

electionlineWeekly — July 03, 2008

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I. In Focus This Week

Thousands of new citizens expected to add to voter rolls before November

Local jurisdictions and third-party groups fill in to provide registration at ceremonies

By [M. Mindy Moretti](#)

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On a recent mid-June morning, with the white grave markers and wind-whipped American flags of Arlington National Cemetery as a backdrop, 70 people from around the world became U.S. citizens.

After all the speeches, anthems and official work were done, U.S. District Judge T.S. Ellis III (himself an immigrant from Colombia) urged the new citizens to seek out the women in the American flag t-shirts at the back of the ceremonies to register to vote.

Unlike their official documentation and watching the video of Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." a copy of the [National Mail Voter Registration](#) form is not part of the official [guidelines](#) for naturalization [ceremonies](#) as set by the [U.S. Customs and Immigration Services](#) (USCIS).

Each year, more than half a million foreign-born persons become U.S. citizens. Unlike the National Voter Registration Act, in which state agencies are federally mandated to give citizens opportunities to register to vote at motor vehicle departments and other public assistance offices, there are no laws requiring that new citizens be given voter registration opportunities on the day of their swearing-in ceremony.

According to Chris Rhatigan, a spokesperson for USCIS, the only items the agency provides newly naturalized citizens are a certificate of citizenship, a Citizen's Almanac and a U.S. flag. All other documents, including voter registration forms and passport applications, have must be supplied by outside organizations.

"We do not naturalize people so that they can vote," Rhatigan said. "We naturalize them so they can become citizens of the United States with all the same rights and privileges of everyone else. If they choose to register to vote they can."

Although some advocacy groups have representatives stationed outside of courthouses with voter registration forms in-hand (partisan organizations are not permitted), over the past nine years, millions of new citizens and potential new voters have needed to find a way to register to vote.

And this year, local elections officials and advocacy groups have more work than ever before. Despite a [backlog of pending citizenship applications](#), Jonathan "Jock" Scharfen, acting director of USCIS anticipates a record number of new citizens.

"Our employees are hard at work every day, including evenings and weekends, processing files and interviewing applicants. The results of their efforts show tremendous productivity," Scharfen said in an [online newsletter](#). "I am optimistic that USCIS will exceed our goal of completing more than 1 million naturalization applications this fiscal year, which ends September 30, compared to last year's 748,000 naturalization cases."

On a recent Tuesday in Miami, nearly 6,000 people became new citizens. It was a busy day for Barry Garner, assistant deputy in the [Miami-Dade Elections Department](#). Garner and his staff in the community outreach division place a voter registration form on each seat for citizenship candidates at every ceremony held in the county.

The county also stations a staffer at the ceremonies to collect the voter registration forms, but Garner said a lot of times, the new citizens will hand them back to whoever they see first, be it a county staffer or member of an advocacy group.

“Of the 6,000 forms we put out last week, we probably got back one-third of them,” Garner said. “We try to meet them at the door to get the forms, but sometimes they hand them in to other organizations. I’m sure that overall well more than a third were handed in, but that’s what was given directly to our office.”

In [Cook County, Ill.](#), one of the largest voting jurisdictions in the country, the county used to send staff to naturalization ceremonies but now partners with [Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights](#) (ICIRR) to distribute voter registration forms.

“There were anywhere from three to five ceremonies per week and frankly because we are such a large jurisdiction, it would have been a permanent job for someone,” said Courtney Greve, senior public information officer for the Cook County Clerk’s Office. “That’s why this partnership works out.”

According to Greve, the Clerk’s office provides ICIRR with all the registration materials and any training necessary. In addition, members of ICIRR attend meetings at the Clerk’s office on voting rights and staff members from the county attend ICIRR events.

“We do lots of voter registration outreach and we do try to target at least a few events in immigrant communities that might not have advocacy groups,” Greve said. “But we want to make sure we’re not ignoring a population, that’s why this partnership with ICIRR is so important.”

Douglas Kellner, co-chair of the New York Board of Elections, used to work for the [New York City Board of Elections](#) which represents the largest voting jurisdiction and is home to thousands of new citizens. According to Kellner, the city board does provide voter registration forms and personnel to assist with voter registration at naturalization ceremonies.

[U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#) Chair Rosemary Rodriguez used to attend naturalization ceremonies in Denver and said that although she did not have an official position on providing the National Mail Voter Registration form, she personally likes the opportunity for interaction with new citizens.

Still, many elections officials felt automatically providing the form would help the process.

“I strongly agree that voter registration should be a routine part of the official naturalization process,” Kellner said.

And with a record number of citizens — new and old — registering in advance of the November election swamped elections offices are going to need as much help as they can with the process.

II. Election Reform News This Week

- Turns out things didn’t go quite as well as was originally reported with [Palm Beach County’s first foray into optical-scan voting](#). The votes for three precincts weren’t counted on election night after Tuesday’s special city commission. Nearly 700 votes from three precincts – 14 percent of the total number cast – were added into the final results released by the supervisor of elections office after the standard post-election audit Wednesday and Thursday. During the audit, three cartridges containing vote totals were labeled “suspended,” meaning their votes hadn’t been counted on election night when all the cartridges were brought to a tabulation center to be “read” by vote-counting machines, elections office spokeswoman Kathy Adams told the *Palm Beach Post*. After the audit, they were read and the votes were added to the totals. In the end, the system worked the way it was supposed to, she said. “That’s why it’s marked unofficial, because

when they do the audit, they find out if anything was not included," Adams said. Of course that [wasn't the only problem faced by the county](#) elections office this week.

- [Another Alabama county is being investigated](#) for voting irregularities in the June 3 election. Fifth Judicial District Attorney Paul E. Jones has assigned two investigators to look into the Randolph County primary after the state's Attorney General declined to do so. "The attorney general declined to conduct any investigation of allegations of voter irregularities in the recent Alabama primary. He said he doesn't have the manpower to conduct an investigation," Jones told the *Randolph Leader*. "Because we had the complaints, someone should take responsibility to investigate. There's no sense in letting it drag out." Circuit clerk and absentee elections manager Chris May said he provided the district attorney with the documentation that includes absentee applications and reports. Randolph County had 280-plus absentee voters, which is normal for a primary, May said.
- Although the U.S Department of Veteran Affairs has not backed down on its ban voter registration drives at its facilities, [officials in Connecticut took matters in to their own hands this week](#). Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz (D) and the state's Attorney General registered a handful of veterans — including 92-year-old World War II vet Martin Onieal — and threatened a lawsuit if they weren't permitted to come back and provide a voting machine demonstration. Bysiewicz conducted the impromptu registration session outside the VA entrance after she said her office failed to get a written response to two letters seeking permission to go to the state's VA centers, and was denied access in a follow-up phone call. "To ban voter registration drives is a slap in the face to veterans like Mr. Onieal, who have served and sacrificed greatly for our country and for the basic freedoms that we have here," Bysiewicz told the *New Haven Register*.

III. Research and Report Summaries

electionline provides brief summaries of recent research in the field of election administration. Note some articles require a subscription. Please e-mail research links to sgreene@electionline.org.

The [July issue of American Politics Research](#) is a special issue on election administration and voting technology. Three articles will be summarized this week and three will be summarized next week.

[Voting Technology, Ballot Measures, and Residual Votes](#) – By David C. Kimball and Martha Kropf, *American Politics Research*, July 2008

Residual vote rates (overvotes and undervotes) on ballot measures during the 2004 general election and how voting technology and ballot features affect those rates is examined. The research finds lever voting machines and full-face DREs produce higher residual vote rates for ballot measures; ballot-measure residual vote was less common in jurisdictions where there was more newspaper coverage of the specific issues on the ballot; and like previous research has indicated, there are more residual votes in jurisdictions with more African Americans and low-income voters for both ballot issues and the presidential race. Studying the 2006 general election in New Jersey where two counties used scrolling DREs while the remaining 19 used full-faced DREs, the residual vote rate of the full face DREs was found to be significantly higher than that of the scrolling DREs. The authors suggest voting-machine performance should not just be assessed on president and top-of-the-ballot races.

[Digital Divide or Just Another Absentee Ballot?: Evaluating Internet Voting in the 2004 Michigan Democratic Primary](#) – By Alicia Kolar Prevost and Brian F. Schaffner, *American Politics Research*, July 2008

One concern cited by opponents of Internet voting is that it is biased against low-income and minority voters, what is often called the digital divide. Examining data from the 2004 Michigan party-run Democratic primary, the authors argue that these factors do not play a role in the decision to use the Internet as an absentee-voting method. The one factor that did play a role was age, with younger people using the Internet to cast their ballots at a higher rate than older people.

[Whose Votes Count?: Undervotes, Overvotes, and Ranking in San Francisco's Instant-Runoff Elections](#) – by Francis Neely and Corey Cook, *American Politics Research*, July 2008

San Francisco voters' experience with instant runoff voting (IRV) from 2004-2006 is examined. Switching to IRV – where voters rank candidates in order of preference - appears to have increased overvote rates and decreased undervote rates. The authors state higher overvote rates suggest potential confusion using the more complex IRV ballot. Demographic influences on ranking the candidates – do certain demographic groups rank more candidates than others for example – are found to be very limited. Overall voters are found to have adapted relatively well to IRV.

Other research:

[Improving the Security, Transparency and Efficiency of California's 1% Manual Tally Procedures](#) – By Joseph Lorenzo Hall, UC Berkeley School of Information, June 2008, to be presented at the USENIX/ACCURATE [Electronic Voting Technology \(EVT\) workshop](#), San Jose, CA July 28-29, 2008

The post-election manual tally has been in place in California for more than 40 years. The author looks to increase the security and transparency of this process while also optimizing it to make it more efficient and save election officials time and resources. The author and a team worked with several counties, including redesigning the post-election manual tally process for San Mateo County. Through observing the process recommendations are made in three areas:

- Security: Including when the random selection and tally should take place; conducting blind counting (not knowing the ballot totals for the precinct when conducting the tally);
- Transparency: Including wider spread public notice of the manual tally; publishing procedures and data for observers.
- Efficiency: Including using pre-filed tally sheets.

[Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2006](#) – U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, June 2008 ([Press release](#) and [detailed tables](#))

The U.S. Census Bureau releases its report on voting in the 2006 general election, the biennial study on elections based on survey results. Approximately 48 percent of voting-age citizens voted, the highest since 1994 when the data was first collected.

[Genetic Variation in Political Participation](#) – By James H. Fowler, Laura A. Baker, Christopher T. Dawes, *The American Political Science Review*, May 2008

Abundant research exists on why people vote, yet little of it examines the role of genetics. The authors test and find data that supports their hypothesis (using twin studies among other data) that some of the variation in voter turnout is due to genetic factors. They suggest a research agenda that focuses on searching for biological sources of participatory behavior.

IV. Opinion This Week

National: [Military voters](#)

Alabama: [Voter fraud](#); [Selling votes](#)

Colorado: [Logan County](#)

Florida: [Voter confidence](#); [Voting rights](#); [Palm Beach County](#)

Hawaii: [Absentee voting](#)

Indiana: [Primary voting system, II](#); [Election reform](#)

Minnesota: [Instant-runoff voting, II](#)

Missouri: [Voting system](#)

North Carolina: [Runoff costs](#); [Instant-runoff voting, II, III](#)

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

South Carolina: [Better planned elections](#)

Tennessee: [Felon voting rights](#)

Texas: [Vote rigging](#)

Vermont: [Voter ID](#)

Virginia: [Petersburg election](#)

***some sites require registration*

V. Request for Proposals

- The Colorado Secretary of State's office issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) on June 6, 2008 to procure a new Campaign Finance software system to replace their legacy system. The RFP is posted on the Secretary of State's Elections [Web site](#). The deadline for submission of proposals is July 10, 2008.

VI. 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

- **Director of Campaign Finance Reform**, Common Cause, Washington D.C. — lead Common Cause team to design and implement campaign finance reform strategy and campaigns, with primary focus on public financing of elections, as part of a broader pro-democracy agenda. Build and manage relationships with key coalition partners and allies. Serve as spokesperson and resource to the media and the public on Common Cause campaign finance reform efforts. Assist in the development of public education materials, policy briefings, and online and offline grassroots engagement strategies. Assist development staff in writing of grant proposals and reports. Work closely with other Common Cause staff to ensure overall success of campaign finance reform campaigns at the national, state, and local level. Manage program budget. Other duties as needed. **Qualifications:** Bachelor's degree required, JD preferred; extensive knowledge of campaign finance law and policy; demonstrated political judgment and advocacy skills; minimum ten years advocacy, legal or political campaign experience; minimum five years coordinating or supervising the work of others; commitment to Common Cause issues and agenda; ability to analyze complex public policy issues and communicate them effectively to a broader audience; demonstrated ability to be flexible and work well under pressure; strong organizational and interpersonal skills; and a good sense of humor. **Application:** Please submit resume, cover letter and salary requirements to Director of Human Resources at hr@commoncause.org and include "Director of Campaign Finance Reform" in the subject line; or fax to 202.355.7546. No phone calls please.
- **Election Data Application Specialist**, Baltimore City Board of Elections — the full performance level of specialized data processing work in a local election office. Employees produce and verify data output. Employees in this classification do not supervise but may provide advice and guidance to Election Data Application Specialist I's and other support staff. Employees receive general supervision from an Election Director, Election Deputy Director or other designated administrative staff. The work may require travel to data processing locations to attend meetings or to perform other assignments such as voter registration. Employees may be required to work evenings and weekends, particularly prior to and following an election. **Qualifications:** graduation from accredited high school or possession of a high school equivalency certificate; one year of experience in the operation of date entry devices. **Salary:** \$28,434 - \$44,520. **Application:** 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:** July 11, 2008.
- **Elections Director**, Salt Lake County, Utah — we are looking for an individual with exceptional project planning and management skills and demonstrated professional managerial experience who can lead a highly functioning team of elections officials in a county well-respected for excellence in elections administration. We believe in respect, collaboration, creativity accountability and teamwork and we invite those who share these values to join us. The Elections Division is responsible for administering all local, state and federal elections in Salt Lake County. The division is responsible for keeping current on election laws, maintaining voter registration

records, managing voting precincts, and identifying polling locations for registered voters across Salt Lake County. The Elections Division Administrator is responsible for overall management, oversight and planning for the conduct of all local, state and federal elections in Salt Lake County. Salt Lake County has nearly 600,000 registered voters (500,000 active), 979 voting precincts and currently 433 polling locations. We operate Premier Accuvote TSX touch screen voting machines at the polls and central count optical scan for absentee and by-mail voters. For further information, visit our [Web site](#) or e-mail: jyocom@slco.org or call: (801) 468-3519. **Application.** **Salary:** \$78-648-\$116,376. **Deadline:** Open, but priority will be given to those submitting applications before July 15, 2008.

- **Election Director**, Baltimore County, Md.— is the supervisory or managerial level of work directing elections in local jurisdictions within the state. Employees supervise office support staff, which may include subordinate supervisors. Employees receive managerial supervision from the State Administrator or Deputy State Administrator of Election Laws. Employees may be required to work evenings and weekends. The work may require travel throughout the State to exchange information regarding the election process and promote voter registration. Qualifications: graduation from an accredited high school or possession of a high school equivalency certificate; and five years experience applying federal, state and local election laws and regulations applicable to conducting elections, which much have included at least one presidential or gubernatorial election. **Salary:** \$52,950-\$90,706. **Application:** 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:** July 15, 2008.
- **Election Information Specialist**, Wicomico County, Md. — is the full performance level of work providing information technology support to staff members of a local election board. Employees in this classification coordinate maintenance and troubleshooting of election information systems and work in conjunction with State Board of Elections information technology staff, local government information technology staff, software vendors and contractors to resolve microcomputer hardware and software problems. Employees in this classification do not supervise. Employees receive general supervision from an Election Director or Election Deputy Director of a local election board. Employees may receive assignments and technical direction from the Chief Information Officer of the State Board of Elections. Employees may be required to work evenings, weekends and holidays and to travel to polling sites during Election Day. Employees in this classification are assigned to work in one or more local election board offices. Employees assigned to work in more than one local election board office will be required to travel between offices. **Qualifications:** Graduation from an accredited high school or possession of a high school equivalency certificate; two years of experience in computer programming; implementing, troubleshooting or supporting local or wide area networks; installing and troubleshooting personal computers or evaluating, implementing or maintaining microcomputer hardware and software. **Salary:** \$36,280- \$57,567. **Application:** 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:** July 24, 2008.