

## Summary of Survey of County Election Administrators on Identification and Provisional Voting in General Election 2004

*Prepared by the Office of the Secretary of State*

### *Summary of Survey Results on ID Process:*

- Nearly all counties said that the ID process went well. Typical positive comments included: "it went very well, no problems," "no complaints were heard," "my electors are very responsive to the ID requirement," "people are used to providing ID," "the voters had their ID ready to show to the judges, it was very efficient."

Typical concerns were mild, generally involving voters who were reluctant to show ID rather than those who did not have ID, and included the following: "remarks were made but they had their ID," "my judges only mentioned a few who made comments," "one person refused to show ID and voted provisionally," "we had one person who refused to show ID, out of 2349 electors, and left without voting." The most negative response was the following: "there was a lot of complaining but voters – 99.8% – brought ID."

- Election administrators had mostly positive comments in regard to the Motor Vehicle Division services, including both their verification of people who claimed to have registered to vote at the MVD, and their verification of the driver's license number or last four digits of Social Security number provided by people who forgot to bring ID to the polls (a.k.a., the Voter Verification Service.) They did indicate that at times the Motor Vehicle Division phone numbers were busy for lengthy periods of time, but that when they got ahold of MVD staff they were pleasant and helpful. The Voter Verification Service reportedly worked well.
- According to the survey, very few people who had identification and/or registration issues left the polls without voting and without later returning. These included about 50 people statewide, of whom 30 were from one county – and most of these latter left due to not being registered to vote.

## *Summary of Survey Results on Provisional Ballot Process:*

- There were about 668 total ballots voted provisionally, although counties varied in whether they included provisional absentee ballots in this total. Provisional absentee ballots may have accounted for about 50 to 100 additional provisional ballots, resulting in an estimate of about 750 total provisional ballots cast. The number of provisional ballots resolved by the close of polls was reported as 71. In almost all cases these were counted as regular ballots on election night.

Election administrators reported that the most common cause of voting provisionally was that the person was not on the register. A large percentage of the people not on the register claimed to be registered to vote through the Motor Vehicle Division. (Oftentimes the MVD verified on election day that the person registered through MVD; for some reason the registration card did not reach the county, but the provisional ballot was counted following verification through MVD.)

Other common reasons for voting provisionally included not signing the absentee affirmation envelope, as well as showing up at the polls to vote despite appearing on the list of people who requested and were sent an absentee ballot. About 50 of the total of about 750 provisional ballots were cast due to ID issues; this means that 1/100 of a percent of voters voted provisionally due to ID, or 1 out of every 10,000 voters. The number of ID provisionals includes about 15-20 people who did not include ID with their absentee ballots, despite written instructions and a form mailed with their ballots that they were supposed to complete and include with their ballot.

According to the survey, 34 of the total of about 50 provisional ballots voted for ID reasons were not counted. However, ten of these were in Yellowstone County, all of which were absentee voters who did not return the enclosed ID card and did not respond to contact from the elections office; ten of them were from Lewis and Clark County and ten were from Roosevelt County. Almost all voters who cast provisional ballots for ID reasons, and whose ballots were not counted, did not respond despite election administrator attempts to contact them before the deadline to provide ID.

- Nearly all counties contacted voters by mail, in person, or by telephone to let them know whether their provisional ballots were counted. For the most part, counties that did not contact them chose not to do so because voters were already informed at the polling place at the time the provisional ballot was resolved and counted.
- Most counties had positive comments about the provisional ballot process. Some questioned what they saw as lack of voter responsibility, and noted that some voters showed up and voted provisionally even though they were not registered or were in the wrong precinct. According to the survey, some election judges had trouble understanding the process, but the election administrators just saw the need for more training. Election administrators appreciated that the process allowed them to count the votes of people who were mistakenly left off the register.