

## **Teller County Primary Election Report**

### **Executive Summary:**

I served as an Election Observer for the 2012 Teller County Primary Election. I was an observer from June 18, 2012, through June 27, 2012. Primary Election Day was on June 26, 2012. My immediate discovery on June 18, 2012 was that the Teller County election staff was not prepared to produce the Primary Election the following Tuesday, June 26, 2012.

Paula Barnett from the SCORE Team from the Secretary of State's office was on-site and had been on site for several days prior to my arrival to assist the election staff with SCORE and election matters.

In summary, there was a history prior to this election where the former election department manager was not doing her job and was moved out of the position, two weeks prior to the election. However, the Clerk should have been managing this department and staff and taking more responsibility for the election process from January 1, 2012. Other staff should have been involved in the organization of the Primary Election so that others had knowledge of the Election Plan. The entire election was disorganized until election night.

Issues that contributed to a difficult election were:

1. Lack of training and comprehension of SCORE.
2. Lack of leadership and training.
3. Missing the Affidavit of the Voter on the ballot return envelope, (this was a major complication.)
4. No detailed election plan for the primary election process.
5. Fires in El Paso County and Teller County throughout early voting and on Primary Election Day.

Paula Barnett and I had a conference call with the Secretary of State's office on Tuesday, June 19 and asked the Secretary of State's office for additional resources to prepare and run the Primary Election. If the Secretary of State's office had not sent additional resources to Teller County prior to the election and during the election, voting may not have occurred and Election Day and Election Night could have been very problematic. The Secretary of State's office did send Christy Heppard to manage the Primary Election.

The following are observations (and suggested remedies) for the lack of preparedness and training for the 2012 Teller County Primary Election:

### **SCORE Issues:**

- The major issue of this election was the ballot envelope that went to mail in voters was sent without a voter signature affidavit. This was a difficult complication that made it hard for the ballot receiving judges and staff to understand how to count, how to organize and then follow-up with a letter to the voter who sent in their ballot without an affidavit. This issue became more complicated as the election process continued. The staff and the judges had to separate the ballots that were received in Cripple Creek, from the Ballots received in Woodland Park; then further separate the ballots with signed affidavits, no affidavit, but a signature; ballots with no signature, and ballots that were correct.
- Teller County had a lack of understanding of SCORE and the SCORE election process. Although staff had attended clerk meetings and training, they had not been able to comprehend and remember the basics of the SCORE program. The Secretary of State's office had been assisting staff via telephone, prior to the election. Paula Barnett, SCORE staff was in Teller County assisting staff with SCORE and stayed for a week and one-half prior to the election, and then through the Primary Election Day, and the day following the Primary Election. Since the election, Paula has been assisting election staff in order to close and canvas this election.

### **Suggested SCORE Remedies:**

- Clerk needs a basic understanding of specific SCORE modules so that she can train and assist judges and staff or ask the necessary questions of the SCORE Help Desk when needed.
- Election Manager and one or two additional staff need intense SCORE training as soon as possible. All reports and functions need to be learned prior to the General Election.
- SCORE Training may require sending election staff to Denver for a hands on training class.
- Use of Secretary of State tools, Election Planner and Calendar need to be strictly followed.
- A second SCORE work station needs to be set up in the election ballot processing room, so that more than one judge or staff can work at a time.
- Several key Judges need to be trained on basic pre-and post election functions such as receiving ballots and running SCORE reports.

### **Organizational and Leadership Issues:**

The Clerk for Teller County had not managed the election team properly for the team to produce the 2012 Primary Election. The election manager was new and had not been trained well enough to conduct the primary election. It did not appear that there were written plans to perform this election. The Clerk had given complete responsibility to a former election manager who was dismissed 2 weeks prior to the election; however it appeared that the Clerk had not been very involved in overseeing and managing the election process.

There was a lack of leadership, and training on all levels had been poorly executed. Staff had not been properly directed, and this trickled down to the lack of detailed training with the Judges during the election and on Election Day.

It was discovered one week before the Teller County Primary Election that the vote center at the Florissant Library had not been reconfirmed. (The Florissant Library is closed on Tuesdays).

If the Secretary of State's office had not sent Election Staff, Christy Heppard, and SCORE staff, Paula Barnett to Teller County to manage the primary election, county voting and ballot processing and counting may not have occurred in the 2012 Teller County Primary election.

### **Suggested Remedies:**

- Clerk should attend all Clerk meetings, and should collaborate with other County Clerks, to ask questions about the election process.
- Clerk should review Title I and Rules, follow the Secretary of State's Election Planner and Calendar, step by step.
- Clerk and Staff need a review process whereby any materials that are mailed to electors are double checked several times.
- A daily meeting and plan should be scheduled with all election staff beginning as soon as the Primary Election Canvas is completed; to plan for the 2012 General Election.
- All staff involved with election process should only be able to schedule vacations and time off after the final canvas of the General Election in November 2012. Black out vacation dates need to be discussed with staff one year prior to any election(s). No vacations should be allowed from September through the General Election in 2012.
- Clerk needs to research previous election records in SCORE and in the courthouse to be able to determine how many voters have typically voted in Teller County in previous elections. These numbers are helpful in setting up any future election, for judges, vote centers, ordering of ballots and supplies, etc.
- Simple organizational tools need to be at all desks; i.e. calendars, election calendars, staff directories and election notebooks would be helpful.
- Clean and organize the supply closet.
- The ballot processing room needs to be set up like an office and must have calendars, paper and basic office supplies.
- All election areas need to be organized carefully, inquire with Teller County to use the back room in the basement of the courthouse for storing non-security election items, i.e. the signs and election supplies. More room is necessary for the ballot processing and the counting area to keep it organized.
- Clerk needs to ask the Teller County Commissioners for permission for the election staff to work over-time, and for some compensation either monetary or comp time off after the general election. Staff needs to have the expectation that they will be working late nights and weekends in order to produce the next election.
- Consistency is needed with judges staffing, use same judges for each separate judges responsibilities; i.e. Early Voting, Counting, Canvas. Confirm in writing and verbally

several times with judges that they will be available, these specific dates and times. This should be completed months before the election.

- Plans for using Vote Centers should be made verbally and in writing one year prior to any election. These plans should be reconfirmed by telephone with those entities several times prior to the election via phone calls and in email form, so that there are no surprises about the location of the Vote Centers prior to the election.
- Intergovernmental agreements with the entities need to be in writing for Vote Centers.

### **Polling Place Setup Issues:**

The Teller County election staff had not been trained well enough to train the judges on how to set up the Election Day in the vote centers. The Clerk and staff relied on using judges who had been in these positions previously, however the judges were not well enough trained to set up the vote centers. Some of the judges were lacking knowledge in the set up of the voting machines and in SCORE. Basic understanding of subjects such as provisional ballot processing, calling out the voter's name at the vote center, fixing problems with the voting equipment and problems with balancing were all observed.

The voting equipment was not in good repair or order.

### **Suggested Remedies:**

- A manila poll book needs to be at every vote center, these poll books are numbered, and each elector needs to sign in when they arrive at the Vote Center. Or, a printed E-Poll Book, where the elector signs next to his typed name needs to be at the vote centers. This is another accounting of the number of voters who come into vote for the end of the night accounting. This would give the judges three accounting processes; a written poll book, signature cards and SCORE. With the three systems, usually if an error has occurred during the day, the error can be accounted for through one or all of these systems. In the written poll book, it should also be noted if a voter will vote on the electronic equipment; again another backup accounting method.
- Early Voting Judges (and supply judges) will require training in Score prior to opening the polls, go through various elector scenarios; and teach them the necessary EV001 and EV 36 reports. This training should be done the week prior to any election.
- Improve the lists of staff and working judges, with first and last names on the schedule, all contact telephone numbers and emails need to be included. Staff information needs to include extension phone number and cell phone numbers.
- Ballots need to be secured; with seals and seal logs at all times.

- All Vote Center sites should be tested for internet connectivity and SCORE access, at least two weeks prior to the election. This should not be a last minute process.
- All cards after tested and logged on a sheet as they are made and designated to each piece of equipment and the location of the equipment. Label the cards correctly. Test cards during polling place or vote center set –up.
- Sample logs are located on the Secretary of State’s website for the cards and each piece of equipment. These logs can be attached in a sleeve on each piece of equipment or attached to a clip board that travels with each piece of election equipment.
- Consider recruiting at least judge for each Vote Center who is extremely computer savvy, and can troubleshoot any issues that arrive in SCORE and with the DREs. Also, consider having a student judge’s program and one student judge at each vote center.
- Check all of the current supply boxes; follow the list that is suggested by the Secretary of State’s office. Need new tape, and some new supplies. This can be done several months before the Election Day.
- A 6 hour Judge’s Training is recommended which will include, each team of judges opening up, and setting up the DRE’s. This piece of training should be completely hands-on. Also, all judges should vote on the touch screen equipment during the training so that they can see the process.
- Several Judges for each Vote Center should have a SCORE training on the Election Day Module, this will take several hours and should be scheduled a couple of days prior to the Election. Again, this should not be one individual judge; it should be several judges from each vote center so that judges are cross-trained in the case of an emergency.
- Judge’s training needs to include; the original count of the ballots on election morning, and How to Balance the remaining ballots at the end of the election. Training on the balance formula needs to be covered. All judges need to be cross-trained on all duties.
- Teller County should work with the voting system vendor to be properly trained on the election equipment.
- Teller County needs to ensure that the election equipment is properly maintained prior to any election.
- Teller County needs to inventory the election equipment and keep a secure log of the serial numbers of this equipment.

### **Election Day Issues:**

Lack of a detailed Election Day plan was observed. Many issues occurred that could have been prevented with some of the training and planning as suggested above. I observed the Florissant Vote Center. The judges had not been cross-trained on their various duties. There were no precinct maps in this vote center. The program card for the DRE was incorrect and had to be replaced. SCORE could not be accessed until 8:30 a.m. (This was a problem from the State level). Elector names were not called out when the elector was acknowledged by the Greeter

Judge. The sign in sheet was a yellow tablet, not an e-poll book or a numbered poll book that would assist with balancing at the end of the day. The label printer did not work for the first few hours. Two of the voters were documented as voting on the DRE, when in fact they voted paper ballots. Judges were not aware that they had to hang posters. There were no name tags for the judges. The judges had to search for the keys to the ballot bags. Seals were missing for the accuvote machine. Judge's supply box was not complete and needed to be updated. Although this team of judges had worked together for many years, it was obvious that they had not had a thorough training on how to set up the DRE, and how to run a vote center. Head Judge did not have enough equipment training and had no SCORE training.

Basic understanding of subjects such as provisional ballot processing, calling out the voter's name at the vote center, fixing problems with the voting equipment and problems with balancing were all observed.

At the courthouse, the receiving ballot judges had problems all week and on Election Day, counting ballots, scanning ballots and inputting information into SCORE.

### **Suggested Remedies:**

Most of the issues that occurred during the Election Day at the Florissant Vote Center and at the Teller County Courthouse could have been resolved with a detailed and hands on training by Teller County election staff and Clerk with the Judges.

- Receiving Ballot Judges: Major Training required; Define the Process; Write down the process step, by step.
- Counting and Canvas Judges need SCORE training.
- Early Voting and Election Day Voting Judges need hands on equipment training, and detailed Election Process training.
- A minimum of a 6 hour Judge's Training should be held which will include, each team of judges opening up, and setting up the DRE's. This piece of training should be completely hands-on. Also, all judges should vote on the touch screen equipment during the training so that they can see the process.
- Several Judges for each Vote Center should have a SCORE training on the Election Day Module, this will take several hours and should be scheduled a couple of days prior to the Election.
- Judge's training needs to include; the original count of the ballots on election morning, and How to Balance the remaining ballots at the end of the election. Training on the balance formula needs to be covered.
- All judges need to be cross-trained on all duties.

### **Election Night Issues:**

Judges and staff needed additional training, organization and training for the election night process. Consideration of the press and internet access needed to be addressed. One of the election judges mentioned that she suspected that of the 7 memory cards that had been programed, only 4 of the cards had been through logic and accuracy testing.

**Suggested Remedies:**

- Additional training for the two teams of judges, the judges who receive the ballots; SCORE training and training for the counting judges.
- An open and transparent process for the Logic and Accuracy Testing. Follow the Rules for this process from the Secretary of State's office.
- A plan on Election night for the press which includes a location where they can have access to the internet.

**Post Election Day Issues:**

As previously mentioned, many of the mail-in ballot envelopes did not have signatures or signature affidavits. As required to resolve this issue, a third letter needed to be sent out to those electors whose ballots had come in, but did not contain a signature affidavit. Also a telephone call to each elector whose signature was missing was required to be made by Teller County election staff. This process was being organized by election staff the day after the election.

**Suggested Remedies:**

- Clerk and election staff needs to organize a proofing system for all materials that are mailed out to voters.

**Training Issues:**

Overall, as mentioned in the Executive Summary, there was a lack of training of the Clerk, the staff and the judges for the Teller County Primary Election. This was observed in almost every step of the election process prior to and during the election.

**Suggested Remedies:** Some of these suggestions have been mentioned previously in this report:

A 6 hour Judge's Training; which will include, each team of judges opening up, and setting up the DRE's. This piece of training should be completely hands-on. Also, all judges should vote on the touch screen equipment during the training so that they can see the process.

- Several Judges for each Vote Center should have a SCORE training on the Election Day Module, this will take several hours and should be scheduled a couple of days prior to the Election. Again, this should not be one individual judge; it should be several judges from each vote center so that judges are cross-trained.
- Judge's training needs to include; the original count of the ballots on election morning, and How to Balance the remaining ballots at the end of the election. Training on the balance formula needs to be covered.
- Teller County election staff should work with the voting system vendor to be properly trained on the election equipment.
- Teller County should recruit at least judge for each Vote Center who is extremely computer savvy, and can troubleshoot any issues that arrive in SCORE and with the DREs.
- Teller County should consider having a student judge's program and one student judge at each vote center.
- All Teller County staff members need to attend all judge's training, including MV and Recording staff, and Clerk will need to close the office for a few hours to accomplish this.

### **Summary:**

In summary, there was a history prior to this election where the former election department manager was not doing her job and was moved out of the position, two weeks prior to the election. However, the Clerk should have been managing this department and should have taken more responsibility for the election process from January 1, 2012. Other clerk staff should have been involved in the organization of the Primary Election so that several employees had knowledge of the Election Plan. The entire election was disorganized until election night.

Issues that contributed to a difficult election were:

1. Lack of training and comprehension of SCORE.
2. Lack of leadership and training.



3. Missing the Affidavit of the Voter on the ballot return envelope, this was a major complication.
4. No detailed election plan for the primary election process.
5. Fires in El Paso County and Teller County throughout early voting and on Primary Election Day.

To move forward: Staff needs to consider the remedies as suggested in this report.

1. Teller County staff needs to have the desire to learn the election process, SCORE and election procedures.
2. Election training and organization need to begin immediately in Teller County
3. The Teller County Clerk needs to manage and direct staff and use the Election Planner and Election Calendar as provided by the Colorado Secretary of State to manage the election process.
4. Teller County Clerk and staff need to educate themselves on Rules and Title I Law and follow these Election laws.

*The above observations were compiled from notes taken prior to, during and after the Teller County Primary Election completed on July 12, 2012 by Peggy Nerlin.*