

electionlineWeekly—January 8, 2009 **electionline.org**

I. In Focus This Week

Director's Note:

For 2009, Old Faces in New Places

By [Doug Chapin](#)

“Change” was a huge story in 2008, and here at the Pew Center on the States (PCS) we were right in step, as the New Year brings some significant changes in our operations here at Pew’s beautiful new building in Washington, DC:

- Effective immediately, I have agreed to take over PCS’ entire elections portfolio, including *electionline.org*, Make Voting Work, and our campaign finance reform initiatives – a daunting task to be sure, but exciting given the breadth of the work and the skill and enthusiasm of the entire elections team;
- *electionline.org*’s research director Sean Greene is joining the PCS Research team, where he will continue to focus on elections research as part of our work but will also be using his skills to tackle other state-focused projects in cooperation with the rapidly expanding and incredibly talented “R&D” staff;
- Michael Caudell-Feagan is living proof that “no good deed goes unpunished”; after establishing Make Voting Work and integrating *electionline.org* into PCS, he has now been asked to serve as a deputy director of PCS where he will be coordinating the work of my team as well as that of my colleagues in corrections and government performance; and
- Carolynn Race has received a well-deserved promotion to Manager of Program Administration for PCS, where she will be an essential part of Managing Director Sue Urahn’s PCS leadership team.

The last change is more bittersweet. December 31, 2008 marked the last day at *electionline.org* for my friend and colleague Dan Seligson, who beginning in 2009 is the new Director of Communications for the National Environmental Education Foundation. Dan has been with me as Editor of *electionline.org* literally from the very beginning in 2001, when we assembled a report on election reform in roughly eight weeks. Everything good about *electionline.org* was thanks in part to Dan - and everything bad was my fault in spite of his efforts to dissuade me. I’ll miss him.

Not everything is changing, however. We are still committed to rigorously researched, balanced analysis of election administration across the country, and we still welcome your thoughts, suggestions and criticisms about our work.

I am fortunate to have found my dream job so early in my career – seriously, is there any better place for an election geek? – and I give you my commitment to maintaining that level of enthusiasm and interest even as our work expands.

Happy New Year and here’s to a great 2009 and beyond.

Pew study finds military voters overseas from half of U.S. states face challenges

(Washington, D.C.) One-third of all U.S. states do not provide enough time to vote for military personnel stationed overseas and as many as half of all states need to improve their absentee voting process to

ensure that the votes of servicemen and women abroad will be counted, according to a report from the Pew Center on the States released today. The report, titled "[No Time to Vote: Challenges Facing America's Overseas Military Voters.](#)" is the first-ever detailed public analysis of states' voting systems for military personnel stationed overseas.

Pew undertook this state-by-state research in response to widespread concerns about challenges facing military voters abroad. Only one-third of the estimated one million ballots distributed to military and overseas voters in 2006 were actually cast or counted, according to the federal [Election Assistance Commission](#). Figures for the 2008 election are not yet available. An estimated six million military and overseas civilian voters have the right to cast absentee ballots in America's federal elections. *No Time to Vote* was developed by the Pew Center on the States' Make Voting Work initiative, which seeks to foster an election system that achieves the highest standards of accuracy, convenience, efficiency and security.

For each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, researchers calculated the amount of time it takes overseas military voters and election officials to complete each step of the absentee voting process. The researchers then determined if all of the steps could be completed in time for each state's election deadlines and assessed whether overseas military voters have enough time to vote.

The report found that:

- The District of Columbia and 16 states do not provide enough time to vote for military personnel stationed overseas. These states send out absentee ballots after the date necessary for military voters to meet all required deadlines. The states are Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.
- Three states are "at risk" for not allowing military personnel overseas enough time to vote. These states provide just five or less additional days beyond the number necessary to complete the voting process. With such a limited cushion, minimal unanticipated delays at any stage of the process—due to mail delivery or the actions of election offices or voters—will result in voters from these states being less likely to return their completed ballots in time to be counted. These states are Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Vermont.
- Six states provide enough time to vote only if military personnel overseas return their completed absentee ballots by fax or e-mail – a requirement that raises concerns about access to technology and the privacy and security of their votes. These states are Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii and Rhode Island.

"We cannot allow the men and women who defend our country to be denied the ability to exercise this basic democratic right," said Doug Chapin, Director of Make Voting Work. "While individual states have adopted a wide range of improvements, the lack of consistency across their absentee voting processes presents one of the greatest challenges to military and overseas citizens attempting to navigate the system. Fortunately, there are a number of common sense fixes that can get us closer to ensuring that all U.S. citizens have the opportunity to successfully exercise their right to vote."

Pew researchers studied whether four policy options would help the 25 states and District of Columbia that need to improve the voting process for military overseas voters:

- Expanding the use of the [Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot](#), a back-up measure for military voters who do not receive their state ballots in time;
- Allowing election materials to be transmitted electronically;
- Ensuring a minimum of 45 days to allow ballots to travel between voters and election offices; and,

- Eliminating a requirement that military voters have their completed ballots notarized before returning them.

The analysis found that all four options can bring about improvements, although not every reform is right for every state. All states could ensure time to vote by adopting a fully electronic process for transmitting all election materials between voters and election offices. Important questions have been raised about the privacy and security of returning completed ballots by fax or e-mail – but many overseas military voters would benefit significantly if states simply sent out blank ballots electronically instead of by traditional mail. Every state could also ensure time to vote by expanding the use of the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot, although this tool is only a back-up measure.

Additionally, Pew is working with the [Uniform Law Commission](#) to promote the use of a uniform law for all voters covered under the [Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act](#) (UOCAVA). Pew's goal is to have such a law adopted by states in time for the 2012 federal election.

No Time to Vote is supplemented by individual fact sheets for the 26 jurisdictions that need to improve their voting process for overseas military voters. The fact sheets are available on the Pew Center on the States Web site at www.pewcenteronthestates.org.

Make Voting Work, a project of the Pew Center on the States, examines the most pressing election problems, and undertakes and evaluates pilot projects and experiments designed to address them. This research will inform our efforts to identify effective solutions through changes in policies, practices and technology. Further information is available at pewcenteronthestates.org.

II. Election Reform News This Week

- [An audit](#) of former Hillsborough County, Fla.'s supervisor of elections Buddy Johnson's books has revealed some spending "mysteries." When the report was released on Monday, county auditors weren't sure what Johnson did with as much as \$1.7-million earmarked for new voting machines. They see no proof it went to Premier Election Solutions, the company that supplied the machines. After the release of the auditor's report, Premier Elections Solutions announced that the [county actually owed them \\$2.1 million](#). According to the *St. Petersburg Times*, commissioners requested the audit last month after Johnson stunned them with a request for a \$2.3-million infusion on his way out the door. They had approved his \$6.7-million budget request in September and expressed surprise that he was seeking an increase equal to more than a third of that little more than two months later. And now all of this has fallen squarely in the lap of [new supervisor of elections Phyllis Busansky](#) who told the paper that on her first day on the job she found the financial records in "tremendous disarray."
- Now that the Senate race in Minnesota has been [certified](#) and the action has moved to the [courts](#), officials are starting to look at [election reforms](#). Secretary of State Mark Ritchie is asking for changes that would begin even before the polls open on Election Day. He says the state's election system was strained by a near doubling in absentee voting. Nearly 300,000 people voted absentee, and thousands of ballots were disqualified. "I want to tackle those 10,000-and-some properly rejected ballots by making that system for absentee voting less confusing, less complicated. So that we have fewer people that are rejected properly, but unfortunately," Ritchie told Minnesota Public Radio. Local elections officials have suggested the state simply allow early voting, at regular polling booths, using regular ballots and vote counters. That would eliminate much of the paperwork that tripped up voters last fall.
- A new year brings new names and faces to many offices in the world of election administration but before we say hello, let's say good-bye to a few old friends who are moving on in the new year. In West Virginia, [Betty Ireland](#) is ending her historic run as the state's Secretary of State and first woman elected to a statewide office. Palm Beach County supervisor of elections [Arthur Anderson](#) stepped aside this week after failing to win his bid for re-election. In Ventura County,

Calif., clerk and recorder [Phil Schmit](#) is calling it quits after 28 years. Allen County, Ind. director of elections [Pamela Finlayson](#) is stepping down after 20 years and two voting system changes. Leavenworth County, Kan. is saying good-bye to county clerk [Linda Scheer](#) after 19 years of service. And in Ford County, which is also in Kansas, two-term county clerk [Vicki Wells](#) is retiring.

- All of us at Electionline.org and Make Vote Work would like to wish a speedy recovery to Gaston County, N.C. elections director [Frances Pinion](#) who suffered a heart attack early this week. According to the Gaston Gazette she is doing well. "She's doing great," Mozelle Cathcart, chairwoman of the Gaston County Board of Elections told the paper. "She's in good spirits."

III. Research and Report Summaries

electionline provides brief summaries of recent research and reports in the field of election administration. Please e-mail links to research to sgreene@electionline.org.

[A Threat Analysis on UOCAVA Voting Systems](#) – By Andrew Regenscheid and Nelson Hastings, The National Institute of Technology and Standards (NIST), December 2008

At the request of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, NIST researchers examined four electronic technologies that could aid citizens covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) in the voting process – telephone, fax, electronic mail and web-based voting. The report found that all four methods could expedite both voter registration and requests for blank ballots. Additionally, the faxing, emailing and use of web transmissions is seen as a viable and secure option for transmitting blank ballots to UOCAVA voters. The electronic return of voted ballots to local election officials, however, still faces serious challenges to procedural and technical security. While a number of states already deliver blank ballots electronically, NIST recommends the establishment of best practices to provide more guidance in this area.

[2008 Virginia Election Administration Survey](#) - Conducted by the Voter Registrars Association of Virginia in consultation with Dr. Michael P. McDonald, Associate Professor, George Mason University & Matthew Thornburg, PhD student, George Mason University, January 2009

The survey, conducted in July 2008, asked Virginia's local general registrars and electoral board members about a number of issues including workload, human resources, administrative resources, training and the conduct of elections. Specific questions focused on duties, salaries and benefits, number of staff, job descriptions, election official training and poll worker training and how much time certain election administration tasks consume relative to others. Differences in responses were found between larger urban and smaller rural jurisdictions. One of the more significant concerns expressed from jurisdictions of all sizes was the potential challenge of recruiting enough qualified poll workers in future elections due to the growing complexity of election administration.

IV. Opinion

National: [Election Assistance Commission](#); [Instant-runoff voting](#); [Paper ballots](#)

Arizona: [Voting system](#)

California: [St. Helena elections](#)

Connecticut: [Voting obstacles](#)

Florida: [Hillsborough County](#)

Michigan: [Recount](#)

Minnesota: [Recount, II, III; IV; V; Instant runoff voting](#)

Mississippi: [Election reform, II; Voter ID, II](#)

Missouri: [School polling places](#)

New Jersey: [Voting system, II](#)

New Mexico: [Rio Arriba County Clerk](#)

Ohio: [Voter registration; Cost of elections](#)

Pennsylvania: [Voting machine lawsuit](#)

Washington: [Pierce County, II](#)
West Virginia: [Same-day registration](#)

***some sites require registration*

V. Job Opportunities

All job listings must be received by 12 p.m. Eastern on Wednesday for publication in our Thursday newsletter. Job listings are free but may be edited for length. Whenever possible, include Internet information. Please email job postings to mmoretti@electionline.org

Election Administrator, Benton County, Wash. — position is under the direction of the County Auditor, an independently elected official, and is responsible for the management of voter registration and elections for Benton County. In addition, the County Auditor conducts elections for several junior-taxing districts ranging from cities, towns and school districts to library and drainage districts. The County currently has 87,000 registered voters. The Election Administrator will supervise a full-time staff of 3 plus up to 20 additional staff during elections, as required. **Qualifications:** Extensive management experience with a minimum five years in election administration, or any combination of education and experience that would likely provide the required knowledge, skills and abilities, is qualifying. An in-depth knowledge of election laws, regulations and rules is desirable. In addition, the qualified candidate must have prepared and managed annual budgets, have experience in the management of automated information systems, and must have proven ability to meet deadlines, lead an experienced staff, and have served in some capacity in the public eye. The position requires that the Election Administrator be conversant with pending legislation and its potential impact on Election Department operations. Candidates with a college degree and/or certification as an Election Administrator by the Washington State Secretary of State will be highly considered. **Salary:** \$52,068 to \$67,572. **Application:** Please submit an application (available online at: www.co.benton.wa.us), resume, cover letter and five work-related references to: Bobbie Gagner, Benton County Auditor; c/o Benton County Personnel Resources Department; 7122 W. Okanogan Pl., Bldg. A; Kennewick, WA 99336. **Deadline:** Open.

Election Administrator, Everyone Counts, San Diego, Calif. — will work day-to-day with worldwide clients to coordinate their elections conducted over the Internet. You will make proposals; arrange contracts, detail job specifications, set up elections using our online administration system, coordinate sign-off and testing, report results to clients, and send invoices. You will also respond to customer and voter inquiries by phone and email. Customer service skills, computer skills, and attention to detail are crucial elements of this position. You will also directly supervise other Elections Administrators. **Qualifications:** Demonstrated ability to work independently and to supervise others; strong listening skills and ability to show respect for all clients; excellent written, oral, email, telephone, and presentation communications; attention to detail and accuracy; proficiency in general computer software, such as Microsoft Office or Open Office, and a strong comfort level with the use of the Internet and technology, including learning complex new software systems; demonstrated ability to collaborate with a variety of people, taking the initiative to reach out to others, in person and by phone and email; demonstrated ability to accomplish numerous tasks with high quality in a time-efficient manner. Experience strongly preferred: Online business processes, advanced computer skills; administration, project management; customer service, helpdesk assistance; business or government sales, negotiation, and invoicing; bachelor's degree or higher. **Salary:** Based on qualifications and experience. **Application:** Those interested should email a cover letter, one page resume, and salary requirements to careers@everyonecounts.com