

Florida Senate Committee on Ethics and Elections  
Testimony Regarding the 2012 General Election  
Pat Thomas Committee Room, 412 Knott Building  
Monday, January 14, 2013  
10:00am

Statement of  
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Chairman Latvala, Vice-Chair Sobel, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on the 2012 General Election in Escambia County. I applaud the committee for holding this hearing to gain insight from election administrators on how to improve upon our system of conducting elections in the nation's fourth-most populous state.

Change has been a constant theme in Florida election administration since I first took office in 2005. Many of the reforms enacted at the state and federal level in response to the 2000 election were implemented over a period of years, and subsequent legislatures have made additional changes. Many of these efforts have been supported or suggested by Supervisors of Elections, while others we have opposed. Regardless, once the legislature works its will, we have worked diligently to implement any such changes in a timely and efficient manner.

Overall, our election team, which included poll workers, temporary election workers, full-time staff and volunteers, conducted a very successful election. Among the highlights:

- Countywide turnout exceeded 75%, above the statewide average
- Incorporated a multi-page ballot into all aspects of the election for the first time
- Increased per-hour throughput of early voters above 2008 levels, the previous high
- Largest number of registered voters at book-closing in history for Presidential election
- Deployed "Live Ballot" system for UOCAVA voters, which increased ballot delivery options for military and overseas voters
- Multi-faceted communication effort directed to voters, which focused on length of ballot, three-ways to vote, and where to vote
- Created a mobile version of our website, and actively used social media
- Implemented municipal, county commission, school board, and legislative redistricting/reapportionment

Among the biggest challenges we faced:

- The length of the ballot increased the cost and complexity of the election, and was a source of complaints from many voters.
- The statutory limitation on early voting site selection limited our ability to take maximum advantage of the early voting period. Although we added an additional early voting site, the other statutorily-authorized sites were not viable options for a variety of reasons, and several of the sites that were used had significant limitations.
- With our large number of UOCAVA voters, we received a significant number of ballots in the final few days of the election. Many of these ballots required duplication, which is a time consuming task that took place after the polls closed.
- Our policy is to verify that any voter to whom an absentee ballot is issued after precinct registers are printed (on the Sunday before Election Day) did not vote at their precinct, prior to tabulating the ballot. This verification occurs when the precinct registers are returned after polls closed.

As a member of the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections (FSASE), I join my colleagues in advocating the following two legislative priorities:

- **Length of Ballot:**
  - Amend FS 101.161 (1) to include constitutional amendments or revisions proposed by joint resolution not to exceed the 15 word caption/75 word ballot summary.
  - Repeal FS 101.56075 (4) which mandates that all voting systems utilized by voters during a state election shall permit placement on the ballot of the full text of a constitutional amendment or revision containing stricken or underlined text.
- **Early Voting:**
  - Amend FS 101.657 (1) (d) to require eight (8) days for Primary and General Elections, with the option for Supervisors to provide additional days not to exceed fourteen (14) days.
  - Amend FS 101.657 (1) (a) to allow the Supervisor the ability to select early voting sites consistent with the procedure used to select election day polling places.

From dense, coastal urban areas, to less-populated rural areas, we are blessed to live in a state wide in diversity. One of the challenges facing you as policy makers is to fashion uniform election laws that work as well for voters in Escambia, Washington, Holmes and Liberty County as they do for voters in Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Orange and Pinellas. I'm sure I speak for my colleagues in committing to work with this committee, this chamber, the House, and the Governor to help ensure the integrity, transparency, and efficiency of Florida's elections. Thank you again for the invitation to appear, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.