

Election Procedures Review
Of
Grant
State of Washington
2007 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. The Legislature also added a requirement that the Program conduct a follow-up visit to verify that the County Auditor's Office has taken steps to correct 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.

Pursuant to RCW 29A.04.570(1)(b), the Election Certification and Training Program conducted an election review in Grant County during the 2007 General Election cycle. Libby Nieland, Program Specialist, represented the Election Certification and Training Program during the review. Bill Varney, Grant County Auditor, Faith Anderson, Grant County Elections Supervisor and other members of the staff participated on behalf of the Grant County Auditor's Office.

Both the reviewer and the Grant County Elections Department approached the review in a spirit of cooperation. The department allowed the reviewer to thoroughly review and examine all aspects of the election processes. The staff provided documentation and materials during the review which greatly contributed to a successful examination process.

The purpose of this review report is to provide the Grant County Elections Department 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 the Grant County Elections Department 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 the validity of the outcome of any election or of any canvass of election returns.

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Overview

During the course of this review, several county processes and procedures were either observed or reviewed. The reviewer observed pre-election, Election Day, and post-election procedures, as well as canvassing and certification meetings conducted by the Grant County Canvassing Board.

A crucial element in any office, teamwork among staff becomes even more important whenever there is an accelerated work load. The support lent to the elections department from all sections of the Auditor's Office is commendable.

The Grant County Election Department is adequately staffed during non-election work periods by three permanent employees. However, because there is insufficient space to accommodate additional help, no staffing is added in response to heavier work loads during election time.

Lack of office space also affects the ability of political party observers and members of the public to observe any phase of an election. This means that many of the election processes are not truly public or transparent.

Voted ballots are accounted for during every step of the process, from the time of receipt through the counting processes. The accounting methods used by the Grant County Auditor are thorough, accurate, and efficient.

The written Grant County Elections Department office procedures must be expanded and updated. Procedures provide consistency in completing office work. Written procedures also ensure that tasks implemented infrequently are not overlooked.

The Grant County Auditor strives to provide a high level of service to the voters in the county. Just five days prior to the election the Auditor was required to implement new processes at the ballot deposit sites in order to provide all of the services that voters have learned to expect. The Auditor met all of the new requirements for the four remote staffed ballot deposit sites.

Some of the recommendations in this report require relatively minor changes in the county's procedures. However, administration of elections is complicated, so even minor changes may have a major impact on the election process.

The following recommendations and suggestions will improve and enhance the county's election procedures and policies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations indicate 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 obtained information based on actual observation of a procedure, verbal explanation or written procedures. The reviewer provides a description of the county's procedure, a citation of the applicable law, and a recommendation based on the citation.

Precincts

Nine precincts currently exceed the maximum number of registered active voters permitted by law.

RCW 29A.16.040(3) states, "Precincts in which voting machines or electronic voting devices are used may contain as many as nine hundred active registered voters. The number of poll-site ballot counting devices at each polling place is at the discretion of the auditor. The number of devices must be adequate to meet the expected voter turnout."

Recommendation: Any precinct with more than 900 hundred active registered voters should be divided into two or more precincts as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days prior to the first day for candidates to file for the primary. Voters in newly created precincts must be notified per RCW 29A.76.030.

Verification and Confirmation Notices

Confirmation notices and verification notices requesting identification of voters are mailed to voters whenever required by law. The notices are sent with pre-addressed reply forms, but do not provide pre-paid postage as required by federal and state law.

Confirmation notices are mailed under a U.S. Post Office nonprofit permit. Forwarding service for standard nonprofit mail is not provided by the United States Postal Service without the proper mail piece endorsement. No such mail piece endorsement appears on the verification notice.

RCW 29A.08.030(1) indicates, "The verification notice must be designed to include a postage prepaid, preaddressed return form by which the applicant may verify or send information. ... (3) 'Confirmation notice' means a notice sent to a registered voter by first-class forwardable mail at the address indicated on the voter's permanent registration record and to any other address at which the county auditor or secretary of state could reasonably expect mail to be received by the voter in order to confirm the voter's residence address. The confirmation notice must be designed to include a postage prepaid, preaddressed return form by which the registrant may verify the address information."

Recommendation: Verification and confirmation notices must provide pre-paid return postage to the voter.

A postal endorsement which provides the forwarding address to the Auditor must be added to the confirmation notice if the Auditor wishes to continue using nonprofit postage rates.

Incomplete Voter Applications

Whenever an applicant fails to provide all required information on a voter registration form, the Grant County Elections Department returns the original voter registration form to the applicant requesting that the missing information be provided to the Auditor. The form is pre-addressed for prompt return, however, it is not postage prepaid. The original date of submission is used as the date of voter registration if the completed form is returned to the elections department.

RCW 29A.08.110(1) requires, "The auditor shall promptly mail a verification notice of the deficiency to the applicant. This verification notice shall require the applicant to provide the missing information."

RCW 29A.08.030(1) states, "Verification notice means a notice sent by the county auditor or secretary of state to a voter registration applicant and is used to verify or collect information about the applicant in order to complete the registration. The verification notice must be designed to include a postage prepaid, preaddressed return form by which the applicant may verify or send information."

Recommendation: The Grant County Auditor should not send an incomplete voter registration form back to the applicant. A verification notice, not the original form, should be sent to applicants who submit an incomplete voter registration form. The verification notice must be postage prepaid. The voter registration form originally submitted must remain in the possession of the Auditor.

Voter Name Changes

The Grant County Auditor requires that a registered voter requesting a change of name fill in the official name change form or a new voter registration form. No other format is acceptable.

In addition to the use of name change and voter registration forms, RCW 29A.08.440 prescribes, "a person who changes his or her name shall notify the county auditor regarding the name change . . . (1) By sending the auditor a notice clearly identifying the name under which he or she is registered to vote, the voter's new name, and the voter's residence. Such a notice must be signed by the voter using both this former name and the voter's new name."

Recommendation: Any written request for a name change from a voter is acceptable provided that the voter's former name and signature, new name and signature, and residence are included in the request.

Public Notice of Availability of Service

A notice of availability of registration and voting assistance for elderly and disabled voters was published just four days prior to the General Election as part of the Notice of Election.

RCW 29.04.220 states, "The county auditor shall provide public notice of the availability of registration and voting aids, assistance to elderly and disabled persons,. . . not later than public notice of the closing of registration for a primary or election."

Recommendation: A notice of availability of services to the elderly and disabled persons must be published no later than 30 days before every election or primary. The notice may be incorporated in the notice of closing of registration.

Questionnaire to Jurisdictions

Prior to March 1, 2007, the elections department contacted local jurisdictions by telephone confirming positions, term length, and salary of all offices subject to candidate filing in the coming year. The names of incumbents for positions were not confirmed with the jurisdictions. Office procedures clearly state that jurisdictions will be sent a questionnaire. A form for the questionnaire is found in written office procedures. The prescribed questionnaire includes a request for updated information on jurisdiction boundaries.

WAC 434-215-005 requires, "The county auditor shall send a questionnaire to the administrative authority of each local jurisdiction for which the auditor is the candidate filing officer. The questionnaire should request, as a minimum, confirmation of offices to be filled at the general election that year, the name of the incumbent, and the annual salary for the position at the time of the filing period."

Recommendation: Administrative rule and Grant County Elections Department procedures require questionnaires be sent to the jurisdictions. Since the purpose of the questionnaire is to confirm the positions open for filing and all pertinent information concerning these positions, it is best to create and retain a record of the answers supplied by jurisdictions. The County Auditor must mail, fax, or email the questionnaire to each jurisdiction every year. The questionnaire must confirm the names of the incumbents.

The questionnaire already included in the county procedures might be supplemented with a place for the respondent's signature and date of response.

The Auditor should be commended for using the questionnaire as an additional way to gather information on jurisdiction boundary changes.

Absentee Applications

Special absentee ballot applications are available from the Grant County Auditor. However, current applications do not request the following information:

- the applicant's name
- the election applicable to the request
- the last Washington residence if the request is from a military/overseas voter
- a checkbox requesting a single absentee ballot be forwarded as soon as possible

WAC 434-250-030 requires, “(2) ... The form must include, but not be limited to, the following: (a) A space for the voter to print his or her name and the address at which he or she is registered to voter; ... (c) A space for the voter to indicate for which election or elections the application is made. ... (3) ... In addition to the requirements for a single absentee ballot, as provided in subsection (2) of this section, the form must include: (a) A space for an overseas or service voter not registered to vote in Washington to indicate his or her last residential address in Washington; and (b) A checkbox requesting that a single absentee ballot be forwarded as soon as possible.”

Recommendation: Special absentee ballot applications must be updated to reflect current requirements. Procedures should be written addressing when this type of application should be used and how to issue, accept, and comply with special absentee ballot application requests.

Jointly Shared Jurisdiction

Grant County, the lead county in a school district that overlaps into Douglas, Okanogan, and Lincoln Counties, conducted a special three-day filing to fill a void in candidacy. The Douglas and Lincoln County Auditors were correctly notified by the Grant County Auditor that a single candidate filed for the position. Okanogan County did not receive notification. As a result, the director position in Grand Coulee Dam School District did not appear on the Okanogan County General Election ballot. Upon learning of the omission on the Okanogan County ballot, the Grant County Auditor immediately printed and mailed paper ballots to the 779 voters within the Okanogan County portion of the school district.

RCW 29A.24.070(3) states, “For school directors in joint school districts the declaration of candidacy shall be filed with the county auditor of the county designated by the superintendent of public instruction as the county to which the joint school district is considered as belonging under RCW 28A.323.040.”

RCW 28A.323.040 defines, “For all purposes essential to the maintenance, operation, and administration of the schools of a district, including the apportionment of current state and county school funds, the county in which a joint school district shall be considered as belonging shall be as designated by the superintendent of public instruction.”

RCW 28A.323.050 requires, “Jurisdiction of any such election shall rest with the county auditor of the county administering such joint district. At each general election or upon approval of a request for a special election as provided for in **RCW 29.13.020, such county auditor shall: (3) Do all things otherwise required by law for the conduct of such election.” (**RCW 29.13.020 was recodified to RCW 29A.04.321 and 29A.04.330.)

Recommendation: In order to properly conduct a joint jurisdiction election, the lead county must notify all joint counties of candidate filings. This communication is the responsibility of the lead county. Grant County Elections must develop procedures to guarantee information will be shared between joint counties for all candidate filings, no matter when the filings occur. It would be advisable for counties sharing a jurisdiction to meet and create written procedures regarding jointly shared jurisdictions. Confirmation of offices to appear on the ballot, candidate filings during regular and special filing periods, reporting election results, and documentation of such communications should be part of the procedures addressed.

Ballot Security

Once ballots are removed from mailing envelopes, the Auditor correctly secures them in containers using numbered seals and seal logs. All ballots are secured after tabulation and during retention. Some security issues need to be addressed by the Grant County Auditor.

- Envelopes containing voted ballots waiting initial processing are contained in open mail trays inside a vault. The vault door is opened and unsealed each morning. The vault remains unsecured until the end of the business day when it is closed, locked, and secured with a numbered seal. Although entry to the vault is only through the Elections Office, there is no record of who has access to the ballot envelopes during office hours.
- On Election Day a single unaccompanied employee of the Auditor's Office was observed returning with ballots from the U.S. Post Office.
- Staff from other sections of the Auditor's Office assisted in processing ballots on Election Day. A computer, located at a workstation in an auxiliary room out of sight of all other work areas was used by the additional help to process ballots.

RCW 29A.40.110(2) indicates, "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 434-250-101(2) mandates, "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: Envelopes waiting for processing should be secured using numbered seals and seal logs. Physical access to the envelopes may be implemented by use of a cage, cabinet, or by individually securing the envelope trays with a cover. The access to these envelopes with voted ballots must be accountable and documented.

Envelopes with ballots should never be transported outside of the processing area by just one employee. Two people should always accompany the ballots in transport.

Ballot processing should always be observable by at least one other person. The current Grant County Elections Department is restricted in available work space and does not provide room for temporary workers. It is recommended that office space be reconfigured in such a manner as to provide dedicated processing areas visible to two or more persons at all times.

Disability Access Units

A Disability Access Unit (DAU) is available at the Grant County Courthouse 20 days prior to the election. The unit is situated in such a manner that it is wheelchair accessible but does not adequately safeguard a voter's privacy.

RCW 29A.44.060 states, “The county auditor shall provide in each polling place a sufficient number of voting booths or voting devices . . . within which the voters may cast their votes in secrecy.”

Recommendation: The Disability Access Unit must assure privacy, as well as accessibility, to the voter. The unit should be located in such a manner as to meet all requirements.

Manual Inspection of Ballots

A significant number of ballots were subject to additional inspection during final processing through the optical scanner. Many of these ballots were clearly unreadable by the scanner and should have been identified during pre-inspection. Although staff indicated that manual inspection was done prior to final processing, the number of ballots pulled during scanning because marks were unreadable indicates that manual inspection was incomplete.

WAC 434-261-070(1) requires, “Upon receiving absentee ballots and upon breaking the seals and opening the ballot containers from the precincts, all voting positions on voted ballots shall be manually inspected on both sides of the ballot to determine whether the ballot is readable by the vote tabulating system. This manual inspection is a required part of processing ballots.”

Recommendation: Manual inspection of a voted ballot is the primary assurance that the intent of a voter will be honored. Proper inspection must include reviewing all responses on a ballot. The Auditor should consider manual inspection as an essential activity done as a separate step prior to optical scanning. Because this is a process that is best done without interruption, it might be reasonable to delegate this activity to teams of trained seasonal employees.

Provisional Ballots

When an applicant for a ballot does not appear on the voter rolls, the Auditor correctly issues a provisional ballot. The Auditor issues a provisional ballot voting packet consisting of: 1) a provisional ballot, printed on colored paper, not able to be counted mechanically; 2) a security envelope to protect the secrecy of the voter; and 3) an outer provisional ballot envelope requiring voter information.

Following certification of the election, a letter is sent to each provisional voter. The letter explains whether the provisional ballot was counted and, if not, why the ballot was invalid. This letter meets the federal and state requirements of providing provisional ballot information to the voter in a private and cost-free manner.

At the time of casting a provisional ballot, a voter is not given written information on how to learn the final resolution of the provisional ballot.

RCW 29A.44.207 requires, “The official shall then give the voter written information advising the voter how to ascertain whether the vote was counted and, if applicable, the reason why the vote was not counted.”

Recommendation: As part of the free access system required for provisional voting, the voter must be provided with written information regarding how to learn the final resolution of the voter's provisional ballot. This information must be provided at the time of voting.

Voting Centers

Rules were put into effect five days prior to the General Election that redefined the Auditor's Office from a polling place to a voting center. Several requirements for voting centers differ from that of polling places. The Grant County Auditor complied with all requirements for all five voting centers, with one exception. All voting centers, with the exception of the Auditor's Office, displayed large signs outside declaring the location was a place for voting. No such signage was displayed outside the Grant County Courthouse.

WAC 434-250-100(2) requires, "Each voting center must: ... (c) Be marked with signage outside the building indicating the location as a place for voting."

WAC 434-250-330 states, "For elections conducted entirely by mail, the county auditor's office must operate as a voting center beginning the day that ballots are mailed to voters."

Recommendation: A sign indicating the Grant County Courthouse is a place for voting must be displayed during business hours beginning the date ballots are mailed for the election until 8:00 p.m. election night.

Disability Advisory Committee

The Grant County Auditor has not established a disability advisory committee to assist in improving accessibility to election services in Grant County. The requirement to establish a disability advisory committee has been in effect since 2006.

RCW 29A.46.206(2) directs, "Each county shall establish and maintain an advisory committee that includes persons with diverse disabilities and persons with expertise in providing accommodations for persons with disabilities. The committee shall assist election officials in developing a plan to identify and implement changes to improve the accessibility of elections for voters with disabilities."

Recommendation: A disability advisory committee composed of at least two people with disabilities and two people who are experienced in providing disability accommodations should be established by the Grant County Auditor immediately.

Canvassing Board Manual

The Grant County Canvassing Board has compiled rules into a manual. The manual contains hypothetical situations to exemplify rule applications. Several examples prescribe incorrect reactions, such as issuing a provisional ballot, instead of a regular ballot, to a registered voter who has moved out of precinct. A few of the statutory references and timelines in the Grant County Canvassing Board Manual are incorrect.

There is no record that the current rules were officially adopted by the Grant County Canvassing Board at a public meeting.

RCW 29A.60.140(5) requires, "All rules adopted by the county canvassing board must be adopted in a public meeting under chapter 42.30 RCW."

Recommendation: The Grant County Canvassing Board Manual needs to be revised. Once updated, the Manual should be officially adopted by the Canvassing Board at a public meeting. The date of adoption should be included in the manual.

Suggestions

The following are suggestions for increasing operational efficiency within the County Auditor's Office. These suggestions do not address issues involving compliance with state laws or administrative rules, so are made as suggestions only.

Written Procedures

Written office procedures are essential to a well run office by providing consistency and documentation for the actions and decisions of staff. The Grant County Election procedures manual does not provide guidance as to how staff should fulfill statutory requirements.

Suggestion: The Grant County Elections Department procedures could be improved by providing task specific instructions, including when, by whom, and how tasks should be accomplished. Out-of-date citations and forms need to be removed or updated.

Notice of Election

A Notice of the General Election containing all required information was published in a timely manner. However, the arrangement of the posted times regarding the County Auditor's office hours was confusing. The hours appeared to indicate that the Auditor's Election Department would be open from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. every business day through the election.

Suggestion: Posting times and locations for voting centers is important and needs to clearly indicate which facilities are open for specific dates and times. It is a good idea to have someone unfamiliar with office practice read the notices prior to publication.

Election Day Processing

On Election Day, final processing of ballots began shortly after 10:00 a.m. and did not finish until 7:50 p.m. Considering the number of ballots to be processed through a single scanner, the start time would have been adequate, provided no difficulties had occurred.

Two conditions were identified as contributing to delays in optical scanning:

- 1) The operators of the optical scanners spent a significant amount of time on interruptions and issues from the public. The optical scanner was located directly behind the public service counter of the Grant County Elections Department. The public tended to address concerns to the most immediate persons, which happened to be the scanner operators.
- 2) The two most knowledgeable staff members in the office, the Auditor and the Elections Supervisor, were operating the optical scanner. It was often necessary for them to pause and attend to other office duties because of their level of expertise.

Suggestion: The following changes could greatly improve Election Day processing of ballots:

- Relocate the optical scanners to an area that is viewable, but not accessible, to the public. Such a move will enhance security and accuracy of tabulation. This change may necessitate using another area of the courthouse, but reducing distractions will improve election efficiency.
- The Auditor and the Elections Supervisor need to be free to attend to office responsibilities, including answering questions from the public and the press. Other staff members, possibly a temporary election worker, could operate the tabulator under the supervision of the managers.

2007 Election Guidelines

The Grant County Auditor produces a booklet for candidates titled, “Election Guidelines.” The booklet provides useful information regarding dates, deadlines, elective processes, and information useful to candidates and campaigns. This booklet is an excellent tool for interested parties. However, the 2007 booklet contained several items and dates based on old information.

Suggestion: Whenever a booklet is used year after year, it is essential to update with current information. A person from outside the immediate election office, such as a retiree or volunteer, may be very helpful in verifying the booklets information. Using an outside resource for proofing the manuscript will provide a fresh perspective.

Ballot Processing

Ballots are processed at the regular staff work stations. Pens with black or blue ink and pencils are available in ballot processing areas.

Suggestion: If at all possible, an area should be dedicated to ballot processing, duplication, and pre-tabulation inspection. Isolating these processes from the normal office work flow reduces distractions thereby increasing efficiency and accuracy.

Exclusive access and use of distinctive ink colors (i.e. red, orange, or pink) provides additional assurance of proper ballot management.

Verification of Signature

A voter is contacted by mail whenever the voter’s signature on the return envelope does not match the signature on the voter’s registration record. A letter sent to the voter describes the three legal ways to verify signatures. The letter encloses a copy of the voter’s registration record signature and a copy of the questionable signature on the ballot affidavit.

Suggestion: The purpose of the letter is to verify the signature on the ballot; the letter need only include information explaining how the voter may verify the signature and a copy of the ballot affidavit. Providing a copy of the original signature from the voter record is not recommended as a voter fraud deterrent.

County's Response to Draft Review Report

The Election Certification and Training Program issued a Draft Review Report to the Grant County Canvassing Board in March 2008. In accordance with WAC 434-260-145, we provided Grant County 10 days to respond, in writing, to recommendations listed in the draft report.

The Grant 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.

RESPONSE TO ELECTION PROCEDURES REVIEW
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GRANT COUNTY, WASHINGTON
MARCH 19, 2008

The Grant County Election's Department has already started to work on implementing the recommendations included in the Election Procedures Review conducted by the Office of the Secretary of State Election Certification and Training Program. Our goal is to have all of them in place by the 2008 primary election in August. The physical reconfiguration of the elections department may take a little longer. With all of the changes in the election laws over the past several years, it helps to have someone come in from outside of our department with years of experience running county elections and review our procedures. Libby Nieland's attitude was that she was here to help us and we appreciated that.

Following is our response to the recommendations in the report.

Precincts

Nine precincts currently exceed maximum number of 900 registered voters.

RCW 29A.16.040 states: Precincts in which voting machines or electronic voting devices are used may contain as many as 900 active voters. Grant County is a Vote by Mail County. In our interpretation, this RCW does not relate to vote by mail counties. We have 5 ballot drop-off locations. In each location is one AutoMark Disability Access Unit. The RCW was written to prevent delays in voting. Each drop-off location serves many precincts. There are no delays at the drop-off locations.

Verification and Confirmation Notices

We have borrowed the form that Spokane County uses. We will provide prepaid, return postage.

Incomplete Voter Applications

A verification form, return postage prepaid, will be sent to a voter applicant who did not provide all the information needed.

Voter name changes

Any format to change a voters name will be accepted as long as the voter requesting the name change provides their former name and signature, and new name and signature, and residence address.

Public Notice of Availability of Service

The notice will be included with the notice of closing of registration.

Questionnaire to Jurisdictions

The only time Grant County has contacted local jurisdictions by telephone was to follow up on the questionnaire if the jurisdiction did not return said questionnaire. The questionnaire has been mailed to each jurisdiction for years. This has been the best way to confirm incumbent positions and any changes that might have been made that we were not aware of.

We already do everything SOS recommended, except a place for the respondent's signature and date of response. We will add a place for the respondent's signature and date of response.

Absentee Applications

We have started using the form that is provided on the SOS website. We will add procedures to our elections manual addressing when this type of application should be used and how to issue, accept, and comply with special absentee ballot application requests.

Jointly Shared Jurisdiction

Grant County is part of several joint jurisdictions, lead-county for some and not for others. We will work with the joint counties to get written procedures regarding jointly shared jurisdictions in place.

Ballot Security

We have approached the maintenance department regarding reconfiguring the elections department so that dedicated processing areas are visible to two or more persons at all times. We will assure that envelopes with ballots that are being transported outside the processing area are accompanied by two people. We will start securing the trays that contain envelopes with ballots that are waiting processing with a sealed cover. Seal logs will be maintained to assure accountability.

Disability Access Units

When we reconfigure the elections department we will design an area to assure the privacy and accessibility of the Disability Access Unit.

Manual Inspection of Ballots

The increased number of ballots that were unreadable by the optical scanner was a problem with the ballot stock itself. The scanner could not read the code markers on some of the ballots. These ballots had to be duplicated.

Manual inspection could be improved and we will work on delegating this activity to trained employees.

Provisional Ballots

Grant County will print up instructions and information which will be included with each provisional ballot given to voters. It will explain that letters are sent to each provisional voter explaining to the voter if the ballot was counted, and if not counted, the reason why. A phone number will also be provided that they can call to check on the status of their provisional ballot.

Voting Centers

We will provide a sign outside the County Courthouse letting the public know that the courthouse is a voting center with dates and times.

Disability Advisory Committee

We are in the process of establishing a Disability Advisory Committee.

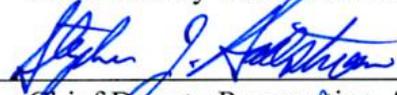
Canvassing Board Manual

The canvassing Board Manual is being revised. The rules will be adopted by the county canvassing board in a public meeting.

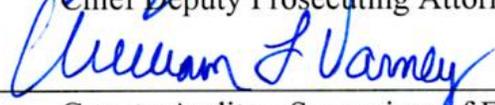
Grant County Canvassing Board:



Chair County Commissioners



Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney



County Auditor, Supervisor of Elections

Dated this 26th day of March 2008

Conclusion

Elections should be conducted in an open and transparent environment. The physical arrangement of the Grant Elections Office restricts the ability of the Auditor to provide a completely open process. The office should be rearranged to provide secure working space for tabulation and ballot processing while remaining visible to the public. Included in this rearrangement should be accommodation for official party observers and room for temporary staff. Hopefully such arrangements could be made prior to the next general election.

Members of the elections staff exemplify teamwork and an understanding of the importance of their jobs. Staff would benefit from task specific written procedures. Procedures addressing tasks in a step-by-step manner will provide consistency and documentation of office practices.

Meeting and establishing communication protocol between counties sharing jurisdictions with Grant County can prevent voter disenfranchisement. It is imperative that lead counties not rely upon only one process for communicating election information to joint counties; acknowledgement procedures need to be created to ascertain the information is received.

Staff is commended for thorough and accurate accounting of ballots, from the time of receipt until the final canvass of ballots. Their attention to the daily accounting is exemplary.

Some areas of security need to be improved. Security measures may require relocation of office functions and hiring of seasonal staff.

The Grant County Auditor and staff were cooperative and receptive to the review process. It was because of their openness and cooperation that this comprehensive report was possible.

Review Report Prepared by:

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Office of the Secretary of State

Date: March 11, 2008

