

**SUMMARY REPORT ON VOTE CENTER DATA
TIPPECANOE COUNTY, INDIANA
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, NOVEMBER 6, 2007**

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SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

During the 2007 city elections in Lafayette and West Lafayette, voters were asked to complete questionnaires regarding the voting process at various Vote Centers. In Lafayette, four Vote Centers were selected for the distribution of questionnaires and in West Lafayette three Vote Centers were selected. The overall response rate was quite high in West Lafayette at 64.4 percent. However, this response rate decreased in Lafayette, with 31.9 percent of voters completing the questionnaire. This lower response rate is likely attributable to the layout of some of the Lafayette Vote Centers, in that much larger rooms were used and Ball State University Timers were not always in place to verbally request that exiting voters to complete the questionnaire.

We were interested in a number of questions regarding the use of Vote Centers and the opinions of the voters regarding the process. Would voters take advantage of the early voting period? Did they view the use of Vote Centers as a convenient way to vote? Was pre-election information adequate? Was the process a smooth one, with well-trained workers and limited time? The responses to the questionnaire items intended to evoke answers to these and related questions are shown in Table 1. We hoped to get a fair number of respondents from each Vote Center and, by and large, this was the case. In West Lafayette the number of respondents ranged from a low of 374 at the Federated Church in West Lafayette whereas the low number in Lafayette was the 111 respondents at the Jenks Rest Senior Center. However, we did obtain 1,245 questionnaires from Lafayette which provides a good picture of voter attitudes.

From these data it is apparent that a fairly large number of individuals took advantage of the early voting period, ranging from 24.3 percent in Lafayette to 35.0

percent in West Lafayette.

For information purposes we also asked voters if they had voted in previous elections, and if so, how often. The data show that, as one might expect, most people were repeat voters. In both cities, over 90 percent of our respondents indicated they voted either almost always or always. At the other extreme, less than 5 percent in each city were first time voters.

Regarding the convenience of Vote Centers, individuals were asked their opinion as to whether or not Vote Centers were more convenient than their old precinct, equally convenient or less convenient. Surprisingly, less than 10.0 percent of the voters surveyed stated that Vote Centers were less convenient than their old precinct. Over 80.0 percent in both cities (86.3% in Lafayette and 87.6% in West Lafayette) indicated that Vote Centers were either equally convenient or more convenient than their old precinct. This strongly indicates that the vast majority of voters have no problem shifting away from the old precinct based voting.

We also were interested in how individuals heard about using the Vote Centers. The data show that most respondents heard from either the mailed postcard or from the media. At least 50.0 percent learned about using the Vote Centers from postcards, with 56.8 percent in both Lafayette and West Lafayette learning about the Vote Centers from the media. The next highest source of information about using the Vote Centers was “word of mouth.” Of greater importance in this regard was whether or not the pre-election information was considered helpful. In part, we addressed that issue with an item that was asked in both cities. Voters were asked to rate the pre-election information about Vote Centers and 56.5 percent in Lafayette and 53.4 percent in West Lafayette said

it was excellent, coupled with over one-third (35.0% in Lafayette and 37.1% in West Lafayette) who said it was satisfactory. Thus, over 90.0 percent of the voters in both cities were at least satisfied with pre-election information about the new voting center process. Indeed, only 2.0 percent or less rated pre-election information as poor. An additional question posed only in West Lafayette dealt with the procedures for voting. We were interested in whether or not respondents, who might be dissatisfied with the process, felt that way because it was too time consuming or too complicated. However, as can be seen from the data in Table 1, only 1.7 percent thought it was too time consuming and only 0.6 percent thought it was too complicated.. Fully 89.5 percent believed the procedures for voting at the Vote Center were excellent.

We also looked at gender as a possible control for attitudes regarding our other variables and to ensure that our respondents were not skewed in one direction. Regarding gender, women were a bit more likely to respond to the questionnaire, with 51.6 percent doing so in West Lafayette and 56.8 percent in Lafayette. Based on these results, it does not appear our respondents were highly skewed to one gender as opposed to the other. When attitudes were controlled by gender there was no appreciable difference between male and female respondents.

Table 1

Survey Results - 2007 City General Election; Lafayette & West Lafayette Vote Centers

Item	<u>Lafayette</u>		<u>West Lafayette</u>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
When voted:				
Early	303	24.3	500	35.0
Election Day	<u>942</u>	75.7	<u>930</u>	65.0
Total:	1,245		1,430	
Voting Center:				
St. Lawrence	279	22.4		
Jenks Rest Senior	111	8.9		
4-H Fairgrounds	708	56.9		
Evangelical	147	11.8		
Purdue Memorial Union			421	29.4
Federated Church			374	26.2
Calvary Baptist Church			635	44.4
How often voted in past elections:				
First Time	32	2.6	62	4.3
Rarely	16	1.3	8	0.6
Occasionally	23	1.8	48	3.4
Almost Always	420	33.7	516	36.1
Always	751	60.3	790	55.2
No Answer	3	0.2	6	0.4
Which best represents your opinion of Voting Centers:				
More convenient than old precinct	575	46.2	838	58.6
Less convenient than old precinct	81	6.5	91	6.4
Equally convenient	499	40.1	414	29.0
I haven't made up my mind	73	5.9	73	5.1
No answer	17	1.4	14	1.0

Table 1. (Cont'd.)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Lafayette</u> Frequency - %		<u>West Lafayette</u> Frequency - %	
<u>How did you learn about using the Voting Center: (multiple responses possible)</u>				
Postcard	637	51.2	721	50.4
Word of mouth	200	16.1	220	15.4
Party official	45	3.6	39	2.7
Candidate	63	5.1	75	5.2
Media	707	56.8	812	56.8
Other	149	12.0	137	9.6
<u>Pre-election information about Vote Centers provided to the public was:</u>				
Excellent	704	56.5	763	53.4
Satisfactory	436	35.0	530	37.1
Fair	64	5.1	88	6.2
Poor	15	1.2	28	2.0
No answer	26	2.1	21	1.5
<u>The procedures for voting at the Vote Center were:</u>				
Excellent	N/A		1280	89.5
Too time consuming	N/A		24	1.7
Too complicated	N/A		9	0.6
Generally poor	N/A		10	0.7
Unsatisfactory	N/A		13	0.9
Other	N/A		81	5.7
<u>Gender:</u>				
Male	527	42.3	684	47.9
Female	707	56.8	738	51.6
No answer	11	0.9	7	0.5

SUMMARY OF DATA ON THE VOTE PROCESS IN VOTE CENTERS

To ascertain the extent to which the Vote Centers on Election Day efficiently operated in terms of processing voters through the various stations the Ball State University Timers selected the tenth person in line and followed that voter through all the stations until he/she had completed voting. Each step of the voting process was timed. The following tables contain the mean times it took to vote in the Lafayette and West Lafayette Vote Centers where Timers were present.

<u>Vote Center</u> <u>Voters</u>	<u>Mean time to Vote (Minutes)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Total</u>
4-H Fairgrounds	7.12	52	1630
Evangelical Covenant Church	3.21	87	842
St. Lawrence Church	4.52	66	582
Purdue Memorial Union	6.06	72	692
Cavalry Baptist Church	5.59	44	583
Jenks Rest Senior Center	8.14	66	753
Federated Church	NA	NA	NA

NOTE: The data for the Vote Center at Federated Church were improperly coded, but the data will be available after re-coding.

No Vote Center recorded a time exceeding 10 minutes. There does appear to be some variation in time spent in the process by the number of election-day voters at the Vote Center, with fewer overall voters contributing somewhat to quicker times, but this was not uniformly the case. The highest mean time was recorded at Jenks Rest Senior Center where a large proportion of the 753 election-day voters were senior citizens. Overall, when the voting process takes less than 10 minutes from the time a citizen enters the polling place, the procedures must be viewed as efficient.