

Election Procedures Review
Of
King County
State of Washington
2006 General Election



Conducted by the
Office of the Secretary of State
Election Certification and Training Program



Introduction

The Washington State Legislature enacted legislation in 1992 mandating that the Office of the Secretary of State review county election procedures and practices. The Election Certification and Training Program was established within the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State to conduct reviews and to provide for the certification of election administrators. In 2005, the Legislature expanded the Election Certification and Training Program to require that each County Auditor's Office be reviewed at least once every three years. They also added a requirement for the Program to conduct a follow-up visit to verify the county has taken the steps they listed to correct the problems noted in the report.

The election review process is governed by RCW 29A.04.510 through 29A.04.590 and Chapter 434-260 of the Washington Administrative Code. Reviews are conducted at regular intervals in conjunction with a county primary, special or general election, at the direction of the Secretary of State.

Pursuant to RCW 29A.04.570(1)(b), the Election Certification and Training Program conducted an election review in King County during the 2006 General Election cycle. Sheryl Moss, Program Manager; Tracy Buckles, Program Specialist; and Pam Floyd, Assistant Director of Elections represented the Election Certification and Training Program during the review. Jim Buck, acting King County Records, Elections, and Licensing Director; Sherril Huff-Menees, acting Superintendent of Elections, and other members of the staff participated on behalf of the King County Elections Division.

King County allowed the reviewer to thoroughly review and examine all aspects of the election processes. The county provided documentation and materials during the review which greatly contributed to a successful examination process.

Both the reviewer and the King County Elections Division approached the review in a spirit of cooperation. The State commends the King County Elections Division for its organization and preparation in making the review process a positive and useful experience.

Contents of this report are based on observations of election practices and procedures and on interviews with county election personnel. The reviewer obtained information based on the actual observation of a particular procedure, on verbal explanation or written procedures. In all cases, the predominant concern is whether or not the county's actions constitute compliance with the intent of statutes and rules.

The purpose of this review report is to provide King County Elections Division with a useful evaluation of its election procedures and policies and to encourage procedural consistency in the administration of elections throughout the state. This review report includes a series of recommendations and/or suggestions that are intended to assist King County in improving and enhancing its election processes.

The reviewer is statutorily prohibited from making any evaluation, finding, or recommendation regarding the validity of any primary or election or of any canvass of the election returns. Consequently, this review report should not be interpreted as affecting, in any way, the validity of the outcome of any election or of any canvass of election returns.

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Overview

In the course of this review, the reviewer observed pre-election tasks, election procedures, post-election procedures, canvassing, and certification of the election. The election staff verbally explained the tasks the reviewer was unable to observe.

Since 2004, many changes have been made in federal and state law. In Washington State alone, over 350 changes to law and rule have been enacted.

Following the 2004 elections, King County's election practices were reviewed by several different groups, each making reports with recommendations on how King County needed to improve. These reports have assisted King County in making significant changes to their operation.

While this report lists the areas where King County needs to continue to improve, they also need to be commended for their accomplishments in other areas:

HAVA (Help America Vote Act) Implementation. As King County continues to conduct poll site elections, each poll site was required to have a disability access unit available. Poll workers were required to learn a new way to allow voters to vote. King County successfully implemented this HAVA requirement and provided extensive training for the poll workers.

Ballot Accountability. Ballot accountability has been a difficult process for King County. In past years, this was an area that was not adequately monitored. While labor intensive, the process that King County now uses provides a significant improvement. Ballots are accounted for at each step as they are processed. They received a NACRAC award for their ballot accountability process.

Temporary Elections Annex Security. Security at the Annex is greatly improved. They have used a combination of color coded plastic seals, security cameras, security cages, election observers, and Sheriff Deputies to provide a transparent, secure process.

Voter Registration. King County has successfully converted to a new voter registration system and connected to the statewide voter registration database. They have instituted an impressive system used to predict and regulate their workload as well as to track the batches of registration applications. Voter Registration is significantly improved since the Secretary of State's 2002 Election Review.

Written Procedures. For the most part, King County has up-to-date written procedures. They are written in a step-by-step manner that allows inexperienced personnel to use them. They are thorough and cover all parts of the election process.

Help Desk. King County has worked to provide a good response to the multitude of phone calls on Election Day. The Help Desk is a group of people assigned to respond to these phone calls. The Help Desk's ability to respond to voter questions has improved over previous years.

Observers. Communication with election observers has always been a challenge for King County. They have instituted daily briefings and other changes that assist the official election observers with their duties.

Recommendations

The following recommendations indicate areas where the county is out of compliance with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), the Washington State Constitution, or Federal election law. The reviewer provides a description of the county's procedure, a citation of the applicable law, and a recommendation based on the citation.

Candidate Filing

After filing, candidates wishing to withdraw their candidate filing are required to fill out a form that is either notarized or signed by Election Staff.

RCW 29A.24.131 states in part, "A candidate may withdraw his or her declaration of candidacy at any time before the close of business on the Thursday following the last day for candidates to file under RCW 29A.24.050 by filing, with the officer with whom the declaration of candidacy was filed, a signed request that his or her name not be printed on the ballot..."

Recommendation: While a form may be provided for this purpose, King County should accept any withdrawal request signed by the candidate. Notarization or a specific form should not be required.

Security at the TEA (Temporary Elections Annex)

Security at the TEA consists of a combination of actions:

- Sheriff Deputies are stationed on each floor twenty four hours a day, seven days a week when ballots begin to arrive.
- Security cages to store ballots have been installed on each floor of the TEA.
- Electronic locks have been installed on the doors of each security cage that can only be opened by supervisors' badges. Each electronic lock records the identification of everyone who locks or unlocks the cage. Each morning the cages are unlocked and remain open until secured at the end of the day.
- Security cameras are focused on the doors of each security cage to record everyone going in and out of the cage. The camera images are recorded on a DVR, 24/7, with an archive capacity of 25 to 30 days for post-event review.
- When ballots are transported from one processing area to another, the ballots are boxed and sealed. The seals are color coded to each step of the process. For most steps, the seal used is a pre-numbered plastic seal threaded through a punched hole in the box. In some cases paper seals are used, and are covered with clear plastic tape to secure the seal in place.
- Seal numbers are recorded when used or broken on seal logs in most cases. When a log is not used, the seal number is written directly on the box.

WAC 434-261-045 states: “Received ballots and ballot images must be maintained in secure storage during processing, duplication, inspection by the canvassing board, or tabulation. Secure storage must employ the use of numbered seals and logs, or other security measures that will detect any inappropriate access to the secured materials. Ballots and ballot images may only be accessed in accordance with RCW 29A.60.110.”

WAC 434-250-110 (2) requires, in part, “...Following initial processing, all absentee ballots must be kept in secure storage until final processing. Secure storage must employ the use of numbered seals and logs, or other security measures which will detect any inappropriate or unauthorized access to the secured ballot materials when they are not being prepared or processed by authorized personnel...”

Recommendation: The security procedures implemented by King County at the TEA provide excellent security. These recommendations will add to what they already have in place:

- The security camera recordings are stored on the DVR for 25-30 days. Ballots are in the TEA for up to 45 days. The security camera records should be kept for the entire time that ballots are in the TEA. These records should be placed on a DVD and kept for the same amount of time required for other election documentation.
- The use of plastic seals and logs is the best method for sealing boxes with ballots. All boxes used for storing or transporting ballots should be punched to allow use of plastic seals and the use of paper seals should be discontinued.
- The security measures in place visually record who goes in and out of the security cages and the Sheriff Deputies watch for unauthorized access. Those authorized to work on a box of ballots record the seal numbers. These measures do not readily show if a person has had unauthorized access to a specific box of ballots. A record of the seal number(s) should accompany sealed boxes of ballots. As the seals are broken the record should be checked that the seal is the same one applied earlier. This could be done by compiling the seal numbers of a group of boxes on a single log with the names of those sealing the boxes or by placing the seal number on a sheet with the name of those sealing the box inside the sealed box.

Absentee Ballots Deposited at Polling Places

Voters who dropped off an absentee ballot at a polling place put the ballot in the side slot of the Accuvote cabinet. In many poll sites, the container was not adequate to hold the number of absentees received.

The poll workers removed the absentee ballots from the Accuvote and put them in blue bags to transport absentee ballots from the poll site to the county. In many instances the blue bags were not large enough to accommodate all the ballots. Poll workers were forced to use other means to transport their absentee ballots.

One polling place was observed accepting an absentee ballot at 8:25 p.m. The time of delivery was not documented on the ballot, nor was the ballot secluded and presented to the canvassing board.

The poll site ballot accountability form states that the number of absentee ballots is not to be recorded on the form. Instead an absentee ballot transmittal slip is included with the blue bag used for transporting the absentee ballots and the number of absentees is recorded on the transmittal slip. A separate accountability form is used for provisional and challenged ballots.

RCW 29A.40.110 states in part, "... (2) All received absentee return envelopes must be placed in secure locations from the time of delivery to the county auditor until their subsequent opening..."

WAC 434-253-170 states in part, "After the polls have closed,... absentee ballots must be placed in containers that are marked and sealed..."

WAC 434-250-100 states in part, "... If a ballot envelope is returned after 8:00 p.m. on election day, the deposit site staff must note the time and place of deposit on the envelope, and such ballots must be referred to the county canvassing board of whether special circumstances warrant consideration, as documented by deposit site staff..."

*WAC 434-253-165 states in part, "... The county auditor shall provide a ballot accountability sheet... upon which will be recorded, at a minimum, the following information:
...(15) The total number of absentee ballots accepted at the poll site;..."*

Recommendation: In larger polling places, a separate sealed ballot container should be provided for absentee ballots with sufficient volume for all ballots received on Election Day.

A single blue transport bag is not adequate to transport absentee ballots from larger polling places. Additional bags or larger bags should be provided.

Poll workers should be trained on the correct procedure to be followed when absentee ballots are delivered after 8:00 p.m.

The number of absentee ballots accepted at the polls should be listed on the ballot accountability sheet. An absentee ballot transmittal slip included with the bag containing the absentee ballot is useful and that practice should continue. Recording the number of absentees on the ballot accountability sheet serves as the official record of the number of absentees transported should something happen to the transmittal slip or the blue bag.

Provisional Ballots

The reviewer observed several poll sites on Election Day. Provisional ballots were inconsistently managed at various poll sites. Some poll workers placed voted provisional ballots in the same slot as absentees. Others kept the voted ballots in the red bag used for transporting them at the end of the day.

RCW 29A.44.207 states in part, "... The election official shall ensure that the required information is completed on the outer envelope, have the voter sign it in the appropriate space, and place the envelope in a secure container..."

Recommendation: The red bags are not secure as they are not secured with a numbered seal on Election Day. Each poll site should have a secure container for voted provisional ballots.

Polling Place Closing Procedures

The reviewer only observed one polling place closing at the end of the day. The polling place was extremely disorganized. Unvoted ballots were not rendered unusable prior to opening the ballot box. The voted ballots were placed on the same table as unvoted ballots. The AVU judge did not know how to close out the AVU. Write-in ballots were placed in the incorrect bag for transportation from the polling place. Results were posted before reconciling the ballots. The voted ballots were not counted.

RCW 29A.44.270 states, "At each precinct immediately after the last qualified voter has cast his or her vote, the precinct election officers shall render unusable and secure in a container all unused ballots for that precinct and return them to the county auditor."

RCW 29A.44.280 states, "Immediately after the unused ballots are secure, the precinct election officers shall count the number of voted ballots and make a record of any discrepancy between this number and the number of voters who sign the poll book for that precinct or polling place, complete the certifications in the poll book, prepare the ballots for transfer to the counting center, if necessary, and seal the voting devices."

Recommendation: King County has provided very good training for poll workers in the past; however, it is an ongoing problem to properly educate poll workers. Training should emphasize the correct procedure for closing the polls, with special attention given to the process of making unvoted ballots unusable and secure prior to opening the ballot box. Even though Accuvote printouts include the number of ballots counted, the Revised Code of Washington requires a physical count of the actual ballots compared to the actual number of signatures in the poll book.

As of the publication of this report, King County has revised their closing procedures and added more emphasis to this area in their poll worker training.

Depot Drop Sites

Most polling places deliver their supplies and sealed voting devices to a depot drop site. The drop site observed by the reviewer did not have a check list to determine if all supplies had been delivered by the inspectors. The people manning the depot unsealed the Accuvotes and removed the data cards prior to transporting to the counting center. These cards were placed in a single transport carrier immediately after removal from the Accuvotes. Cards were observed laying loose in the van and placed in coat pockets while they accepted supplies from other polling places. At the end of accepting the supplies, the cards were placed in a transport carrier and sealed.

WAC 434-253-203 states in part, "... (3) In a sealed container, the data pack/chip of each ballot counter shall be transported to the counting center with each results printout."

Recommendation: King County Elections must find a way to keep the memory cards securely sealed at all times. Memory cards could remain securely sealed in the Accuvotes until arriving at the TEA.

If neither of those options is used, the depot locations must be staffed sufficiently to securely remove the cards for transportation, and the staff members must be instructed to immediately place the memory cards in a securely sealed container when removed from the Accuvotes. A log would then need to be used to document that the original Accuvote seal had not been tampered with, and to note the seal on the container that the cards went into. Memory cards must be treated with the same diligence and respect that physical voted ballots receive.

As of the publication of this report, King County reports that depot procedures have been changed to provide more security of the memory cards.

Polling Place Canvass

Each polling place sealed their poll book, provisional ballots, challenged ballots, spoiled ballots, write-in ballots, uncounted voted ballots, and other canvass materials into the red bag for transporting to the counting center. Once received at the counting center the seals were broken on the bags and the contents processed to account for all ballots and each precinct's election results were verified.

The written procedure, Document # EO2-010 A, states:

“...6) Verify the seal number(s) against the number(s) written on the Ballot Transmittal (BT) envelope found inside the red bag(s).

- ...b) If the number does not match, write the seal number on the BT and place a check mark to the left of the correct number in red. Both sorters initial.
- c) Drop the seal into the BT envelope”

This is the procedure also explained in the canvassing training.

WAC 434-261-007 states, “If a seal is missing or broken without authority, all subsequent steps taken must be documented and included in a report to the canvassing board.”

WAC 434-261-040 states, “... If no seal exists, or if a discrepancy is noted between the information recorded on the transmittal sheet and the seal, the county auditor shall immediately be notified. The nature of the discrepancy shall be entered on the receipt log, the container set aside, and the ballots contained therein not tallied until the discrepancy is resolved. The log shall list the precinct, the nature of the discrepancy, and the corrective action taken. If the county auditor cannot resolve the discrepancy or arrive at a satisfactory explanation for the discrepancy, the ballots shall be treated as ballots for which a question of validity has arisen, and shall be set aside and referred to the canvassing board for their consideration as provided by law or administrative rule (see chapter 434-262 WAC).”

Recommendation: It is correct to require that bags containing ballots should be sealed for transport from the poll site to the counting center. If the seal number at the counting center does not match the number indicated on the ballot transmittal, further investigation should be conducted to verify that the bags and the contents were not tampered with before going further in canvassing the materials.

Suggestions

The following are suggestions for increasing efficiency and improving operations within the County Auditor's Office. Although these suggestions do not address issues involving compliance with state laws or administrative rules, the reviewer identified the tasks as areas of election administration in which the County Auditor might improve the efficiency and operation of the office.

Voter Registration

In the procedures for, Sorting and Batching Voter Registration Forms and Voter Registration Forms—Data Entry, there are references to the late voter registration period that extends from the 30 day cutoff to 15 days prior to an election. In those references, there is no mention of using the statewide database for verifying that in-person registrations submitted during the late registration period are actually new registrations in the state and not transfers. This is an important step in the process as the law requires that only new registrations in the state are accepted during this late registration time.

It should be noted that upon observation, staff were actually checking each registration, but it is not documented in the written procedure.

Suggestion: Checking the voter registration database to verify that a new registration may be processed during the late registration period should be included in the written procedures.

Candidate Filing

During candidate filing, the Office of the Secretary of State and King County Elections Division were required to communicate frequently on the status of Legislative and Judicial races, including sending a fax of each candidate declaration. There were difficulties in maintaining the communication.

Suggestion: The Secretary of State's Office and the King County Elections Division should find a way to notify each other of state and federal candidate filings. Each maintains an on-line candidate filing system. It should be possible to set up an automated exchange of information each time a candidate files for office.

Logic and Accuracy Test

While the programming that tabulated the ballots passed the Logic and Accuracy Test, there were numerous typographical errors found on the results report.

Suggestion: King County should include proofing the format of the results report as part of their pre-testing of the system.

Ballot Printing

Just prior to Election Day, King County discovered a printing error. The ballot numbers of 35 precinct splits were listed in the poll books incorrectly. King County called each inspector to explain the situation and the solution. The poll workers were well informed and it did not appear to cause any problems with the counting of the ballots.

Suggestion: King County needs to determine the cause of the printing problem and implement a procedure that will catch similar errors before the ballot order goes to the printer.

Precinct Election Officers

King County has had difficulty in recruiting enough poll workers for every election. The reviewer observed many precincts that were shorthanded as one or more poll workers did not show up to work on Election Day

Suggestion: The shortage of poll workers is a national problem. King County uses many different methods to recruit poll workers. They should continue to use every possible avenue to add workers to work the election. This problem would be solved by switching to all mail elections.

Ballot Tabulation

King County uses an older ballot tabulation system for their absentee ballots. It is comprised of approximately 40 precinct ballot counters that require an operator for each tabulator. The system is slow, very sensitive to paper jams, and would not be adequate to meet their needs if the elections were conducted entirely by mail.

Suggestion: Ballot tabulators need to be purchased to provide a more efficient method of preprocessing and counting ballots.

Ballot Reconciliation

King County has developed an extremely thorough, time-consuming method of accounting for ballots as each step of ballot processing. While very necessary, it is impeding the processing of ballots.

Additionally, a weak part of the reconciliation process appears to be in the duplication area. Ballots to be duplicated are accounted for at the time a particular batch is opened and inspected. They are then rubber-banded by batch and several batches are placed in sealed boxes. When the boxes are duplicated, they do not stay in the same groups, but are mixed together and form new batches. This process makes it very difficult to track and reconcile the ballots and is especially cumbersome if the count is off.

Suggestion: King County should purchase or develop a system that automates ballot accountability. Such a system would cut down on the time spent manually checking the ballots at each stage and would more efficiently and accurately track ballots through the process.

Provisional Ballots

The provisional ballot procedures were reviewed and they meet all the requirements in state law. The ballots were transported from the TEA to the courthouse for processing. Afterwards, the ballots were transported back to the TEA for counting. Election observers following the provisional ballot procedures observed that the same methods of security used at the TEA were not employed at the courthouse. Even though courthouse security was in fact adequate, the use of different security methods at different locations complicates the process and could generate the incorrect perception that one of the methods was insufficient.

The room used for processing the provisional ballots was not adequate for the number of ballots processed and the number of duplication teams required. While the room was organized and well run, it was very crowded.

Suggestion: The reviewer strongly suggests that the processing of provisional ballots be conducted at the TEA for the following reasons:

- Transporting ballots is always problematic and requires additional security.
- The TEA is already setup with workstations, computer connections, and secured areas.
- The TEA has plenty of room, especially since absentee ballots are no longer being processed at the time of processing the provisional ballots.
- The same security methods will be used for all voted ballots.
- The courthouse just does not have adequate facilities for the provisional ballot operation.

At the time of publication, King County reports that provisional ballots are now processed at the TEA.

County's Response to Draft Review Report

The Election Certification and Training Program issued a Draft Review Report to the King County Canvassing Board in April 2007. In accordance with WAC 434-260-145, we provided King County 10 days to respond, in writing, to recommendations listed in the draft report.

The King County Canvassing Board provided the following response to the Draft Review Report. The signed original of their response is on file in the Office of the Secretary of State.



King County

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May 1, 2007

To: Sam Reed, Secretary of State

From: Sherril Huff, Director Designee 

Re: The Elections Certification and Training Program, Review Report

Thank you to Sheryl Moss, and the entire group of Secretary of State Elections staff who participated in the review of King County Elections in November, 2006. As always, it was a pleasure working with your office in each of the stages of this review. Many of the recommendations and suggestions addressed in the review have been acted upon or are in the process of being enacted. A few comments have been noted for inclusion in the design of the facility King County Elections will be moving to in December of this year and in a few rare circumstances we might have determined that a suggestion could not be effectively implemented in the King County environment.

The review in total was another positive opportunity for many of the improvements made in the past two years to be examined through an independent process for validation or suggestions for additional change.

The following is my response on behalf of the King County Canvassing Board, regarding the election review conducted by the Secretary of State's office.

Overview Comments

Ballot Accountability:

The quality control and ballot reconciliation processes designed by King County Elections staff was recognized by the National Association of County Clerks, Recorders, and Election Officials as a best practice in August a best practice 2006.

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Voter Registration:

Your language “Significantly improved” does not adequately address the importance of the improvements made nor the strong statements made by SOS review staff. The procedures and process used to calculate work load needs was referred to as better than seen anywhere else, the reality is that we have met and exceeded a standard by which other counties are measured and the bulk of the work was completed before the implementation of a statewide VRDB. There are still those who will not acknowledge the improvements that have been accomplished in King County until they understand that we meet any existing standard for VR data base management

Help Desk:

Thorough logs of help desk calls are maintained and addressed by regional troubleshooters immediately. These calls are logged and used after each election to address common issues in training and follow-up with poll workers who need remedial attention to performance. The logs also provide guidance for our Election Distribution Center and training staff.

Recommendations

Candidate Filing

Procedures have been developed for this change and will be implemented for upcoming candidate filing process.

Security at the TEA (Temporary Elections Annex)

- We are currently working with facilities management to increase the retention of stored recordings.
- SOS staff has agreed with our plan of continuing to order pre-punched ballot storage boxes as we replace supplies.
- We have implemented a seal log on the box to document seal changes. It has currently been placed on the outside of the box to ensure that anyone can readily identify if numbers do not agree or have been changed. We avoided placing the seal log in the box because discrepancies would be noticed only if issues were suspected and the box needed to be opened.

Absentee Ballots Deposited at Polling Places

These issues have been addressed in training, in a revised edition of the poll worker guidebook and a report submitted to the King County Elections canvassing board.

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Provisional Ballots

Agreed; this issue has received heightened focus in training and addressed with greater emphasis in our revised Poll Worker Guidebook.

Polling Place Closing Procedures

Observation at one poll site out of 509 and over 4,000 poll workers placed throughout King County on Election Day does not provide a fair standard for evaluating performance and training. Follow up with the poll workers of the location referenced has taken place to address the weaknesses in performance noted above.

Existing training *does* address these issues as does the Poll Worker Guidebook. King County has revised its poll worker training and the Poll Worker Guidebook to emphasize the importance of closing procedures. King County will continue to try to recruit poll workers suitable for the work. The growing complexity of the work, the physical requirements and the need for technically savvy poll workers limits the ability of political parties to supply people with the skill level necessary to perform the critical, demanding work of being a poll worker. We have found that due to the complexity of our polling place operations, in order to increase proficiency inspectors require eight hours of training and judges require four hours of training. Many qualified persons are eliminated based on inability to attend a full day of training and work a 16 hour day on Election Day. There is an alarming number of dedicated, experienced people who have served as poll workers for many years dropping out of our poll worker rolls. This is due to their assessment that the work has become more demanding than they can continue to perform.

In the canvassing process we comply with the intent of RCW 29A.44.280. Our experience shows we can not rely on poll workers to balance the poll books at the time of polling place closing procedures. The referenced rule does not take into account the large volume of ballots and the number of precincts assigned to a polling place in King County. Experience has shown that the time, accuracy and security required to perform this duty cannot be met by relying on poll workers at the end of 16 – 17 hour day. Poll workers are encouraged to place voted ballots immediately in a secured and sealed container to avoid mishandling of these ballots. The canvass process allows for secured and properly trained staff to investigate any discrepancy between the number of ballots voted and the number of signatures in the precinct books. Poll books provide a page for incident reporting for poll workers to indicate any situation that my help in the investigation of discrepancies.

Depot Drop Sites

New procedures have been applied to depot functions. KCE procedure is to maintain the integrity of the security seal that is placed over the memory card slots. Seal numbers are recorded during the L&A procedures and recorded on a log. Poll workers are trained to check the seal numbers for verification prior to opening the polls and to report a discrepancy. When

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poll workers return election supplies, the depot staff verifies the seal number to the log. The memory cards are removed from the equipment, counted and recorded on a transmittal form. The form states number of cards, security seal number and is signed by observers and staff. The sealed bag is transported by two staff to the central count location

Polling Place Canvass

Such investigation is conducted for the referenced circumstance to an exacting degree. We have continued to revise canvassing procedures to address specific concerns; subsequently our reconciliation results have continued to show far greater accountability.

Conclusion

King County has made great strides in improving their election operation.

In addition to the normal procedures required for an election, King County also had to respond to emergency situations on Election Day caused by flooding. They were able to initiate emergency measures to respond to the needs of the communities threatened by flooding and provide the opportunity for many to cast a “flood ballot” on Election Day.

Polling places continue to be a difficult area to manage. Due to the very large number of poll workers required, there are few substitutes available when workers do not show up on Election Day. King County needs to continue to provide extensive training for poll workers, emphasizing areas that are commonly missed.

Automating some of the more labor intensive procedures, such as ballot reconciliation, will speed up processing ballots and improve their ability to account for all ballots. Automation is included in King County’s plan to switch to all mail elections.

Switching to all mail elections will negate the need for the recommendations listed in the report addressing polling place issues but will place greater emphasis on other recommendations. The current ballot tabulation system used at the counting center should be replaced by a high-speed tabulation system, and an automated ballot accountability system would be crucial. An adequate facility is critical to conducting all mail elections. Such a facility should house the entire division, provide ample space, and be easily accessible by the public.

King County elections staff displayed tremendous support for the election process. Staff was conscientious and dedicated to maintaining the integrity of the elections process. They should be commended for the improvements they initiated.

The reviewer has made a series of recommendations and suggestions for consideration by the King County Director of Records, Elections, and Licensing Services Division and the Canvassing Board. These are meant to enhance and improve the County’s election procedures. The Office of the Secretary of State Election Certification and Training Program is available for any additional assistance the Director may request.

Review Report Prepared by:

Sheryl Moss
Elections Program Manager
Office of the Secretary of State



Date: May 8, 2007

Signature