

## **electionlineWeekly—August 07, 2008**

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### **I. In Focus This Week**

#### **Some Homeless Citizens Face ‘Roadblocks’ When Registering**

*Lack of fixed, ID address challenges voters and administrators*

By [Dan Seligson](#)

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Over breakfast in a church social hall in Washington, D.C., Roy Crabtree, a North Carolina native who currently has no fixed address, espoused strong and well-researched views about politicians' responsibilities, campaign promises, the price of oil and the war in Iraq.

When November rolls around, however, Crabtree, who has voted in almost every election in recent years, said he was unsure whether he would participate.

"It's up in the air," he said. "Registering to vote without a fixed address - that is definitely a roadblock to our people."

Low-income and homeless citizens face some unique difficulties when registering to vote. Proof of identity, such as birth certificates or ID cards, can get lost, making it harder to fill out legal forms. Registration forms are not always readily available. And residency requirements can cause other headaches. With the 2008 presidential election looming just a half a year away, homeless and low-income citizens might face a few complications – but it can be done.

Whether living in a fixed address or not, U.S. citizens can cast ballots, said Tulin Ozdeger, civil rights director for the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

"A homeless person should be able to vote even if they don't live in a traditional dwelling," Ozdeger said. "You can register even if you are living on the street."

Judicial opinions in recent years have upheld the notion that requiring a traditional dwelling can pose a hardship to some voters. Court decisions from a number of states have stated that street corners, parks and other public places can be used to establish local voting precincts, the National Coalition for the Homeless [reports on its Web site](#).

However, election officials say a valid mailing address is still a necessity. Once a registration has been processed, a confirmation card is sent through the mail. If it is returned as undeliverable, the person might end up not being registered.

Local election officials from Arlington County and the District both said they are well aware of the challenge homeless people face when establishing domicile. Local organizations, including shelters, churches and community groups can provide addresses that will be considered valid by registrars.

"We're familiar with the addresses," said Donna Patterson, deputy registrar for Arlington County. "We know the people at the shelters and the churches where mail will be accepted for people who don't have homes."

Bill O'Field, spokesman for the District of Columbia's Board of Elections and Ethics who left his post in June, said in May that his department will accept non-traditional addresses for people without fixed addresses.

“Since early 1980s, D.C. has allowed homeless people to register to vote with an address because of what the [registration] form says,” O’Field said. “So if it’s at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and E, we accept that address, but we need a mailing address for them to send them a voter information card.”

O’Field said registration materials are available throughout the city, at police stations, fire houses, public libraries and public assistance offices. Also, the department will send representatives to address groups interested in registering homeless citizens in the District.

Private organizations around the city offer assistance to homeless people seeking to register to vote. Miriam’s Kitchen, at 24<sup>th</sup> and G streets, Northwest D.C., for example, offers voicemail services and a post office box for homeless people to stay in touch. That post office box can also be used as an address for voter registration.

While establishing residency requirements in the area can be established with the help of local organizations, a new crop of voter identification requirements that have been gaining a foothold across the country could be a more difficult barrier to overcome.

An Indiana law that requires all citizens to present a government-issued photo ID before voting was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. For now, only two other states - Florida and Georgia - have similar requirements, though some legal experts say more laws could be on the way.

“It can be difficult for a homeless person to maintain ID documents because they move around so much and may be subjected to police sweeps, encampments that get cleared out and the destruction of their personal belongings,” Ozdeger said. “They’re already at risk of losing an ID. Once a homeless person loses a birth certificate, it’s very difficult to get a new photo ID.”

*This article was modified from a piece that originally appeared in Street Sense, a newspaper in Washington, D.C. that focuses on issues relating to poverty while creating economic opportunities for people who are experiencing homelessness. For more information, go to [www.streetsense.org](http://www.streetsense.org).*

## II. Election Reform News This Week

- Several states held their primary elections this week, including Kansas, Michigan and Missouri. Although there were scattered reports of problems, overall things seemed to go well for the dog-days of summer. In many areas, the extreme summer heat seemed to keep voters away and in [Michigan](#), there were problems with the paper ballots caused by the humidity. In Shawnee County, [Kansas](#), more than 4,000 votes were miscounted because federal service ballots were entered into the wrong column. And in [Missouri](#) there were no major problems, although one [blind voter](#) did report having issues casting her ballot.
- A survey released this week by *The Associated Press* finds that more Americans than ever — likely 57 percent — will [cast their ballots on paper](#) in the November election. The number of registered voters in jurisdictions that will rely mainly on electronic voting machines has fallen from a high of 44 percent during the 2006 midterm elections to 36 percent. “More people will be using computer-read paper ballots than at any other time in the nation’s history,” Kimball Brace, head of Election Data Services told the AP. “As you get more registered voters and more people in the pool, it exacerbates this bigger issues of paper.” With fewer than 100 days until November 4, the first concern for many election officials is making sure they will be able to get all their ballots printed between the time the national, state and local slates have been selected and Election Day.
- On Wednesday, [Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner](#) filed suit to seek damages from Diebold Election Systems (now Premier) over what she said were faulty voting machines. “We will make the equipment work, but this is not something that Ohio should be satisfied with for the

long term," Brunner told the *Columbus Dispatch*. "Our goal is to have Ohio taxpayers compensated for this equipment that doesn't function properly." Brunner is seeking punitive damages from Diebold, after she said an investigation showed that votes in at least 11 counties were "dropped" in recent elections when memory cards were uploaded to computer servers. Brunner wants the court to find that Premier made false representations about its equipment and failed to live up to contractual obligations and warranties. Ohio spent millions of dollars, mostly federal funds, to upgrade voting systems after problems with punch-card ballots in Florida in the 2000 presidential election.

- A [voter registration drive in Milwaukee](#) ran into problems this week when workers for ACORN turned in hundreds of fabricated forms and many more that were incomplete. ACORN fired about a dozen canvassers and alerted the commission to most of the problematic forms. The Wisconsin election commission's director, Sue Edman, said the workers lost their ability to register voters, and the commission is making sure no incomplete or fabricated forms are entered into the voter database. Six canvassers have been referred to the district attorney's office for potential criminal charges, she said. "If there was any suspicion of either fraudulent activity or just really sloppy work, we terminated them, and we informed the elections commission," Carolyn Castore told *The Associated Press*. "We were catching it." Edman agreed the group uncovered most of the problems. Between 1,500 and 2,000 of the registration forms submitted were incomplete while "maybe a couple hundred" were clearly fabricated, she said.

### 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](mailto:sgreene@electionline.org).

The third USENIX/ACCURATE [Electronic Voting Technology \(EVT\) Workshop](#) took place in San Jose, Calif., from July 28-29. A number of papers were presented, some of which have already been summarized here. Two more are summarized this week.

[Scantegrity II: End-to-End Verifiability for Optical Scan Election Systems using Invisible Ink Confirmation Codes](#) – By David Chaum; Richard Carback, Jeremy Clark, Aleksander Essex, Stefan Popoveniuc, Ronald L. Rivest, Peter Y.A. Ryan, Emily Shen, Alan T. Sherman, July 2008

The past several years have seen an increasing focus on the verifiability of election tallies. A system enhancement, rather than an entirely new system, is proposed called Scantegrity II, an end-to-end addition to optical scan technology. It uses confirmation codes printed on ballots in invisible ink with voters then using a special pen to develop the ink. The authors describe how the system is able to maintain security and privacy.

[Systemic Issues in the Hart InterCivic and Premier Voting Systems: Reflections on Project EVEREST](#) – By Kevin Butler, William Enck, Harri Hursti, Stephen McLaughlin, Patrick Traynor and Patrick McDaniel, July 2008

The authors summarize critical flaws they found during a security analysis of Premier and Hart InterCivic voting systems for the state of Ohio's Everest study conducted in October 2007. They find failures in protecting election data integrity, failures in protecting elections from malicious insiders and failures in providing trustworthy auditing. Entire reengineering of the systems is recommended.

*Other research*

The most recent issue of the [Election Law Journal](#) is now available. Subscription is required.

### IV. Opinion This Week

National: [Military voters](#); [Electronic voting, II](#); [Absentee ballots, II](#)

Alabama: [Ex-felon voting rights](#)

Arizona: [Youth poll workers](#); [Voter ID](#)

Hawaii: [Chief elections official, II](#)  
Kansas: [Primary election](#)  
Kentucky: [Ex-felon voting rights](#)  
Louisiana: [Military voters](#)  
Minnesota: [Instant-runoff voting](#)  
North Carolina: [Paper ballots](#)  
Tennessee: [Paper ballots](#)  
Virginia: [Eligible voters](#); [Vote fraud](#)  
Washington: [Dead voters, II](#)  
Wisconsin: [Election Day](#)

*\*\*some sites require registration*

## **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](mailto:mmoretti@electionline.org)*