officials get \$15 for attending instructional meetings. If the county board of elections requests the presence of a chief judge or judge at the county canvass, the chief judge shall be paid the sum of \$20 per day and judges shall be paid the sum of \$15 per day. However, counties may pay higher than the minimum amounts set in the general statutes.

Qualifications: Registered voters, residents of precinct, have good moral character, and able to read and write. No candidates for nomination or election or officeholders.

Training: The county boards of elections conduct training. Training materials are derived from state law and State Board of Elections (SBE) precinct uniformity materials. The SBE is implementing the North Carolina Precinct Official Certification Program, an elective course, in conjunction with the North Carolina Community College system. The program is designed to

help instructors and precinct elections officials gain an in-depth understanding of the election process. The goal is to have at least one certified precinct official in every polling place in the state and to develop online poll worker training. The number of training hours that poll workers receive varies by county. Most of the counties train their poll workers between 4-6 hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Three judges are assigned to each precinct: One chief judge and two judges. Counties can determine the number of assistants to assist judges.

No-show poll workers: The precinct judges of elections can appoint another to act as chief judge until such time as the chairman of the county board of elections shall appoint an individual to fill the vacancy. Each county board of elections by unanimous vote is authorized to appoint any qualified registered voter in the county as emergency election-day assistant.

North Dakota¹⁴⁰

Pay: No less than the minimum wage.

Qualifications: Has attended poll-worker training.

Training: The secretary of state's office is required to provide the election officials manual from which the training is based. The secretary of state's office develops printed, video and web-based materials for use in training. Online training is being developed in conjunction with the counties. The length of the training sessions is determined by the county.

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least two clerks, two judges and one inspector.

No-show poll workers: Poll workers are asked to select replacements from the voters.

Ohio¹⁴¹

Pay: Not less than the federal minimum wage; not more than \$95 per day. Local jurisdictions determine pay for training and elections.

Qualifications: No felony conviction or violation of the election law, must be able to read and write English readily, no candidates for office in the precinct. Each elector serving as a poll worker shall complete a program of instruction.

Training: State-required training with curriculum

determined by local authority. State reviews materials developed by county boards of elections upon request. Some county boards of election provide online training. Each county board of elections determines the length of the training session.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Four per precinct, board of elections can name more.

No-show poll workers: The presiding judge with the concurrence of the majority of poll workers can appoint an elector to fill the vacancy until the board of elections appoints another person.

Oklahoma¹⁴²

Pay: \$95 per election day for inspectors; \$85 per election day for other poll workers. The inspector is also paid mileage; all poll workers are paid mileage if they live more than ten miles from the polling place. All poll workers are paid \$25 plus mileage to attend training.

Qualifications: Registered voters in the county and demonstrated competence to perform duties. The judge and the clerk must be of different political parties.

Training: Must train once every two years. The State Election Board designs the training program and produces and distributes all the training materials and also provides instructor training for all county officials who conduct training. A group of trained instructors provides all poll worker training. In some counties, county officials train their own poll workers; in others, a trained instructor from a neighboring county provides training. There is a set curriculum, but county officials have some flexibility to adapt it to their own circumstances. County officials, both trained poll worker instructors and others, provide frequent suggestions for design of the training program materials. The State Election Board is currently exploring online training for county election board officials. Local instructors are now required to attend a more extensive two-day training program before they can conduct training in their own counties or in other counties. Poll worker training lasts approximately three hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Three – an inspector, a judge and a clerk. In larger precincts, the County Election Board may assign more than three poll workers.

No-show poll workers: Not specified in state law. However, all county election boards have trained substitutes who are available on short notice. It is rare that a polling place has fewer than the required three poll workers for more than a short time.

Oregon

Note: The state conducts elections by mail and does not have local precincts, significantly reducing requirements for poll workers.

Pay: Not less than the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is higher.¹⁴³

Qualifications: An elector of the county, able to read, write and speak English and may not serve in an electoral district where they are a candidate for most offices. Family members of a candidate cannot serve at a precinct where the candidate may be voted on; shall have the necessary capacity and ability to carry out functions with sufficient skill and dispatch.¹⁴⁴

Training: At least every two years the county clerk instructs the board clerks concerning the proper election and voting procedures to be followed by them. The county clerk's advice and instruction conforms to applicable rules, directives and instructions of the secretary of state. The secretary of state may require a county clerk to conduct an additional meeting.¹⁴⁵

Number of poll workers per polling place: The day board which issues ballots – three or more clerks. The counting board to count ballots - four or more clerks.¹⁴⁶

No-show poll workers: No information available.

Pennsylvania¹⁴⁷

Pay: \$75 to \$200 for election judges; \$75 to \$195 for inspectors; \$70 to \$195 for clerks and machine operators. For transmitting returns of primaries and elections and the ballot box or boxes, all judges receive \$20. County boards of election can pay more for training and instruction.

Qualifications: Registered electors of the election district. Cannot hold office or be a candidate.

Training: The training is offered to the counties on request and voluntary basis. State training materials were developed with input from county election personnel. Many counties rely upon training materials they have

developed, which are more specific to the county. The Department of State (DOS) is considering developing a web-based training module that can be used by county election officials. DOS will produce a training video, expected completion in December of 2007. The extent of the training is within the discretion of the county board of elections.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Minimum of three poll workers required - judge of elections, minority inspector of elections and the majority inspector of elections.

No-show poll workers: No specific provisions but there are general provisions relating to failure or refusal to carry out their duties. It is unclear whether these provisions would apply to an election officer who simply fails to show up.

Rhode Island¹⁴⁸

Pay: Minimum \$60 for election day and \$25 for training.

Qualifications: Registered voter, able to read and write English, and not an incarcerated felon or on probation or parole.

Training: The State Board of Elections conducts the training and everything concerning operating the polling place and election laws is covered and develops training materials. Input is taken from local jurisdictions on content and ways to improve the material. Two to three is the standard class duration. There is no required minimum duration.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Six

No-show poll workers: Regulations are in development.

South Carolina¹⁴⁹

Pay: Poll managers - \$60 for election day plus \$60 for training. Clerks receive an additional day's pay at \$60 for a total of \$180. Some counties elect to supplement pay.

Qualifications: Must be residents, registered electors in county or adjoining county. Poll managers must complete training. One 16 or 17-year-old poll manager's assistant, who has completed training, may be appointed for every two regular poll managers. Poll managers must take an oath.

Training: Poll-worker training mandated by the state. State law requires the State Election Commission to

approve the training program, but it is carried out by the county election commissions. Training materials are always being amended and improved using input from local and state election officials. Hours of training not set by law, but typically takes two to three hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: General elections/primaries: Three managers for first 500 registered voters, three additional poll managers for every 500 registered voters, or fraction of 500, thereafter.

Special/municipal elections: Three managers for the first 500 registered voters, one additional poll manager for every 500 registered voters, or fraction of 500, thereafter.

No-show poll workers: The voters present can appoint from among the qualified voters.

South Dakota¹⁵⁰

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.

Qualifications: Registered voters and residents of precinct.

Training: Each county auditor, assisted by the state's attorney, calls together the superintendents from each precinct and instructs them on election laws and duties. The state puts together an election training that can be used - or they can develop their own training materials. There is no state-mandated curriculum. The person in charge of the election sets the curriculum. The secretary of state's office trained about a quarter of the poll workers in the state. Number of hours of training is not set in statute.

Number of poll workers per polling place: A minimum of three. Two or four additional precinct deputies may be appointed.

No-show poll workers: Filled by the voters of the precinct at the polling place.

Tennessee¹⁵¹

Pay: \$15 minimum. Those attending an instruction school receive an additional \$10. State law allows the county legislative body to increase pay.

Qualifications: Registered voter of county and must live in the state house legislative district.

Training: County election commissions must instruct election officials. They set the curriculum based upon election day duties. The coordinator of elections must

conduct a training seminar for administrators, deputies and county election commissioners at least once a year. At this training outlines, manuals and reports are reviewed with county election commission staff members. County election commission offices then train election day officials. On occasion, the local jurisdictions have had some input in the subjects to be reviewed at the annual training seminar. The statute does not require a minimum number of hours for the instruction school.

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least four - an officer of elections and three judges.

No-show poll workers: Chair of county election commission must furnish the first grand jury sitting in the county after an election the names of all appointed election officials who failed to serve in the election and who did not notify the commission in advance that they could not serve.

Texas¹⁵²

Pay: At least the federal hourly minimum wage. Beyond that pay is determined by the political subdivision holding the election, except primary elections where the amount is based on appropriations from the state legislative body.

Qualifications: Registered voter of precinct. Those ineligible include: candidates, persons related to opposed candidates, employees of candidates or under candidate's supervision, holders of elected offices, campaign managers and treasurers, and persons convicted of election offenses.

Training: State law requires the county to provide training. The secretary of state's office has developed written materials, developed internally by secretary of state personnel, and online training which it makes available. Included with written materials is a suggested curriculum for in-person training session. Online training materials were developed by a private firm in consultation with the secretary of state and a group of county clerks/election administrators. Election judges, clerks, county officials gave feedback during the development of online training. The state has always created handbooks and videos for use in local training. There is no set amount of time mandated for election worker training.

Number of poll workers per polling place: One election judge and two clerks per polling place, with one of the clerks serving as an alternate judge.

No-show poll workers: No state law addressing this.

Utah¹⁵³

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction.

Qualifications: Registered voters in county. Those who are 17 may be also poll workers if they will be 18 by the general election date.

Training: No state-mandated poll worker training. County clerks develop their own training materials. Individual county clerks may have minimum training requirements, however they are usually more worried about getting enough poll workers to show up. No state-mandated requirements for number of training hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least three. The minimum number may be higher depending upon the type and size of jurisdiction, the ballot media, and the counting method.

No-show poll workers: County clerks may appoint replacement poll workers.

Vermont¹⁵⁴

Pay: Not specified. Determined by jurisdiction; some election workers are unpaid volunteers, others receive state minimum wage or a stipend per election day or per training meeting.

Qualifications: No state-mandated poll-worker qualifications.

Training: State law requires each presiding officer attend training sponsored by the secretary of state. The election director generally conducts from 12 to 18 training sessions across the state every election year and averages about 90 to 100 attendees per training. An elections procedures manual is updated every election year which is distributed to each town. It details procedures for elections and contains appendices of most forms that will be used. Materials are developed by our elections division with feedback from town clerks. No state-mandated requirements for number of training hours.

Number of poll workers per polling place: No minimum.

No-show poll workers: No state regulations about this scenario. This has not been an issue.

Virginia

Pay: \$75 for election day, plus \$10 for delivery of election materials as state minimum. Jurisdictions can elect to pay more.¹⁵⁵

Qualifications: If practicable, qualified voter of precinct, but at least a qualified voter of the state.¹⁵⁶

Training: The electoral board instructs each chief officer and assistant in duties not less than three nor more than 30 days before each election. Each electoral board can instruct each officer of election in his duties at an appropriate time or times before each November general election.¹⁵⁷

Number of poll workers per polling place: Not less than three.¹⁵⁸

No-show poll workers: The remaining officers can appoint a substitute officer of election.¹⁵⁹

Washington¹⁶⁰

Note: Most counties conduct elections by mail, significantly reducing the need for poll workers.

Pay: At least minimum wage. Paid for both training and election day. Inspectors (the person in charge) are given an additional two hours of pay for that responsibility.

Qualifications: No state-mandated qualifications other than the major parties appoint them and the county auditor may reject names of poll workers who “lack the ability to conduct properly the duties of an inspector or judge of election.”

Training: The state is not involved in poll worker training. It is mandatory and entirely done at the county level. County auditors may waive training for individual poll workers. It is up to each county auditor to determine the length of training needed.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Three poll workers, one inspector and two judges are mandated. Additional clerks can be added.

No-show poll workers: No state regulations.

West Virginia¹⁶¹

Pay: \$125 maximum for one day's services for attending training if the commissioner or poll clerk provides at least one day's service during an election and a sum not exceeding \$175 for his or her services at any one election.¹⁶²

Qualifications: Must be a registered voter of county or municipality; able to read and write English; may not be a candidate on the ballot or parent, child, sibling or spouse of a candidate on the ballot; may not be prohibited from serving as an election official pursuant to any other federal or state statute; and may not have been previously convicted of a violation of any election law.¹⁶³

Training: Secretary of state puts forth training that explains election procedures to conduct, election official duties and the method of voting on each system used. Training materials are developed at state level with local jurisdiction feedback. The state is currently developing a program that uses more technology to enhance training that will assist poll workers in retaining more knowledge and providing a more accessible method of training all poll workers in the state.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Five

No-show poll workers: Alternates are designated, trained, and paid to be available.

Wisconsin¹⁶⁴

Pay: No state-mandated minimum. Only mandates a daily rate or hourly rate. The appropriate governing body decides the pay including pay for attending training sessions. The Wisconsin Towns Association recommends poll workers be paid at least the state minimum wage.

Qualifications: Must be qualified electors of the ward; able to read and write English; be capable, be of good understanding, and may not be a candidate to be voted for at an election at which they serve. All election workers must view or attend at least one training every two years.

Training: Chief election inspectors must attend an initial "Baseline" course conducted by the State Elections Board (SEB) or certified training partner. All other poll workers must view or attend at least one training every two years provided by the municipal clerk. The SEB is currently promulgating rules detailing contents of training municipal clerks must provide. State

training materials are developed by SEB staff.

Consultation with local election officials and voter advocacy groups is routinely sought in development of materials. The SEB is currently working on developing online training modules to provide training for local election officials and poll workers. Six hours of training are required during a two-year cycle to retain certification.

Number of poll workers per polling place: Seven election inspectors. Municipalities that use voting machines, the governing body may reduce the number to five. The governing body may reduce the number of inspectors by resolution but no action may reduce the number of officials to less than three. The number of inspectors may be increased; the total must be an odd number.

No-show poll workers: State law provides for exceptions for training requirements and residency requirements in cases of emergency.

Wyoming¹⁶⁵

Pay: At least state minimum wage. Determined by jurisdiction.

Qualifications: Registered electors; physically, morally and mentally competent to perform their duties. The county clerk may appoint persons who are at least 16 years of age.

Training: The county clerk under the direction of the secretary of state and the county attorney conducts a training school for judges of election and members of counting boards. The training school, which is also open to the public and the secretary of state shall prescribe the minimum curriculum for the school. Additional schools may be held at the discretion of the county clerk. All judges and members of the counting board shall be paid not less than \$5 nor more than \$25 for attending a school.

Hours of training required: No state-mandated regulations.

Number of poll workers per polling place: At least three judges.

No-show poll workers: The vacancy shall be filled by a registered elector appointed by those judges present at the precinct polling place when the vacancy occurs.

Methodology/Endnotes

Research was compiled through the use of primary and secondary sources including an email survey of state election officials, interviews with state and local election officials, reports from government and non-governmental organizations and news accounts.

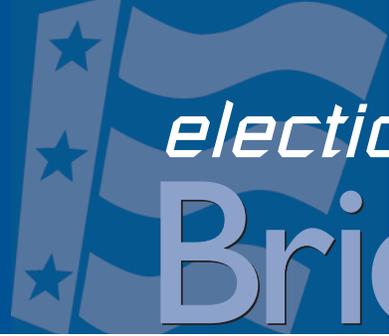
All sources are cited below in the endnotes.

The opinions expressed by election officials, lawmakers and other interested parties in this document do not reflect the views of nonpartisan, non-advocacy electionline.org or The Pew Charitable Trusts.

All questions concerning research should be directed to Sean Greene, project manager, research at sgreene@electionline.org.

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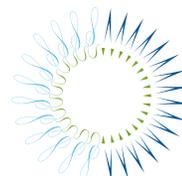
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