

November 2, 2004 General Election Report December 10, 2004

2004 General Election Statistical Information and Interesting Facts:

- ★ Turnout: 70% compared to the statewide turnout of 77.32%.
- ★ Highest turnout in a precinct: 86% (Ward 13, Precinct 6)
- ★ Voters registering at the polls: 48,611 compared to 46,627 in 2000
- ★ Absentee ballots cast: 14,147 (record number)
- ★ Election Judges appointed: 2,278
- ★ Precinct Support staff: 13
- ★ Election Judge training classes conducted: 69 classes or 152 hours of classroom instruction
- ★ The final class was held the day before the election in City Hall with 70 plus attendees, many of which were City employees serving as back-up election judges
- ★ New Election Judges recruited: 771
- ★ Student Election judges: 200, with all seven Minneapolis public high schools and one private school participating in the Student Election Judge Program
- ★ Served 26 nursing homes and 1,102 residents with absentee ballots
- ★ “Kids Voting Minneapolis” made its debut
- ★ Election day calls: 1,265 calls, with 96% answered within 30 seconds
- ★ On election day 78 City staff members from 24 departments or divisions helped by serving as election judges, absentee ballot delivery, answering phones or other functions

Planning and Preparations:

Some have said that election officials only work “two days a year”. In Minneapolis, that statement couldn’t be further from the truth. In fact, early planning was a key element to the success of the 2004 election process.

Minneapolis Elections office staff began preparations as early as December, 2003 when meetings were held with city clerks and election administrators in the metro area to share ideas and plan for election judge training and procedure manuals for the 2004 elections. Changes at the federal level and some changes at the state level required revisions to all training and procedural materials.

Preparations continued in a number of other areas of election administration:

Voter Registration

- Heavy emphasis was placed on communicating voter pre-registration. Voter registration applications and “Register to Vote Here” signage was provided to Parks, Library, Fire and Police stations and a number of locations within City Hall.
- University of MN Voter Registration initiatives: Beginning in February, 2004 Minneapolis Election officials and City Council representatives met with U of M

staff to develop plans for pre-registration of students and develop communication strategies for students.

- Minneapolis Election officials worked with organizations such as the League of Women Voters to provide tools for voter education and registration.

Communication

A communication strategy was developed in March of 2004 with the goal of educating voters about the election process in Minneapolis. Listed below are some of the tools used to meet that goal:

- Utility bill insert
- Web updates with a new web based polling place finder that was launched right after the primary
- Guest appearances on City Beat cable show before the primary and general
- Numerous media interviews and one press conference with the Mayor at the Brian Coyle Community Center, the site of a new polling place
- News media releases to coincide with election benchmarks
- Coordination with Hennepin County communications to disseminate a clear, concise message
- Upon request of the Minnesota Secretary of State assisted in the production of a voter orientation video and an election judge training video. Minneapolis Election Judges were used in these productions as well.
- Aired the Secretary of State's office "Voter Orientation Video" on City Cable channel 14
- Worked with Telecommunications to install a new ACD phone system to better answer calls from the public prior to and on election day
- Worked with the City's Multicultural Services to provide election day posters and other materials in six languages and interpreter services
- Provided training and reference tools to Council and Mayor office staff and City Operator staff on basic election procedures

Absentee Voting

- The Elections office processed 4,000 absentee ballot requests on the first day of absentee voting. Due to the increased interest in absentee voting, the Minneapolis Elections office extended absentee voting hours to include the two Saturdays preceding the general election. State law requires city offices to be open the Saturday before the election from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., but hours were extended to 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. A record number of absentee ballots were cast in the 2004 general election.

Polling Places

- All Minneapolis polling places were reviewed and evaluated for size. Staff worked with building managers to get the largest rooms in which to conduct the elections. Polling places were also surveyed for accessibility in order to meet state and federal laws.
- Thirteen polling places were moved to better accommodate the anticipated larger crowds in a presidential election.

- A voting precinct on the U of M campus was added to accommodate the anticipated large turnout. In late May, Council approved polling places and a split of the old Ward 2, Precinct 4 into two voting precincts. One precinct was designed to accommodate the “super block” of dorms and the other with the remainder of residents in the area at a central, well known location: Coffman Union.

Election Judge Recruiting, Training and Staffing

- Election Judge training started in July and continued until the day before the election. All new training materials were prepared for 2004. Classes were tailored for new judges, veteran judges, chair judges and health care judges. They were held at four different locations throughout the city and in City Hall.
- Election judges were trained to use a Greeter Judge on election day whose job was to “triage” voters as they entered the building so they knew they were in the correct place. Voters were then organized in one line and served in order of their arrival creating a more organized and calm atmosphere especially at peak voter times.
- Staffing levels for Election Judges were increased at most polling places, and 123 election judges donated their time to help defer some of the cost of increased staffing levels.

Election Day Issues

- Polling places were equipped with the maximum amount of voting booths and supplies which required many hours of preparation by the Elections office equipment technician who packed supplies and supervised the transportation of supplies to 131 voting precincts.
- Ballot quantities were determined on a number of factors and not a flat percentage as has been done in the past. Considerations included voter turnout statistics from past elections, precincts with new housing units, and precincts with high election day registrations.
- There were some problems on election day but of 149 documented incidents on election day from election judges and the public, the majority of them were related to campaigning, or supplies and equipment issues.
- Precinct support staff (one designated for each ward) responded quickly and resolved problems at polling places with the use of two way radios.
- The Elections Office worked with the Emergency Communication Center and Public Safety officials to provide dispatchers and responders with polling place locations and have 9-1-1 calls from polling places handled as priority calls.

Evaluation and Opportunities

Post election evaluation and debriefings with election judges are currently being conducted and will continue into next year to identify areas where improvements can be made for future elections. The Elections Office appreciates the support of the Mayor and City Council Offices which helps the office achieve its mission of facilitating the maximum participation of all Minneapolis residents eligible to vote.

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