

## **Help American Vote Act State Planning Committee Meeting July 27, 2006**

Dr. Jim Weatherby called the meeting to order. Those in attendance were Ben Ysursa, Tim Hurst, Jim Mairs and Lisa Powers from the Secretary of State Office; Elinor Chehey from the League of Women Voters; Sharon Widner from Washington County; Dan English from Kootenai County; Dave Navarro and Chris Rich from Ada County, Noel Hales from Canyon County and Emil Drazayich Jr. with Computer Arts. Minutes from the February 9, 2006 minutes were approved.

### **Statewide Voter Registration System-Progress to date**

Jim Mairs reported that the statewide voter system had to be in place for the primary election to meet federal requirements and that deadline was met. The day before the primary election there was a slow down with the network with ITD. The servers are being updated to fix the problem.

### **Accessible Voting Device-Progress to date**

Jim reported that the federal mandate of having one accessible voting machine in every voting place has been met. Approximately 3,000 ballots were cast statewide on the AutoMARK machine. It has been estimated that out of the 3,000 ballots cast, 2,000 were election and poll workers. There were a number of contributing factors that caused some machines not to work properly. The main factors were:

- Quality control on the ballot printing by ES&S. We have assurance of improvements in quality control and that the printing process is going to be much better.
- Testing procedures were not clear in instructing how to test. The procedures are being re-written by ES&S.
- Original Unity training for ballot entry was not adequate. There have since been multiple telephone conference training courses throughout the month that clerks and personnel could enter as many times and at their convenience.
- Single point of contact has been a problem. ES&S went through a lot of personnel changes.
- Some of the training didn't have anything to do with Idaho. Material is now being printed for Idaho specific training.

## **Voter Education Campaign**

Jim Mairs reported that \$38,500 has been spent on the Voter Education Campaign. Advertisements were on statewide cable television, statewide bilingual radio, billboards and broadcast stations. Also, 4,000 letters were distributed through the Talking Book Program from the State Library. It has been very successful and we have received a lot of positive feedback. We will continue to use the “Determined To Vote” slogan. It has been noted that it’s very difficult to reach northern Idaho. The available spots on billboards were hard to secure. Also to help with promoting, Idahovotes.gov has a public relations kit for County Clerks to try to make their jobs easier for getting information out to the public and make the public aware of accessible voting.

Tim pointed out that part of the campaign was to put a “Polling Place Locator” on the website that allowed people to enter an address and find out where their polling place was. There were approximately 35,000 hits on the page. It was probably used more than that, because some counties left the page open and accessed it throughout the day. We are looking at options to provide a registration look-up program for voters through the IdahoVoters.com web-site.

Dan English commented that he had mixed reactions on the AutoMARK. Some of the disabled people were very happy, but many got frustrated and asked if they could just do it the old way. Jim said that many voting places experienced the same reaction. The personality of the people at the polling place made a huge difference in the success. In the future, he is hopeful that more people will be using the AutoMARK.

## **Preparation for the General Election**

Preparation for General Election is underway. This year there is a lot to do to get ready. Unity on-line preparation is ongoing. Many counties are already done, except for the amendments, propositions and advisory vote. One concern is, unlike the primary where elections are spread out, everyone has the general election on the same day. This makes it especially difficult for technical support from ES&S. Most counties will have two ballot pages this year, one with candidates and the other containing the measures.

## **Unity Online Ballot Preparation-progress to date**

Jim reported that Unity Online training has improved. There needs to be improvement on the physical security procedures for the ballot marking device. There needs to be an audit log of chain of custody, who touches and does what with the flash cards. We need to have input from counties on finding ways to make sure it’s secure, but not taking so much of the clerks’ time to accomplish the goals. It takes a lot of time and manpower to test the machines, but they have to be tested. Chris Rich talked about how troublesome

the whole testing procedure is and said that it is impossible to test every machine; it takes too much time and manpower. Tim said that it is certainly a concern, but every machine has to be tested. ES&S will be here in August and will do testing on every machine. He realizes that testing is time consuming and takes a lot of resources, but they have to be tested. Jim said that we are looking for ways to make testing more efficient.

Ben stated that the State of Idaho is picking up costs above and beyond what other states are doing for their counties. He asked Jim to look into what other states are doing for some of their larger counties. He would like the view point of the clerks to see if they feel like their state is picking up enough of the costs with the HAVA money.

Other concerns were expressed by Dan English about the storage of the AutoMark machines and the setting up. The clerks have to hire extra people to set up the machines because the election people are busy with other aspects of the election. They were able to test every machine in Kootenai County before the primary election, but not sure if they would be able to in the future.

### **HHS Grants-Project Vote-update**

Jim said we received another \$100,000 for improvements to access voting places. During the primary election, we received no reports of problems of accessing polling places.

The biggest portion of the money granted so far this year is going to Project Vote. The original proposal was to develop seven Idaho regional training teams that would provide education for the elderly and people with disabilities. Phase I is complete and they have more trainings to complete before the general election. They have been in many locations throughout the state. They have created a Voter Education Manual which focuses on teaching people with diverse learning styles and disabilities about participating in the electoral process. Team 6 that worked in Pocatello was able to provide transportation in cooperation with the bus system to people with disabilities to the polls for the primary and general elections. This was a very special thing that was accomplished.

The most valuable thing happening with Project Vote, is that there is now a network and it's working. They have done a really good job.

Dan English said they have some rural Grange Halls that are looking at improving their wheelchair ramps. Jim said that some communities are pulling together to get their improvements done because it's an improvement to the community.

### **The Democracy Fund-update**

Tim handed out a spreadsheet for the Democracy Fund showing revenue and expenditures as of the end of the fiscal year. We still have 13 million dollars in the Democracy Fund, \$4.5 million is owed to ES&S for the ballot marking device. \$6.3 million has been allocated to the grant program. Title I goes towards election

administration improvements, Title II goes towards meeting federal requirements and HHS is for disability access.

Tim also handed a spread sheet on the Democracy Fund showing individual state grant amount, county match requirement, match money, total paid out and amount available. Grant amount set aside is \$6.3 million and the match requirement is \$1.5 million. Each county has been designated an amount according to population. Payette County bought an optical scan system. Power County bought precinct equipment. Dan English asked if there was an expiration date for the use of the money. Tim said that there is no expiration date on the money that has been set aside.

### **Other business from members of the committee**

Ben said that there will be an advisory vote on the ballot. We will know for sure August 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup>. Democrats may have a withdrawal for their candidate against Treasurer Ron Crane. Hopefully they will do something quickly. There is going to be a big ballot this election and there is a fine line between getting it ready too early and then having some late change and having extra costs. There are a lot of deadlines to make. The Voter's Pamphlet will be going out the end of September or first part of October to approximately 600,000 households. There will be information on the constitutional amendments and advisory vote and possibly information on the AutoMARK. Constitutional amendments will have to be published in the newspaper three times. There will be a lot of voter education efforts on the measures. There will be no information on the candidates published in the pamphlet.

Dan English said that he is proposing legislation for a "County Optional Vote by Mail System". The idea is that any county election could be an all mail election and would be similar to Oregon. About two weeks before the election, everyone who is registered would receive a ballot. There would still be a few polling sites open on Election Day for those people who would like to vote the traditional way and for same day registrations. Eventually he would also like to be able to do something to expand the Voter's Guide to include candidate information. He said that he has gotten a lot of support and positive feed back from the public.

Dan also stated that he would like the cut off date for any changes to the ballot much earlier than it is now. Ben stated that the withdrawal deadline has already been pushed back. Before, it was all the way up to two weeks before the election. There is a concern about what would happen if someone dies. Luckily it hasn't happened yet.

Ben complimented Dan on the work he has done for the legislation on the vote by mail. There is talk about the possibility of a closed primary.

Elinor said that the League of Women Voters are for anything that increases voter turnout and Oregon certainly has a better voter turn out than Idaho.

The meeting was adjourned.