

DuPage County Election Summary General Primary Election – March 16, 2004

May 18, 2004

Introduction

This document outlines the areas of DuPage election support that I was personally involved with where I believe there is room for improvement. Some of these ideas were generated by discussions at the DuPage post-election meeting and others from my own evaluation of the processes that I observed during the recent election.

Suggestions for Improvement

Pre-election planning – In order to properly plan for all the tasks and deadlines that are involved with an election in DuPage, we need to develop a formal project plan and project schedule. These planning devices will help ensure that important tasks are not overlooked, and that critical dates and deadlines are recorded and shared between the DuPage Election Commission staff and Fidar.

Suggestions:

DELETED

Election Day Support of Polling Places – We were able to successfully handle the volume of polling place visits with the team of four Field Technicians that we had on Election Day. However, we found that most of the problems that we encountered could have been resolved over the phone when the initial call was made from the polling place to the phone staff at the courthouse. This strategy would require keeping a team of 2-3 “experienced” Fidar people at the courthouse to assist the DuPage phone support staff with the calls that they receive from the polling places.

Suggestions:

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Public Test – Even though the public test ran smoothly, there are things that could be done to speed up the test, and prevent confusion with the machine operators while they are running the test. There seemed to be many redundant test ballots that were testing the same ballot combinations and “blank” and “over-vote” conditions for each ballot style. The test decks for some of the precincts were large, which takes more time to process.

Also, some of the testers were confused on how to handle blank and over-vote conditions, and what type of print-out to produce after running the ender card. Doreen provided them with a copy of instructions out of the AccuVote reference guide, but we need something more specific that is directed towards running a public test.

Suggestions:

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Absentee Ballot Central Count – The processing of absentee ballots using the AccuFeed units on election night was painfully slow. Some of this can be attributed to the poor condition of the Absentee ballots that were processed that night. The ballots had the typical folds from being sent in the mail, but there were many that had been bent, crumpled, and torn. These ballots caused many stoppages due to pick failures, ballot jams, and ballot read failures where the ballot was rejected by the AccuVote and had to be re-read.

Another factor that contributed to the long night, was the fact that most of the machine operators that we had running the AccuFeed units were seeing the AccuFeed machine for the first time on election night. There was a definite “learning curve” for each operator, since they had to become familiar with the proper way to stack and feed the ballots, and also how to respond to the stoppages, ballot jams, and overrides.

The large number of precincts that were placed onto each Absentee memory card caused problems when printing the results. We had 20 precincts on each memory card, and when we printed the results, the only choice we had was to produce a full report for all 20 precincts. After running the ender card, the count program did not give the option of printing only a “summary”, and would automatically print all 20 precincts. This print

job would take approximately 40 minutes to complete, and in some cases would empty out the paper roll, and shred the printer ribbon if the print job was allowed to finish.

Suggestions:

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GEMS Server Upload Log – This log was accidentally cleared at some point during the memory card upload period on election night. The first entry in the log was recorded at 9:40pm, so the log must have been cleared around that time. When viewing the log in the OS Server window, the “Clear” and “Close” buttons are next to each other, and it’s easy to click the “Clear” button when attempting to select “Close”. When the clear button is selected, the user interface does not generate a confirmation popup asking the user “are you sure?”.

Suggestions:

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GEMS Upload Failure on York 58 – This memory card had a failed upload transmission on election night that was not detected until the next day when reports were run on the precinct, and zero results were found for each race within the precinct. The status of the memory card upload within GEMS was “successful” but the upload record showed the ballot count to be zero. It is rather discomfoting that this failed transmission was not detected on election night.

Suggestions:

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Reporting of Equipment Failures and Polling Place Visits – During the daytime support of the polling places, we neglected to properly document some of the equipment failures in the field, and their resolutions. The field technicians were given "Equipment Substitution" forms, but when they were forced to replace a machine at a polling place, some of them left the completed form at the polling place instead of bringing them back to the courthouse. When the failed machines were returned to the courthouse, they did not have this documentation with them to describe what was wrong with the machine. Because of this, each unit had to be tested to determine the failure type.

When calls were received from the polling places, the "incident" was recorded into the DuPage call tracking system. When the problem was resolved, I was supposed to enter a description of the actions that were taken by the field technician to fix the problem. Unfortunately, this "problem resolution" description did not always get entered for each trouble incident. There was a group of incidents where I only entered the word "Done" as the resolution because too much time had passed and I could not remember what the technician told me over the phone. This missing information makes it difficult to determine the specific problem that the technician saw when he arrived at the polling place, and what he did to fix the problem.

Suggestions:

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Tracking of Failed Memory Cards – When memory cards fail to read on Election Day morning or during the upload into GEMS, there is currently no process for tracking these failures, and keeping a history of each memory card. This could result in the use of the same batch of "defective" memory cards for each election, and reproducing the same problems over and over again.

Suggestions:

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Verification of "Registered Voter" Totals – The number of registered voters that were entered into the GEMS database prior to the election was incorrect. This was due to the inclusion of inactive voters, which are not supposed to be included in the totals during "even year" elections.

Suggestions:

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Dispatching of Field Technicians to Polling Places – There were several situations where I dispatched an AccuVote field technician to a polling place, and when they arrived at the polling location, the problem had already been fixed by a DuPage driver who was dispatched for a different reason, like missing supplies. This is the result of having multiple dispatchers, one for AccuVote technicians, and another for the DuPage drivers, and not knowing when a DuPage driver has already been sent to a polling place before sending an AccuVote technician.

Suggestions:

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Fidlar Responses to Issues Listed in DuPage's "Post Election Meeting Notes"

Federal Applications – Fidlar will take action to ensure that boxes to select the party choice are present on the application form.

Ballot Now – The development of new ballot printing software is currently in process. Moutaz will work with Mike and Joe at DuPage to include their recommended improvements. Bob Saar's request for a "print queue" of absentee ballot requests from NetVoter will be considered.

Poll Record Binders – Fidlar will take necessary steps to produce better looking Republican covers that have more color contrast and are easier to read and identify.

Registered Voter Totals From EMPower – Fidlar will attempt to make changes to EMPower to change the view on the export to not include the federal totals.

Inventory – Fidler will attempt to acquire the same inventory software package that DuPage uses so that electronic inventory files can be created and shared with DuPage. The tabulator serial numbers and precinct assignments will be recorded into this file during the lock & load process, and delivered to DuPage for import into their system.

Supplies – Fidler will make available some extra small and large ballot boxes.

Secrecy Cover – Changes will be considered for the secrecy cover to include instructions for the election judges on how to handle jammed ballots in the tabulator, and the importance of reading the messages on the AccuVote LCD display.

Specimen Ballots – Fidler will modify the specimen ballot verbiage to say “To be posted in polling place – not to be used for voting”

- Item 6+7, 6 pp.
- Deleted suggestion
sections pursuant
to 7(a) of the
FOIA as they
constituted
preliminary
opinion