

Results of the Presiding Judges' Focus Groups April 25 and 27, 2010

Two of our more experienced Presiding Judges, Kathy Adelsheim and Sandy Seehaver, suggested after the 2010 General Election that we have PJs from the last several elections come together to share ideas about what needs to be improved in our elections. The goal is to make the experience of serving as a poll worker a positive one, which ultimately will enhance voters' experience and confidence in the election process.

Two Presiding Judges' Focus Groups were held on April 25 and 27, with a total of 20 PJs attending. We started each session by going over what was working well in elections. Then we talked at length about what needed to be improved and, more importantly, how to bring about those improvements. Below are the results. Please note that a couple of PJs who could not attend sent suggestions, which have been included.

What Santa Fe County's BOE is doing right in elections:

- Support on Election Day from both the technicians who visit polling places and the office staff answering phones is outstanding.
- Denise and others who train at election schools do a good job.
- Election Worker Handbook is an improvement over those of past years.
- Some polling places are good.
- Machines work well.
- Supplies at polling places mean workers always have what they need.
- Evening checkout at the Court House works well.
- Poor performers are removed.
- Separating training for PJs from that for other election workers works well.
- Early voting with Ballot on Demand is wonderful.

What We Can Do to Improve Elections		
Category	Suggestion	Disposition
Personnel	Include in instructions that PJ's job is that of problem solver, not simply one of the positions at the table or machine.	Yes, will do.
	Could PJs have a list of other PJs (and their experience) and phone numbers where to reach them for help before and early on Election Day?	No. It's better to call the BOE and not add to burdens of other PJs.
	Have an evaluation process for both elections workers and PJs.	Yes; we'll provide a sheet in PJs packet to evaluate election workers and call selected election workers on PJs.
	Develop a mentoring program for PJs: have trainee shadow experienced PJ from pick-up of supplies to turn in of PJ's supplies. Trainee gets to do everything under supervision.	Yes, will do. Ran pilot in 2011 School Board Election.
	Place new PJs in polling places with experienced PJs.	Yes, will do if possible.
Documentation	Stress in manual and training that ALL voters must identify themselves.	Yes, will do.
	Add one- or two-page aids or quick guides, What to Do with Voters and their Ballots; How to Close out the Books.	Yes, will do.
	Remove inconsistencies in training materials.	Yes, will do.
	Use 3-ring binders and replace only the pages that change after each election; have poll workers turn them in to County Clerk on Election Night.	No; very labor intensive and costly.
	Add publication date to each page in the EW Handbook.	Yes, will do.
	Add tabs to the Election Worker Handbook	No; labor intensive and costly.

	Add an index to Election Worker Handbook.	No. Short handbook with TOC.
	Give Clerks and Judges simpler set of information than PJs receive.	No: all election workers need same information in case a judge/clerk must replace a PJ.
	Ask all PJs to submit/share their personal aids/materials.	Yes, will do.
Training	Verbal information about provisional ballots given to voters is inconsistent across precincts. Need better instruction.	Green sheets in supplies explain how provisional ballots are counted. We'll stress this in training.
	Emphasize that there should be NO political discussion among poll workers from the time they enter polling place till the time they leave.	Yes, will do.
	Need more information on challengers: what they can/cannot do and how to handle problems—e.g., keeping their distance.	Yes, will do. Revised law simplifies rules on challengers.
	Break up training sessions by experience—have special training for first-time poll workers or first-time PJs.	We'll look into this, but training staff is stretched thin as it is.
	Have more hands-on training for machines.	We'll look into this. Are people willing to stay longer or go to warehouse?
	Ensure PJs get checked off on their ability to run machines.	We'll look into this. Are people willing to stay longer or go to warehouse?
	Have large training group break into smaller groups and move from station to station for different topics.	No. Don't have space to do this or enough trainers.
	Evaluate training through a test.	We'll look into this.
	Develop mentoring program for PJs: have trainee shadow experienced PJ from pick-up of supplies to turn in of PJ's supplies. Trainee gets to do everything under supervision.	Yes, will do. Ran pilot in 2011 School Board Election.

Voters	Provide in supplies laminated cards that explain what voters should expect at the polling place.	No. Cost. Also, what would go on this card?
Polling Places	Open polling places before 6:00 am. Some PJs need more than an hour to set up.	No.
	Provide phones to polling places that don't have them.	No. Cost.
	Someday – provide county cell phones and computers to precincts.	No. Cost.
	Provide a way to measure 100 ft.	Yes, will do.
	Try Ballot on Demand at one or two polling places.	No. Cost. We're not doing vote centers any time soon.
Poll Workers	Poll workers need IRS/tax information on their pay.	Not from us—we're not tax attorneys and do not want to give bad advice.
	Rotate poll workers from task to task during day to avoid boredom and mistakes.	Not a good idea. Some poll workers are very attached to their jobs.
Recruitment/ Retention	Press releases early in year explaining job, hours, pay, training, etc.	We already do this at beginning of election cycle (even years).
	Recruit high school and college students through civics classes, employment offices; Pat and PJ volunteers to speak at schools.	Yes, will do.
	Recruit veterans, college faculty members, members of civic organizations like Civitan, Elks, Rotary.	Yes, will do.

	Provide information on PERA policy.	Done. Article in <i>New Mexican</i> on Friday, May 5, 2011. Will repeat next year.
	Have grade school helpers at polling places.	Maybe. Liability issues.
	Use split schedules: problems what to do if replacements don't show up; signing final rosters, what happens if there are legal problems with returns?	No. Administrative nightmare; not cost effective.
	Provide a larger pay differential between PJs and other poll workers.	Maybe; we're looking into our budget.
	Stress the service component rather than pay.	Yes, will do.
	Get PJs who are good at team building, mentoring, and training team members.	Not always possible to tell who has these skills until they've worked.
	Put sign-up sheets in PJ packets.	Yes, will do.
	Put up recruiting tables in SFCC and at other public events, job fairs.	Yes, will do.

Next Steps

1. Kathy Adelsheim and Marty Buchsbaum will check documentation and supplies for consistency. This effort to begin in July 2011.
2. Pat will check on the use of personal computers in the polling place, per Paul D'Arcy's request. **No. Personal computers not covered by County liability provisions.**
3. Pat will find out if poll workers are employees or contractors. **Done. Poll workers are contractors.**
4. PJs need to provide a list of aids that will be helpful on Election Day. Mary Schruben will provide hers dealing with closing the books (i.e., filling in the Roster and Checklist covers).
5. Pat to send out compilation of suggestions to PJs and BOE staff along with decisions about what will be done.