

2005-06 SESSION

COMMITTEE HEARING RECORDS

Assembly Committee on Campaigns & Elections (AC-CE)

Sample:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01a
- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01b
- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt02

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ **

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

➤ **

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

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➤ Hearing Records ... HR

➤ **

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ **05hr_AC-CE_Misc_pt07a**

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ **

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DATE: July 19, 2005

TO: Robert J. Marchant, Senate Chief Clerk
Patrick Fuller, Assembly Chief Clerk

FROM: Kevin J. Kennedy, Executive Director *KJK*
State Elections Board

SUBJECT: 2003 Wisconsin Act 98, Election Officials

Pursuant to the requirements of 2003 Wisconsin Act 98, enclosed is the State Elections Board report on the compensation, recruitment and training of elections officials. This report is submitted for distribution to the appropriate standing committees in the manner provided under S. 13.172(3), Stats.

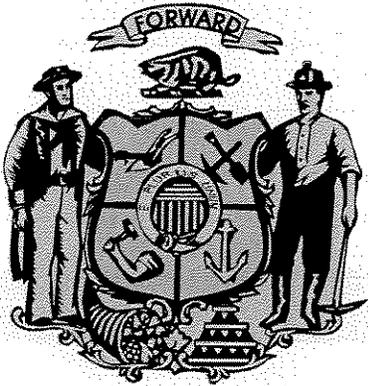
If you have any questions regarding the submittal of this report, please contact me directly at 608-266-8087 or kevin.kennedy@seb.state.wi.us.

Enclosure

cc: Senator Joseph Leibham, Chair
Special Committee on Election Law Review
Robert J. Conlin, Senior Staff Attorney
Legislative Council

Campaigns & Elections

Report on the Compensation, Recruitment and Training of Election Officials



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June 2005

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BACKGROUND

Poll workers are an integral part of the election process in Wisconsin. Throughout this report, the term poll worker is used as an alternative to the term election inspector, which is used in the state statutes. At the polling place the one poll worker who has gone through the training and has been certified is called a chief inspector. They are the individuals who make the process work at the most fundamental level of election administration. The State Legislature recognizes this and required, in the 2003 Wisconsin Act 98, that the State Elections Board prepare the following report on the recruitment, training, certification and compensation of poll workers throughout the state.

A variety of methods were used in gathering the information for the report including conducting a survey of county and municipal clerks and interviewing election agencies in other states. The statistics provided give an in-depth view of the status of poll workers across the state, while the qualitative data provides ideas for the future. A draft of this report was posted on the Website of the State Elections Board in order to solicit feedback from the public and clerks. The comments which were received have been incorporated into the final report.

A sentiment which repeatedly occurred in the survey was the appreciation that clerks have for their poll workers. These are individuals who sit through an often long day and do their job with a high level of dedication and many come back and serve their community every year for many years. It is the Board's hope that this report will lead to an improved understanding of the role and importance of poll workers in Wisconsin, to see where there is room for improvement and gain some new ideas on improving the process for the future.

RELEVANT STATE STATUTES

Wisconsin Election Administration Plan

In 2002, the State Elections Board adopted the Wisconsin State Plan which outlined the future plan for the state in terms of its elections administration, pursuant to S. 5.05(10), Wis. Stats. The plan was required for Wisconsin to be compliant with the Help America Vote Act and receive federal funds associated with the act. The plan included information on the new Statewide Voter Registration System as well as the Board's strategy for training of election officials.

Compensation

The State does not currently set a required wage for poll workers or Chief Inspectors, rather it is set by each local municipality. S. 7.03, Wis. Stats., states that a poll worker must be paid a "reasonable daily compensation" for their work on election day and for any training they are required to attend. The Wisconsin Towns Association has issued an opinion that municipalities should pay poll workers at least minimum wage. There is a provision in S. 7.03, Wis. Stats., that a poll worker can waive any compensation and volunteer their time. This is done with a written document submitted to the clerk.

Training

The State Elections Board is responsible for conducting regular administrative meetings and conferences for election officials, which according to S. 5.05(7), Wis. Stats., "shall be designed to explain the election laws and the forms and rules of the board, to promote uniform procedures and to assure that clerks and other officials are made aware of the integrity and importance of the vote of each citizen." The municipal clerks also have a responsibility to train the poll workers in their municipality, per S. 7.15(1)(e), Wis. Stats., and assist the State Elections Board in any training it does, per S. 7.15(11), Wis. Stats.

In 2001 S. 7.31, Wis. Stats., was created, which requires that each polling place have a "certified chief inspector." This chief inspector is required to attend an initial training from the State Elections Board and attend subsequent trainings to maintain their certification. The State Elections Board set a policy which detailed that the required subsequent trainings would be six hours. There are no other statutes which require poll worker training.

Recruiting

Each municipal clerk is responsible for staffing the polling place of their municipality. In December of even-numbered years, the governing body for a municipality selects poll workers to serve for a two-year term. The major political parties in a municipality are supposed to submit names, to the local municipal clerk, of people in their party who would like to serve as a poll worker. Then the clerk and the municipality's governing body confirm appointment of poll workers from the provided lists. The majority of the municipal clerks however, do not receive a list from the major political parties. In this case, the poll workers who are chosen are unaffiliated with a party. This process is detailed in S. 7.30, Wis. Stats.

High School Poll Workers

S. 7.30(2)(am), Wis. Stats., provides the opportunity for 16-17 year olds to work as poll workers. There are a few stipulations before a high school student is allowed to work. First a clerk must obtain authorization from the principal of the student's high school and the parents of the student and the student must have a 3.0 grade point average.

Poll Workers Working in Shifts

If a municipality would like to allow its poll workers to work in shifts, it must pass an ordinance per S. 7.30(1), Wis. Stats.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

The majority of the statistics in this report were gathered through a survey conducted of municipal and county clerks during April 2005. A copy of the survey is attached in the appendices. Overall there was a 72 percent response rate from the municipal clerks with 1,346 municipalities completing the survey. The survey of the county clerks had a 69 percent response rate with 50 county clerks returning the surveys. Below is more detailed information about the respondents of the survey. Additionally, of the largest 50 municipalities, ranked by their population, all except two, the City of Sheboygan and the City of Muskego, responded to the survey. Please see the appendix for a county by county participation rate.

Respondents to the County Clerks' Survey

Ashland	Crawford	Manitowoc	Rusk
Brown	Dane	Marathon	Shawano
Burnett	Dodge	Marquette	Sheboygan
Calumet	Florence	Outagamie	Taylor
Chippewa	Fond du Lac	Ozaukee	Walworth
Clark	Green Lake	Pepin	Waukesha
Columbia	Jefferson	Racine	Waupaca

Respondents' Years of Work Experience

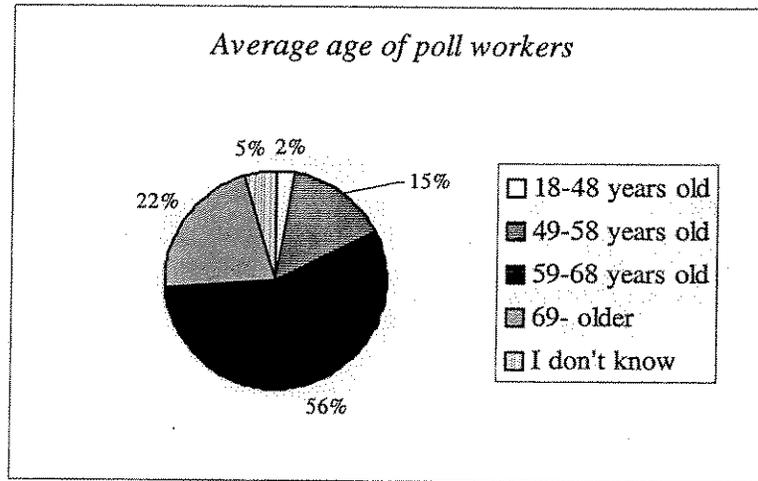
<i>County Clerks</i>		
Less than 1 year	8	16%
1-3 years	7	14%
4-7 years	13	26%
8-11 years	9	18%
12 or more	13	26%
Didn't Respond	2	0.30%

<i>Municipal Clerks</i>		
Less than 1 year	75	6%
1-3 years	237	18%
4-7 years	313	23%
8-11 years	201	15%
12 or more	517	38%
Don't Know	4	0.30%

<i>Types of Municipalities that Responded</i>			
	# of Respondents	Total # of municipalities in this category	% of total municipalities in this category that responded
Towns	848	1265	67%
Villages	328	386	85%
Cities	171	190	90%

OVERVIEW OF POLL WORKERS

To no surprise, the information revealed that the State's poll workers are mostly comprised of older individuals. Wisconsin is not unusual. Across the nation, the average age of poll workers is 72 years old. Due to the rural nature of most of Wisconsin, it is also not surprising that many polling places only utilize three to five poll workers for each election.



Average Number of Poll Workers

<i>Towns</i>	
Fall Gubernatorial	4.6
Fall Presidential	5.5
Spring/Other	4.3

<i>Villages</i>	
Fall Gubernatorial	4.7
Fall Presidential	5.6
Spring/Other	4.4

<i>Cities</i>	
Fall Gubernatorial	7.0
Fall Presidential	8.0
Spring/Other	6.5

Average number of poll workers working at a polling place

	3 Poll Workers	5 Poll Workers	7 Poll Workers	9 Poll Workers	11 Poll Workers	*More than 11	Did not answer	*Average number of workers for those who answered more than 11
Fall Gubernatorial	571	504	174	38	22	34	3	19
Fall Presidential	391	495	271	66	54	67	4	20
Spring/Other	638	510	137	20	14	25	2	18

POLL WORKER COMPENSATION

The survey revealed that while there is a large range of wages paid across the state, most municipalities pay above minimum wage to their poll workers. One interesting statistic is the number of municipalities that do not pay their poll workers to attend a training session, 21 percent of respondents. Please see appendix for a detailed look at the training wages. Although it could be argued that many poll workers work on election day because they feel it is their civic duty and do not work because of the wage they will be earning, several clerks commented on the importance of paying a decent wage in order to attract and keep quality poll workers. When the average wages of each county for 2002 and 2004 are compared, almost all of the average wages have increased over the past two years. Please see the appendix for a chart depicting the 2002 versus 2004 wages separated by county.

All of the wages on the following graphs were calculated so that they are a per hour wage. When a municipality reported a daily wage that was paid, this was divided by 12 to achieve the per hour rate. Of the 275 municipalities that reported a daily wage, 80 percent of these municipalities were towns and villages, which have the option of opening the polls at a later time and therefore poll workers presumably would have shorter hours to work. For a detailed review of the average and ranges of wages per county, please see the appendix.

Average Election Day Wages

<i>Poll Workers</i>		
	Range	
	Low	High
Per Hour Range:	\$2.33	\$14.00
Average:	\$7.05	

<i>Chief Inspectors</i>		
	Range	
	Low	High
Per Hour Range:	\$2.50	\$16.67
Average:	\$7.31	

Training Wages

Per Hour range	\$5.00-\$12.00
Per Hour Average	\$7.29
*Per session range	\$2.00-\$70.00
*Per session average	\$31.31

* Based on a half day session

POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT

In contrast to the State Elections Board's assumption that many municipalities had trouble recruiting poll workers, the data revealed that only 25 percent of clerks stated that they had this problem. When that 25 percent are viewed in more detail there does not appear to be any shared characteristics of these municipalities, such as they are predominantly towns or urban areas. When the data is broken down by county, there does appear to be some counties where more municipalities have this problem than others. See appendix for a more detailed look at the statistics on recruiting.

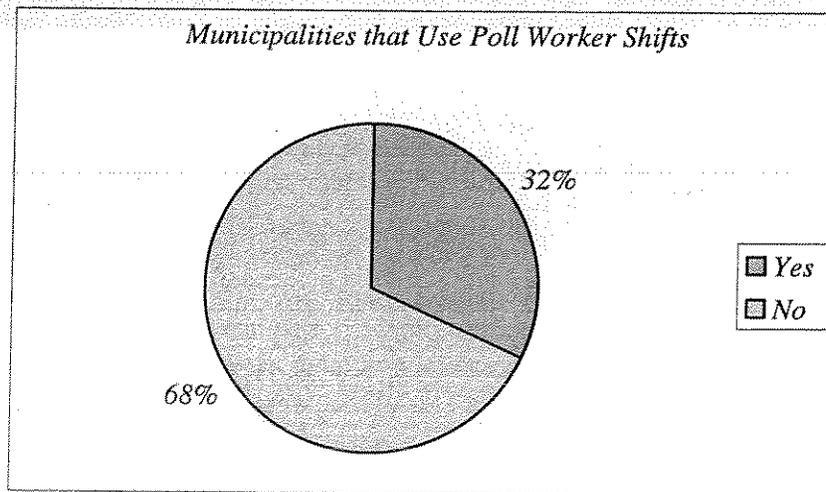
The majority of clerks rely on the conventional methods of recruiting workers such as getting lists from the local parties or simply talking with and asking individuals in their municipalities to participate. Of the clerks who have tried two of the more unconventional methods such as using high school poll workers or working with local community groups, their experiences appear to vary, with the high school poll workers appearing to be the more effective approach. The clerks also had a variety of solutions to the issue of recruiting, with some of them being more feasible than others.

	Towns	Villages	Cities
	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents
Yes	187	98	52
No	661	230	119
Percentage Stating Yes	23%	29%	30%

<i>Main ways that recruiting is done (Respondents were asked to mark all methods that they use)</i>	
	Number of Respondents
Word of mouth	1079
Other poll workers recommend individuals	885
Political parties	252
Other- specified below	239
Advertising	182
Civic groups or volunteer organizations	38
Sign-up Sheet at the polling place or town hall	53
Clerk makes phone calls to possible workers	33
Newsletter	31
People just volunteer	25
Recommendations from the town board	19
Posting Notices in the town hall	7
Announcement made at board/council meetings	6
Working with the local high schools and high school teachers	5
Article in the local newspaper	4
Web Site	3
Sending a letter out to the community	3
Begging and Pleading	2

<i>The Main Obstacles to Recruiting Poll Workers</i>	
	Number of Respondents
Community Members work full time and cannot take a day off	310
Community Members are just not interested	231
Required to work too many hours on election day	91
Not enough compensation	67
Other- specified below	63
Intimidated about making a mistake, too much training, many community members are too old or too young, snow birds, too much paper work	

<i>What can be done to help municipal clerks recruit poll workers?</i>	
	Number of Respondents
Offer more pay	30
Have employers allow a person to work at the polls with out having to take a vacation day	17
SEB could do advertising or provide the local clerks with advertising materials to distribute and use	16
Offer shifts	11
Shorten the hours that the polls are open, do not require small communities to open at 7 a.m.	8
Have political parties take a more active role in recruiting workers	8
Remove the necessity that people must be affiliated with a political party to work	6
Eliminate same day registration	5
Simplify the procedures so that people were not intimidated by the process	4
Have election day on Saturday	4
Remove the requirement that poll workers must reside in a municipality to work there	4
Recognition of the poll workers and their hard work	2
Better polling place facilities	2
Get younger people more involved in the process	2
Institute vote by mail	1
Eliminate training	1



TRAINING

The majority of poll workers in Wisconsin are receiving little or no training outside of the chief inspector training conducted by the State Elections Board. Many municipal clerks stated that their training entailed a quick review before the polls open on election day or learning on the job. The majority of the municipal clerks and county clerks have received some type of training though, the length and extent of this training varies.

Training currently done by municipal clerks for poll workers

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Nothing	686	51%
1-3 hours	641	48%
3-6 hours	17	1%
6 or more	3	0.2%

	Towns		Villages		Cities	
	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Nothing	447	53%	170	52%	69	57%
1-3 hours	386	46%	156	48%	99	82%
3-6 hour	12	1%	2	1%	3	2%
6 or more	3	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Summary of what the training entails

Training done by the municipal clerks varies from a 1-2 hour session before each election to a half hour session before the polls open. The majority of the training is informal with the clerk using the Election Day manual, prepared by the State Elections Board and or materials that they have created. The topics covered in the training include all aspects of the poll worker's duties and pertinent forms and procedures.

Training currently done by county clerks

The amount of training conducted by county clerks is disparate across the state. It appears that many clerks try to make some training sessions available on an annual or biannual basis. These trainings last from 1-2 hours to a half day. Most clerks were not specific about what the content of the training was.

Response of Municipal Clerk's Survey

County clerk provides election-related training to municipal clerks

Yes	539	40%
No	808	60%

County clerk provides election-related training to poll workers

Yes 445 33%

No 902 67%

Response of County Clerk's Survey

County clerk provides election-related training to municipal clerks

Yes 28 56%

No 22 44%

County clerk provides election-related training to poll workers

Yes 19 38%

No 31 62%

Future Trainings

The majority of the municipal clerks, 60 percent, and county clerks, 80 percent, are interested in receiving more election-related training. The Statewide Voter Registration System will be implemented by January 1, 2006, causing many new municipalities to have voter registration for the first time, so it is no surprise that clerks are very interested in training on this topic. As the State Elections Board begins planning the training sessions to be held in the future, this list will be used to decide the specific topics to be covered. Survey responses from municipal clerks stressed the need for hands-on training with visuals of materials. The clerks also commented on the need for flexibility in the location and timing of the trainings. For example having training sessions on a Saturday afternoon and evening training sessions.

<i>Topics that Municipal Clerks Would Like to Receive Training On</i>	
	Number of Respondents
Voter Registration, including deciding a voter's residency and the new SVRS system	136
Would like to have any training offered by SEB	105
Anything New	81
Refresher course on everything	81
Absentee Ballots	34
Forms	14
Would like to learn how to train their own poll workers	14
Election Laws	13
Voting Equipments	12
Duties	10
Posting Notices	9
Provisional Ballots	7
Counting Ballots	6
HAVA	6
Mock Election	5
Campaign Finance	4
Pre-Election Preparations	4
Recount	3
Challenge	2
Post Election	2
After the Polls Close, Observers, Election Day, Nursing Home Voting, Closing Polls, Board of Canvass	1

<i>Topics that County Clerks Would Like to Receive Training On</i>	
	Number of Respondents
Trainings on all type of aspects of an election	18
Registration and the new SVRS system	7
Campaign Finance	3
HAVA- the new regulations and the new accessible voting equipment	3
Board of canvassers	2
Getting candidates on the ballot	1
Creating Ballots	1
Train the Trainer for Chief Inspector Training	1
Recounts	1

<i>Main Issues and Topics Municipal Clerks Would Like to Have Their Poll Workers Trained On</i>	
	Number of Respondents
Pre-Election Preparations	16
Election Day Activities	288
Post Election	221
None of the Above	722
Other (specific answers are listed below)	99
Refresher of all of the above	27
Voter Registration	20
Forms	5
Challenge Procedures	4
Both Election Day and Post Election Activity	5
Professional Conduct	3
Confidence	1
Counting Ballots	1
Duties	1
Voting Equipment	1
Observers	1
Partisan Primary	1

CHIEF INSPECTOR TRAINING

Due to the statutory requirement that a certified chief inspector be at each polling place, the State Elections Board did a series of training with one session conducted in almost every county throughout the state, the majority of the trainings were done during August through September of 2004, with several regional trainings done in October 2004 and January of 2005.

2004 Chief Inspector Trainings

The initial chief inspector trainings spanned from August through October 2004. The trainings were conducted by five Elections Specialists from the State Elections Board.

Every municipal clerk, one chief inspector and one alternate chief inspector as well as county clerks were invited to attend. For a nominal fee of \$50 per person, each municipality could opt to take more poll workers to the training session if they chose. There were approximately 7,570 attendees at the 143 sessions which were held.

The training sessions entailed a three hour PowerPoint presentation which covered every aspect of the Election Day process from opening the polling place to completing the forms and the counting of votes at the end of the night. Each participant was given an Election Day manual, which is a comprehensive guide created by the State Elections Board staff, to be used as a reference tool for poll workers on election day.

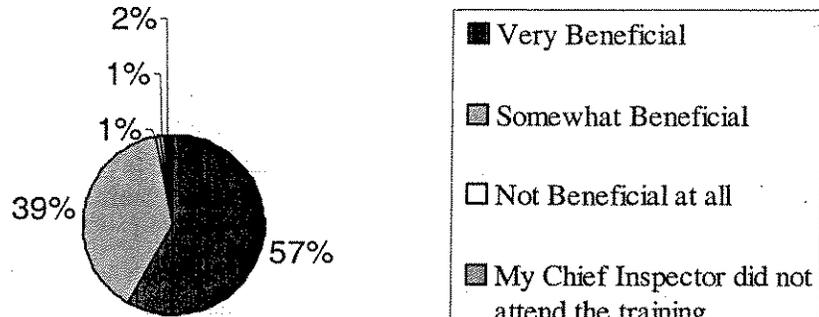
Overall the response to the trainings was very positive. An evaluation was conducted at the end of each session and on average the participants rated the trainings as "excellent" to "good." Many poll workers who had been working for years said that they even learned something new at the training.

2005 Chief Inspector Trainings

A second set of chief inspector trainings was conducted during the months of January and February in 2005 in order for poll workers who had been newly selected to attend. A total of 228 people attended the 10 sessions which were held.

The format of the training did not differ much from the initial training, but the State Elections Board staff did revise some of the materials and presentation based on the feedback they had received from the previous set of trainings.

How beneficial was the training in helping your Chief Inspector(s) to conduct a better election and feel more confident on election day?



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been suggested to the State Elections Board by clerks and the State Elections Board staff. The State Elections Board understands that the feasibility of some of the suggestion would be complex, but believe that these ideas merit at least a discussion by the Legislature.

- Permit poll workers to reside outside of the municipality where they work.
- Mandate a minimum number of hours for poll worker training.
- The State could provide an additional \$25-\$50 for each poll workers who work at the September and November elections and the Presidential Preference Primary during years of a presidential election. The estimated cost for this would be \$1 million per election based on 20,000 poll workers receiving \$50.
- The State could provide additional compensation to each Chief Inspector at each election.
- Encourage municipalities to use high school poll workers.
- Encourage municipalities to use shifts of poll workers.
- Encourage polling place consolidation.
- Change poll worker term to begin in January of even-numbered years, this would allow poll workers to work two elections in the spring before a general election.
- The State Elections Board could make pamphlets available to local clerks to help in their recruitment of poll workers. These could be created in both pamphlet format and as a poster. These could be posted to the State Elections Board Web site and downloaded for free by the clerks. Several states have already created similar pamphlets. See appendix for examples. The Board could also create pamphlets targeted at the county level political party leadership, reminding the party to submit lists of poll workers to local clerks.
- The State Elections Board could create public service announcements (PSA) on the need for poll workers. The PSAs could be made available for the clerks to utilize.
- The State Elections Board could contact some of the state's major employers and the chamber of commerce to see if corporations would be interested in partnering with local municipalities and help the clerks with the recruiting of poll workers.

- It is clear that there is both a desire and need for more election training throughout the state. Unfortunately, there are certain constraints which prevents the State Elections Board from doing all of the requested training. If the State Elections Board was able to create some materials which clerks could either order or download from its Web site, clerks would be able to conduct training at their convenience and adapt this training to the needs of their poll workers. A training module with approximately ten different ten minute segments which would be available on the internet and on DVD might be a viable way to overcome this obstacle. The training modules could have a workbook component and a test component. The University of Wisconsin Extension offices have assisted many state agencies with their training efforts and could to work with the State Elections Board staff to create a training set like this.
- The Association of Graphic Designers (AIGA) has developed a project called Design for Democracy to assist election administrators in the design of their materials. Design for Democracy's purpose is, "an initiative to enable greater participation in the American civic experience through careful design of how public information is presented and how interactions between government and the governed occur." See appendix for examples. Wisconsin should consider requesting a graphic designer from the Design for Democracy Project to review the State Elections Board's forms, voter information and other materials and work with the State Elections Board staff to improve the clarity and design of the forms and materials. Please note, there is a cost involved with this process.
- The State Elections Board should remind municipal clerks about the importance of paying poll workers at least minimum wage for their work on election day. On the other hand there are many incentives, which are not monetary that could also be effective in communicating to poll workers the important role they have in the administration of elections. The State Elections Board should also encourage local clerks to work with their local businesses to provide recognition of the important job poll workers do on election day. This recognition could be as simple as a bakery providing doughnuts for the workers or a municipal clerk purchasing pins for the poll workers to wear on election day.
- The State Elections Board could collect and disseminate best practices on recruiting to municipalities that are in need of this information.
- Create legislation authorizing the use of auxiliary non-partisan employees to assist the poll workers at the polling place in roles such as greeter, runner.
- Make election day a state holiday.
- Encourage clerks to provide extra benefits to poll workers such as a paid meal or snacks on election day.
- Barbeque at the state capitol for poll workers, to recognize the important contribution they make.

- Eliminate non-partisan primary in February.
- The State Elections Board could conduct a mock election for training purposes with voting equipment and ballots.
- The State Elections Board could work with other state agencies such as Department of Human Services and the Department of Workforce Development to encourage them to alert the people whom they serve about working as a poll worker.
- The State Elections Board could work with the Wisconsin Professional Police Association to encourage its members to become more educated about the election process and possibly to recruit them to work as poll workers.
- Wisconsin could partner with a company to create some supplemental online training for poll workers and or municipal clerks. There are some companies such as HAVA Partners that are offering this type of service. Please see appendix for the proposal from HAVA Partners as well as the estimated costs.

EXAMPLES FROM OTHER ELECTION JURISDICTIONS

City of Los Angeles and the State of Missouri

The City of Los Angeles and the state of Missouri both have novel recruiting programs. The City of Los Angeles started a program to have one city employee assist the Chief Poll Worker at each polling place. See more information in the attached appendix. The employee's role was to trouble-shoot and be there if there are any problems at the polling place. The employee is not required to take a vacation day when they volunteer. The staff at the Los Angeles City Clerk's Election Division said that the program was first implemented in Fall of 2004 and the results were positive, they will continue the program in the future. In an effort to recruit younger poll workers, the state of Missouri is working with the Michigan House Civics Commission, located in Lansing Michigan. More information about this organization can be found at: www.civicscommission.com.

Johnson County Kansas

In Johnson County Kansas, the county solicits non-profit organization to be responsible for staffing an entire polling place. See appendix for more detailed information. In exchange for their efforts, the non-profit volunteers have their wages donated to the non-profit. The State Elections Board could create a list of some of these best practices and make them available to local clerks who request the information.

North Carolina

North Carolina is implementing an innovative approach to their training. Its poll worker training is done at the county level. North Carolina's election staff found that the quality of training varies between the counties, so they are implementing a uniform statewide training program in the Fall of 2005. The new training will be supplemental to the training done currently and it is voluntary for the poll workers. The training will be offered through community colleges throughout the state. The North Carolina Board of Elections is working with the colleges to determine the content of the curriculum as well as the materials used during the session. Like a normal college course, there will be test and at the end of the training and those completing the course will earn certification.

APPENDICES

Example of Surveys

Graphs and Charts of Survey Results

Examples of brochures from other states on poll worker recruiting

Detailed information about the Adopt a Polling Place Program of Johnson County in Kansas

Examples of Design for Democracy projects

Proposal from HAVA Partners

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