

electionlineWeekly—April 17, 2008

electionline.org

I. In Focus This Week

News Analysis: Pennsylvania gears up for record breaker

Old concerns about electoral relevancy give way to new ones of record turnout

By [Dan Seligson](#)

Electionline.org

Reading six-month old testimony from a September 2007 hearing on a plan to move Pennsylvania's primary to February is a bit like stumbling upon a debate over whether a ship would fall off the edge of a flat earth.

Arguing citizens were entitled to "meaningful choices" at the polls, the vice president of the state's League of Women Voters said "unfortunately in 2008, Pennsylvania voters may once again not influence the selection of ... candidates for president."

The plan to hold a bifurcated primary system – in which the presidential preference vote would have been held in February followed by a full primary for all other offices in April – never gained traction. But state voters will nonetheless wield more influence than they could have possibly imagined in 2007.

It has become the next critical battleground for the Democrats. Registration has never been higher, and news networks have been previewing the race for weeks. Pollsters release daily findings on the horse race, while candidates themselves have pumped more than [\\$3 million a week](#) into advertising in April.

But many other exciting subplots – especially from the perspective of election administration – will unfold Tuesday as well.

Registration numbers and absentee ballot [requests](#) strongly suggest that record numbers of voters will descend on polling places in the state on Tuesday. Machines, procedures, poll workers and patience will be tested.

One of 22 states requiring an excuse to cast an absentee ballot and one of only 16 not permitting in-person early voting, Pennsylvanians seeking to vote will almost all do so at the polls on Tuesday.

Local election officials have been telling media outlets that they are prepared for the worst.

"There will be lines. The question is how long the lines will be. Folks will just have to be patient," said Tim Boyde, county administrator for Centre County, home of Penn State in an [article](#).

Nick DiFrancesco, county commissioner for Dauphin County, said voters should plan on significant jams.

"We're going to be hit with something we've never seen before," he told the [Patriot-News](#).

Lines, however, are not by themselves a significant problem. New voters unaware that the state requires them to show identification at polling places could be, experts say.

"Pennsylvania requires all first-time voters to provide a form of ID and there have been so many who registered for the first time that people might not know what the rules are," said Tova Wang, vice president for research at Common Cause. "My sense is that Secretary of State Pedro Cortes is well aware of the issues and tried to let people know what the rules are. But it's decentralized. Counties have

a lot of control and responsibility. The question now is whether the education message has been received by counties and whether it's being implemented.”

If they don't – or if voters are not prepared for [voter ID rules despite the best efforts of local officials to educate them](#) – there is recourse. Provisional ballots can be cast by first-time registrants who lack one of the acceptable forms of verification. And Pennsylvania will allow voters in the incorrect precinct but correct jurisdiction to cast them.

One state legislator said she thought the state might not be able to meet the demand for provisional ballots on Tuesday. Rep. Babette Josephs, D-Philadelphia, said in a hearing earlier this month that she was [not confident that](#) the state would have enough emergency ballots on hand to handle those among the more than 155,000 new registrants – or anyone else – in the state who might need them. Local election officials, as well as Cortes, said the state will be ready to handle the demand.

Voting systems in the state will face scrutiny as well, as they have for the past few election cycles. Much of the state employs direct-recording electronic (DRE) machines, including the largest cities and most populous counties. In all, 85 percent will vote on DRE systems. According to [VerifiedVoting.org](#), Pennsylvania is one of a dozen states in the country not requiring either voter-verified paper trails or post-election audits.

And the organization said that could lead to disenfranchisement.

“Most of Pennsylvania's voters live in counties that use electronic voting. There is no way to ensure that their votes will be counted,” [a release](#) from the organization stated.

One machine in particular, the Sequoia AVC Advantage, is [being investigated](#) in New Jersey after discrepancies were found in tallies of presidential primary votes. For its part, the [company said](#) it identified the problem that caused the reporting discrepancies and would be “working with our customers on a method of prevention.”

There is also the matter of machine allocation. With interest and turnout expected to be at near-record levels, some counties have scrambled to have more equipment available.

[News reports](#) this week noted York, Dauphin, Lancaster, Perry, Adams and Cumberland counties have added more voting booths, extra polling places or both to handle the Tuesday crowds.

Note: Electionline.org staff will be in Pennsylvania for the primary and reporting throughout the day.

II. Election Reform News This Week

As residents of the Keystone state count down to April 22, residents in 10 other states (and one territory) are preparing for their primaries. [Indiana](#) and [North Carolina](#) are next up on May 6 and both have seen a large number of new voters register. In [West Virginia](#), election officials are testing the voting equipment ahead of the state's May 13 Democratic primary (Nebraska Republicans vote that day too). Ballots are due May 20 in [Oregon](#) as Democrats in [Kentucky](#) head to the polls. Republicans in Idaho vote on May 27. [Puerto Rico](#) moved its primary up to June 1, and on June 3, voters in [Montana](#) and [South Dakota](#) and New Mexico (Republicans) will finish off the official 2008 primary season, if not the race for the Democratic nomination.

Although the 2008 primary season still has over a month remaining, [Election Protection](#) has issued an interim [report](#) on the program's findings in this year's primary season. According to the report, the experiences of the voters paint a picture of a system that is “not prepared to handle this year's expected significant increase in voter turnout.” Based on what they've seen at the primaries, the most pressing issues facing the election system are: undertrained and not enough poll workers, election machinery

breakdowns, registration roll problems and confusion over voter ID requirements. The 1-866-OUR-VOTE Hotline answered more than 5,000 calls from 42 states and the District of Columbia.

Even as states across the country are working to make it easier for college and high school student to work the polls on election day, [officials in Durham County, N.C. are taking their youth recruitment one step further](#). About 30 students from the North Carolina Schools of Science and Math helped the Durham County Board of Elections prepare voter cards to mail to residents. Mike Ashe, director of the Durham Board of Elections, told a local television station that the students' hard work will make a concrete impact on the community. The students folded and prepared about three-fourths of the 10,000 cards that the board brought to the school. "There's political discussion, there's things going on," Ashe said. "It's really a great event for the school and the board of elections."

Residents of San Diego County found out this week just [what a difference one little number can make](#). It seems that when the county registrar's office sent out a notice to American Independent Party members, a phone number was listed in correctly. Instead of reaching the registrar's office to request a Democratic or Republican ballot, party members were met with a recorded message telling them to call a second number, which led to an explicit sex chat line. "It's a very embarrassing error," Registrar Deborah Seiler told the *North County Times*, explaining that the 800 prefix listed on the mailer should have been printed as 858.

III. Opinion This Week

National: [Voter ID](#)

Florida: [Election reform](#); [Snow birds](#); [Kathy Dent](#); [Voter registration](#)

Hawaii: [Vote-by-mail](#)

Iowa: [English only](#)

Louisiana: [Voting hours](#)

Massachusetts: [Election-day registration](#)

Michigan: [Vote-by-mail](#)

Montana: [Voter registration](#)

Ohio: [Student voting](#); [Vote-by-mail](#)

Oklahoma: [Voter ID](#)

Oregon: [Open primary, II](#)

South Dakota: [Precinct plan](#); [Voter registration](#)

Wisconsin: [Weekend voting](#)

West Virginia: [Voting tips](#)

***some sites require registration*

IV. Available Grants

- **Election Data Collection Grant Program.** *U.S. Election Assistance Commission* will provide \$2 million each to five eligible states to improve the collection of precinct-level data relating to the November 2008 federal elections. **Who May Apply:** States, through their Chief State Election Officials, are the sole eligible applicants for this grant. **How and When to Apply:** Applicants may view the grant announcement at www.submitgrant.net or [click here](#). For detailed information on the application procedures, please log onto www.submitgrant.net. Applications can be submitted electronically or in hard copy. Electronic submissions must be submitted through www.submitgrant.net. Hard copy applications must be sent to EAC Operations Center, 1515 Wilson Blvd., Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22209. For additional information concerning submissions, contact the EAC Support Center by phone at (888) 203-6161, or via email at EAC@lcgnet.com. Applications are due by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on April 28, 2008. The deadline applies to both electronic and paper submissions. **Contact Information:** For additional information concerning submissions, contact the EAC Support Center by phone at (888) 203-6161, or via email at EAC@lcgnet.com.

- Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) to Assist Protection and Advocacy Systems (P&As) to Establish or Improve Voting Access for Individuals with Disabilities.** *Department of Health and Human Services* announces funds to provide T/TA to P & As in their promotion of full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities, including registering to vote, casting a vote, and accessing polling places; developing proficiency in the use of voting systems and technologies as they affect individuals with disabilities; demonstrating and evaluating the use of such systems and technologies by individuals with disabilities (including blindness) in order to assess the availability and use of such systems and technologies for such individuals; and providing T/TA for non-visual access. **Eligibility:** Public and state controlled institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, and private institutions of higher education. **Deadline:** June 2, 2008. **Funds:** Approximately \$367,920 is available to fund 4 awards, ranging from \$91,980-\$367,920. **Information:** Melvenia Wright at melvenia.wright@acf.hhs.gov; or go to: www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2008-ACF-ADD-DH-0034.html. **GrantID:** GD2765.

V. Job Postings This Week

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

Associate, Make Voting Work, Washington, D.C. An initiative of the Pew Center on the States, MVW seeks to develop and pursue an ambitious agenda to modernize the means by which we administer our elections. The associate will help design and implement research and analysis for MVW, coordinate convenings, manage special projects, maintain internal and external communications and support other programmatic investments and budget activities. **Qualifications:** Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred; One to three years of relevant professional experience, including demonstrated research, analytical and writing skills. Experience in public policy in general and election administration in particular preferred; Ability to write clearly and cogently for internal audiences, policy makers, the media and public; Ability to synthesize and summarize large amounts of information and to focus quickly on the essence of an issue, as well as to identify, understand and synthesize different policy perspectives; Experience working with academics, nonprofits and other entities conducting research and policy analysis, helping ensure the results are rigorous, policy relevant and timely and are communicated clearly and persuasively to target audiences. **Salary:** Pew offers a competitive salary and an excellent benefits package including four weeks of vacation annually, a generous 401(k) plan and flexible benefit options. **Application:** Cover letter (indicating where you learned of the opening), résumé and salary expectations to: Monica Chavous Hall, Senior Specialist, Human Resources, The Pew Charitable Trusts, One Commerce Square, 2005 Market Street, Suite 1700, Philadelphia, PA 19103-7077; or faxed to (215) 575-4910 or e-mailed to recruiter@pewtrusts.org. For the complete job listing, click [here](#).

DP Technical Support Specialist, Maryland State Board of Elections, Annapolis, Md. Intermediate level of work maintaining and modifying operating systems for multipurpose, multi-tasking computers. Employees in this classification do not supervise. Employees in this classification receive moderate supervision from a DP Technical Support Specialist Supervisor or other data processing administrator. Employees may be required to work on evenings, weekends and holidays and may be subject to call-in. The candidate will be responsible for supporting election reform IT initiatives. Experience as a Microsoft Certified Professional and experience in Microsoft Windows Professional and Windows Server products, computer networking and technician functions, understanding of security procedures, the elections industry and technical writing skills are desirable. **Qualifications:** 30 credit hours from an accredited college or university in Computer Information Technology, Computer Science, Management Information Systems or other information technology-related field to include course work in machine or assembler computer languages, and operating system and data communication technology for multipurpose, multi-tasking computers may be substituted for the required education; One year of experience maintaining and modifying operating systems for multipurpose, multi-tasking computers may be substituted for the required education; Experience operating multipurpose, multi-tasking computer

systems; or scheduling, controlling input and output or maintaining a tape library to process data on multipurpose, multi-tasking computer systems; or converting data from project specifications by developing program code using third generation computer programming languages; or designing, developing and maintaining communications networks may be substituted for high school on a year-for-year basis. **Salary:** \$40,268 - \$64,282. **Application:** Applications may be obtained by visiting our website at: www.dbm.maryland.gov; by writing to DBM, OPSB, Recruitment & Examination Division, 301 W. Preston Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201; or by calling 410-767-4850, toll-free: 800-705-3493; TTY users call Maryland Relay Service, 800-735-2258. **Deadline:** May 6, 2008