BEST PRACTICES IN ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Montana Election Administrators
Best Practices Planning for 2014

Secretary of State Linda McCulloch
Elections and Government Services
2014 Election Official Certification Training
– February 2014 –
We Rock!

- Yes, everyone in this room rocks. We value the PROCESS of running elections; rather than the politics of elections.
- One of the things we love most about election administration is the way we work together to find ways to solve issues.
- There may be 56 slightly different ways to do things, but we are ONE when it counts – making Montana elections fair, accessible, and accurate.
What are some common election administration challenges?

1. Resources
2. Ballot inaccuracies
3. Tabulator/counting issues
4. Ballot shortages
5. Poll worker knowledge
6. Lines for voting
7. Lines for late registration
8. Communication
9. Emergency/contingency planning
10. Signature gatherers at polls (primary)
11. Poll watchers/observers
Speaking of solving things together – let’s start now!
2014 Best Practices Planning

• Resources
  – 13-2-117. County governing body to provide election administrator with sufficient help. The county governing body must provide the election administrator with sufficient help for the duties imposed by this title. The cost of stationery, printing, publishing, and posting is a proper charge against the county.
2014 Best Practices Planning

- **Resources**
  - **Resources needed:** people, equipment such as precinct scanners, computers, voting booths
  - **Work out a resource plan early** (budget, allocation of equipment, staffing, etc.)
  - **Assign precinct scanners where most needed**
  - **Have enough voting booths to accommodate voters**
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- **Ballot Inaccuracies**
  - Have a ballot proofing plan
    - Use the sample checklist
  - Make no verbal modifications to printing and programming vendor for your ballots
  - Check and double-check
  - Have more than one person proofing
  - As soon as printed ballots arrive – proof and test with equipment!
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• Tabulator/Counting Issues
  – Have a tech on site
  – Have phone numbers for equipment vendor handy
  – Address the problem quickly so that you do not lose valuable time
  – Improvise
    • Get a different machine?
    • As a last resort – can you hand count?
      – Whatever you do, be up front, keep the media and public informed, be accessible
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• Ballot Shortages

*Do not run out of ballots!*
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- Poll Worker Knowledge
  - Poll worker training is critical to the success of any election
  - Poll workers who are not knowledgeable can wreak havoc on the democratic process, including on citizens’ constitutional rights
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• Poll Workers
  – Recruit poll workers from other county or city offices
    • These workers can provide valuable professional assistance and a high level of problem-solving skills
  – Schedule poll workers in shifts if necessary so that fatigue does not affect the accuracy of the election
  – Have backup workers scheduled to come in late night/early morning if necessary
    • Make backup workers part of your contingency plan!
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- **Lines for Voting**
  - Troubleshoot registration issues before voters get in line
    - **Use My Voter Page** — have helpers with laptops, notebooks, or other mobile devices looking up people’s information and directing them to appropriate area
    - **Have a “check-in” table or informational area**
    - **Have people filling out appropriate paperwork while they are in line**
    - **Use color-coding when possible** (pink card means you go to provisional table, yellow new late registrant, green transfer late registrant etc.)
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• **Lines for Late Registration**
  – Make sure late registrants have a clearly marked separate line from registered voters;
  – Have greeters and good signage

This line is for not registered or changing registration only!
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• Lines for Late Registration
  – Have enough computers/workers to handle late registrants
  – After 4 election cycles of late registration, an estimation of the number of late registrants is not hard to come up with ahead of time

Recruit office/counter space from other offices/depts. (General election day is a holiday)
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• Lines for Late Registration
  – Analyze the late registration pattern for your county
  – Statewide election day registration numbers:

  2006 → 4301
  2008 → 7547
  2010 → 3735
  2012 → 8053
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- **Communication**
  - Have a designated person in charge of communication:
    - At the polls
    - At the counting center
    - At the election office and/or late registration location
  - Communication between the election office and poll workers is crucial – have a phone number specifically for poll workers to call
  - The EA or a designee should be accessible on election day (and in the days after election day) to the media, candidates and the SOS 😊
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- Emergency/Contingency Planning
  - HAVE A PLAN!
  - Plan should include:
    - Contact information and phone numbers for crucial services such as internet, phone, power
    - Plan for weather-related emergencies (pssst.....November in Montana can mean SNOW!)
    - Plan for health-related emergencies such as an influenza pandemic
    - Plan for unanticipated poll worker shortages
    - Plan for supply problems including ballot shortages
    - Plan a chain of command for the election office
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• Signature Gatherers (primary)
  – Set up area for signature gatherers well ahead of election day
  – Base the set up on the size and configuration of the polling place and the number of groups requesting access
  – Make sure the set up is reasonable, fairly applied and documented!
  – Train poll workers to collect the names of anyone collecting signatures, and the issue for which they are collecting signatures in case you have to follow-up with sponsors
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• Poll Watchers/Observers
  – Review the NEW Poll Watchers/Election Observers Guide
  • Establish security protocol including using sign-in sheets and identification badges
    – If necessary, restrict items observers may bring into the polling place such as cell phones, large bags, backpacks, etc.
    – If cell phones are allowed, require that they be used outside the polling place
  • Have designated workers to interact with poll watchers/observers, answering their questions, etc.
    – The Security, Integrity and Accuracy of the election should be protected above all else!
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- Some Best Practices from our election administrator panel
  - Vickie Zeier
    - Late registration lines, voting lines, resource distribution, communication
  - Glenda Hall
    - Contingency plans
  - Bret Rutherford
    - Ballot proofing/testing
  - Charlotte Mills
    - Handling signature gatherers/poll watchers/observers
  - Paulette DeHart
    - Ballot reconciliation processes