

## **electionlineWeekly — October 16, 2008**

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

#### **Election officials nationwide offer advice to first-time voters**

*Advice varies, but preparation is common thread*

By [M. Mindy Moretti](#)

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With a record number of new voters expected to head to the polls (or mailbox) this year, we decided to ask election officials and experts what is one piece of advice they would give to a first-time voter to help make the voting experience a good one thus encouraging them to come back.

Here's what they had to say:

**Kim Alexander**, president, [California Voter Foundation](#). I would suggest they ask an experienced voter to help guide them through the process – this would include studying their ballots together, reviewing election information online, and going to the polls. This could be a family member, a neighbor, or someone in your workplace. Getting together with friends and family to talk about the ballot prior to the election is a great way for first-time voters to prepare to make confident choices and ensure a positive, first-time voting experience.

**Anthony Albence**, administrative director, [State of Delaware Department of Elections for New Castle County](#). My one piece of advice: be sure to confirm your polling place prior to Election Day by checking your voter registration card and/or calling your local election office. An addendum: be sure to update your address with your local election office (if applicable) and confirm your new polling place (if applicable).

**Marilyn Bowers**, executive director, [Board of Elections & Voter Registration, Charleston County, S.C.](#) Be Prepared: 1) Know where to vote; 2) Know who you are going to vote for; and 3) Know what ID is required.

**Dan Burk**, registrar of voters, [Washoe County, Nev.](#) Appreciate that you are now participating in a process so profound that 120,000,000 of your fellow citizens will stand in line for up to three hours for the right, over a five minute period, to express their will in the most peaceful of ways regarding our leaders and the direction for our country. It doesn't get any better than that.

**Mary Cheh**, council member, [Council of the District of Columbia](#). My advice: look at sample ballot sent by the board of elections to know ahead of time where your precinct is and what your ballot choices are.

**Michael Clingman**, [State Election Board, Oklahoma](#). For a young first time voter I would remind them that the person in the United States who has the most to gain from voting is the person who turns 18 on November 4. The decisions made that day will affect them more than any other citizen who has been given the franchise to vote. For voters who choose to visit polling places to vote, I would suggest all do their best to observe their fellow voters and reflect on the power of democracy to promote freedoms that are all too often taken for granted.

**Bill Cowles**, supervisor of elections, [Orange County, Fla.](#) Make sure you know where your polling place is before Election Day and study your sample ballot. "Know before you go."

**Scott Doyle**, clerk and recorder, [Larimer County, Colo.](#) My thought on this is to tell the public to vote by mail or at an early voting location if available in their state. Election day precincts/vote centers, at least in most parts of the country, will likely be clogged as Election Day voter turnout is expected to be huge. I think that another important issue this year is that of being able to post results immediately upon the close

of the polls. Election laws/rules have changed tremendously over the last couple of years and the posting of final results can no longer be counted on at 7 p.m. when the polls close. Results now take more time to compile and post and the public should know that taking longer is now the norm and not the exception. Under the complex processes required of election officials to complete an election these days it simply takes longer to get the results posted and this doesn't mean that trust be reduced due to this but instead increased as we are all meeting requirements to ensure secure and verifiable results.

**Larry Haake**, registrar, [Chesterfield County, Va.](#) New voters do not have an orientation period to slowly integrate themselves into the process. New voters, like "veteran voters," will likely encounter parking problems, long lines, short-tempered people, and laws and regulations that sometimes seem illogical. My best advice to new (and veteran voters) is to expect these challenges when they set out to vote and thereby be mentally prepared for them. If these situations are not experienced, then they will have had a better day than they expected; if they are experienced, then their voting experience would have been no worse than they expected. ALL voters should be patient and be appreciative that they have the right and privilege to vote. Nothing of any substance comes easily.

**Karen Handel**, secretary of state, [Georgia](#). My overall advice to first time voters "know before you go" and what that includes is 1) educate yourself on the candidates and the ballot questions on the ballot in your particular county and precinct and 2) educate yourself on all the voting procedures available, be it voting by mail, early voting, advance voting week. Also, take advantage of all the many resources offered by the Georgia secretary of state's Web site such as the poll locator and information on photo ID requirements.

**Candice Hoke**, election law profession; director, Center for Election Excellence. I'd urge first time voters before going to vote-- whether early or on Election Day -- to check into exactly what types of ID they may have to provide, and to review a sample ballot. They can call the nonpartisan Election Protection hotline (1-866-our-vote), which has all voter ID info that anyone would need, and info on all voting options (early, absentee, etc) for their locality.

**Debbie Ingersoll**, co-director, [Board of Elections and Registration, Tippecanoe County, Ind.](#) Vote early if possible!!! Avoid the long lines of Election Day.

**Debbye Lathrop**, clerk, [Laramie County, Wyo.](#) My advice to voters would be to do their homework --- become informed on their state laws on voter registration and election day polling place conduct; to locate their polling place well in advance of election day; to know the local issues on the ballot; and then, above all, to exercise patience with the poll workers. The poll workers are the backbone of the entire system. If we did not have these men and women willing to put this 14-16 hour day of service, the process would have to be much different and less convenient for the voters.

**Dean Logan**, registrar-recorder/county clerk, [Los Angeles County, Calif.](#) With the expectation of record setting voter turnout and first time voter participation, the best advice I can offer to those new voters is to confirm their registration status and polling location prior to Election Day. In California, this information is provided in a Sample Ballot that is mailed to all voters prior to the election. Voters are encouraged to review and mark their Sample Ballot prior to going to the polls. This will ease their own anxiety as well as assist the poll workers on Election Day. Additionally, we are advising those who have the flexibility to vote mid-day in expectation of long lines when the polls open and just before closing.

**Greg Mackay**, administer of elections, [Knox County, Tenn.](#) Read the sample ballot before you get in the booth.

**Glenn D. Magpantay**, staff attorney, [Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund](#). If you do not read English, you may bring a friend, family member, or official interpreter (but not your employer or union representative), into the voting booth to translate the ballot for you. This is your right under the federal Voting Rights Act.

**Deb Markowitz**, secretary of state, [Vermont](#). Be prepared! Check to make sure you know where you are registered to vote and where your polling place is located.

**Eric Marshall**, campaign manager, [National Campaign for Fair Elections at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law](#). The most important thing for first-time voters is to educate themselves about their rights and know that there is a free resource for them if they have any questions or problems – 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683). In order to have a positive experience, first-time voters should know the polling place hours in their jurisdiction, verify the location of their polling place ahead of time, and check the identification requirements in their state. All of that information can be found by visiting [www.866OurVote.org](#). By educating themselves ahead of time, first-time voters will be prepared if something happens out of the ordinary. Of course if that does happen, they should call 1-866-OUR-VOTE.

**John McCain**, [Republican nominee for president](#) (through senior advisor). Do your homework on the candidates and the issues. Visit the candidates' Web pages, watch them debate, discuss the issues with your friends and family, and read about their plans in detail. Don't just make your decision by listening to your favorite TV talking head or radio DJ or by going along and voting as your friends do: make an independent decision.

**Ricardo Meza**, regional counsel, [Mexican America Legal Defense and Education Fund \(MALDEF\)](#) For first time voters my (few pieces) of advice would be: Please to not feel intimidated or nervous about the process of voting. If you have any questions or are confused about anything, please ask someone for assistance rather than just leaving without voting. On Election Day, there will be numerous individuals (at polling places and elsewhere) whose sole purpose is to make certain persons who wish to vote are able to vote. Although first time voters may need a little extra time to navigate through the process, once you cast your vote, you will no doubt feel proud for having participated in the democratic process.

**Pat Nakamoto**, elections program administrator, [Elections Division, Hawaii County, Hawaii](#). 1) Be sure your voter registration record is updated. 2) Know your candidate and ballot question choices before going to the polls. 3) Know what the off peak hours for voting are and avoid the rush.

**Brian Newby**, election commissioner, [Johnson County, Kan.](#) My advice is probably a bit different and that would be: Stay involved. The 18-24 demographic gets a bad reputation for not voting because of the 20-24-year-olds, not the 18 and 19 year-olds. Everyone is excited to vote their first time, but then they are off to college or starting a life and it's easy to become disconnected from voting, especially in local and state races that have the most impact on us. Plus, once in college, it's important to make sure you vote where you are registered. If registered at home, vote at home or through an advance ballot. If registered at your college town, vote there. The important thing is that you know exactly where you are registered and that you vote where you are registered so your vote will count.

**Barack Obama**, [Democratic nominee for president](#) (through campaign spokeswoman). If you are new voter, know your rights. Go to the polls feeling confident but know who to call in case anyone, for any reason questions you or you are turned away. Go as simply dressed as possible, you don't want to give anyone any reason to question you. If you have an ID, take it with you, if you don't and you are questioned, know that you can demand a provisional ballot.

**David Orr**, clerk, [Cook County, Ill.](#) I would encourage first-time voters to avoid peak early morning and after work hours on Election Day, when they may have to wait in a line or feel rushed casting their ballot. If possible, go to the polls between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Better yet, take advantage of Early Voting's convenience and vote at the time and place that works best for you.

**Dan Phipps**, election commissioner, [Douglas County, Neb.](#) My one piece of advice would be to have patience. Voting is not a five minute experience. There may be lines at your polling place, but election officials do their best to process everyone as quickly as possible. If you are prepared in the beginning, you may find yourself pleasantly surprised at how quickly you really are processed.

**Helen Purcell**, recorder, [Maricopa County, Ariz.](#) Make yourself familiar with the candidates and the issues; know the location of your polling place; know your state requirements for identification, if any; go to the polls at the off hours, if possible, to avoid long lines; be patient with poll workers. Information is the most important commodity on Election Day.

**Steve Raborn**, elections administrator, [Tarrant County, Tex.](#) My best advice to election-day voters is to contact their county's Elections Department to make sure they know the name and address of their polling place. We have an interactive website for this purpose, and I think many other jurisdictions do as well.

**Nat Robinson**, elections division administrator, [Wisconsin Government Accountability Board.](#) Be prepared! Know what is required of you to register and vote, know where to go to vote, and don't be in a hurry. If there are lines, be patient. If there are questions or obstacles, be persistent.

**Rosemary Rodriguez**, chair, [U.S. Election Assistance Commission.](#) First of all, welcome to your first election! In order to make it a positive experience, I encourage you to do these things: verify your status. Be sure that you are properly registered, at the correct address. Many states have websites and toll free phone numbers that you can access. Our website, [eac.gov](#), has links to [voter information services](#). Find out your polling location or, if available in your state, what options are available. You may be able to vote early, or by mail. Find out what you are required to present at the polls, some states have ID requirements. Be prepared. Finally, VOTE! Once you have selected a candidate, choose the method by which you want to cast your vote and become a fully enfranchised American! And please be patient. Like you, there are lots of new voters who are enthusiastic about participating and there may be a line when you arrive at your polling place.

**Sue Roust**, auditor, [Minnehaha County, S.D.](#) We encourage voters to mark a sample ballot and bring it with them to the polls. That way they'll have time to study the issues in advance so they can vote quickly.

**Gary Smith**, chairman, [Board of Registration and Elections, Forsyth County, Ga.](#) My best advice is that they download a copy of their ballot from our website. Read it well, especially the state constitutional amendments and come to the polls prepared to vote. Prior preparation will result in less time studying the legal questions on the ballot and help move our lines much quicker. We have analyzed the voting time for this ballot and it will take an average of five minutes...any more than that and the lines will quickly increase...I would suggest that the voter fill out the ballot ahead of time and take it into their polling location and use it as their crib sheet.

**Rokey Suleman**, general registrar, [Office of Elections, Fairfax County, Va.](#) A new voter, first and foremost should educate themselves before they go to the polls. Learn all of the candidates and issues so that you are prepared. Know the location of your polling place. Have your ID ready if it is necessary. And most of all...be patient. Remember, you may stand in line for 20 minutes. The poll workers are there for 14-15 hours. They want to help you. It is not easy to ask the entire country to do the same thing on the same day. It takes time. Also.....Thanks for voting!!!! Absentee's not a bad idea either!

**Sherrie Swensen**, clerk, [Salt Lake County, Utah.](#) Voters should verify their Election Day polling location before going to vote by whatever means is available in their county. We have an online search tool and we also mail a Polling Location Notice to every household, which lists the voters' assigned polling location and our early voting locations and hours.

**Grant Veeder** auditor/commissioner of elections, [Black Hawk County, Iowa.](#) My advice to first-time voters is twofold: First, check with your local election office and verify that you are registered to vote in the precinct where you live, and confirm with them where you go to vote. Second, go to the polls early in the day, and avoid busy times, which are typically before and after work and at mealtimes. In other words, be prepared and don't rush yourself. Then if something unexpected happens, you're less likely to get in a stressful situation and have a bad experience.

**Beth White**, clerk, [Marion County, Ind.](#) The one piece of advice I would give ALL voters, not just new voters, is to be prepared and be patient. In my county, being prepared means voters need to know where to go to vote (our precincts and locations have changed since the last general election), bring your govt. issued photo ID (this has been Indiana law for a few years but the first time for a Presidential election), and be patient. We are expecting record turnout and while it is not common in our county, there will be lines at many of our polling places on November 4. We hope everyone, especially new voters, have a good experience on election day, and we are doing everything we can to make voting as efficient as possible.

## II. Election Reform News This Week

- This week, Make Voting Work, a division of the Pew Center on the States, released a [report](#) called *Being Online Is Not Enough: State election Web sites*. For *Being Online*, researchers with the Pew Center on the States, in conjunction with Nielsen Norman Group, a leading Internet usability firm, measured the usability and effectiveness of state election Web sites based on key benchmarks including: how easy users can locate the site on the Web, how easy it is for users to navigate through the site and understand content, how well the homepage is organized, how easy it is for users to search the site and how well the site incorporates online tools to further help users locate information. Since so many sites were adding improvements in late September and early October, release of the report was delayed in order to go back and incorporate changes into the analysis up to October 7.
- While the campaigns have tried to take on a more gentle tone in the last couple of days, voters did not follow suit, at least in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. At nursing home, [two poll workers got into a scuffle over accusations of improperly marked ballots](#). According to the *Akron Beacon Journal*, George Manos, the 75-year-old Republican, told police that Edith Walker, the 73-year-old Democrat, jumped on his back and struck him in the head three to four times with her fists. Manos said two other elections workers had to pull Walker off his back, according to a report filed with Cuyahoga Falls police. Manos said it happened after he accused Walker of ballot tampering, and he wants to prosecute. The poll workers were placed on [unpaid leave](#).
- Clearly the poll workers in the previous piece did not read the latest study from Utah University and Brigham Young University that said when voters have a good [encounter with poll workers](#), they are much more likely to have confidence that their ballots were correctly counted. "Interaction with poll workers has a consistent, big effect on what voters think about the election process," study co-author Thad Hall, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Utah told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Salt Lake County will invest about \$95,000 for poll-worker training this election, says Jason Yocom, Salt Lake County deputy clerk. The county makes each of its nearly 4,000 poll workers take a three-hour training course, with an additional two-hour class for workers who handle the electronic voting machines or manage a polling station. The county keeps the classes small, with no more than 20 workers per session.

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

[Is America Ready to Vote? State Preparations for Voting Machine Problems in 2008](#) – Prepared by Lawrence Norden and Laura Seago, Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, Susannah Goodman, Common Cause Education Fund, and Sean Flaherty and Pamela Smith, Verified Voting Foundation

Noting it is quite likely that voting systems will fail somewhere come November 4, the authors focus on what states currently and should do to prepare for such an event. Examining the laws and procedures of the 50 states and Washington D.C., the report focuses and grades states in four areas:

- The use of emergency paper ballots as a back up to electronic or lever voting systems;

- Requirements for ballot accounting and vote reconciliation;
- Use of systems with voter-verifiable paper records; and
- Post-election audits of voter-verifiable paper records

The states ranked highest are Alaska, California, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina and Oregon. The states ranked lowest are Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Virginia.

[Report and Feedback: August 2008 Connecticut Election Audit Observation](#) – By the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition, October 14, 2008

Connecticut's post-election audit procedures of the August 2008 primary are [examined](#) and while the report finds the process has improved since the 2008 presidential primary audit, problems still remain. Some of these include lack of standards and detailed guidance about the process and the ad-hoc nature of the audit in many jurisdictions. The report also cites concerns about the chain-of-custody of the ballots and that the procedures as they stand now will not be enough to ensure an accurate audit after next month's election. Several recommendations are made to improve the process including the secretary of state providing more detailed guidance on counting methods and clarification of the process of selecting the races to be audited.

[Pre-Election Audit of Memory Cards for the August 2008 Connecticut Primary Elections](#) – Prepared by the Voting Technology Research (VoTeR) Center at the University of Connecticut, Oct. 7, 2008

The voting process in Connecticut is the subject of another audit report, this time a pre-August primary look at the memory cards used statewide with the optical scan voting technology. The researchers at the University of Connecticut found that of the 185 cards they examined, which were programmed by LHS Associates of Methuen, Massachusetts, ten (5.4 percent) contained junk or unusable data and could not have been used on election day, a number the report states is not acceptable and needs to be addressed. It is possible that the cards were not sufficiently tested by LHS Associates or that there was some sort of hardware or software failure.

[The End of the Line? Preparing for a Surge in Voter Turnout in the November 2008 General Election](#) – By The Advancement Project, October 2008

With a potential surge in turnout in the upcoming presidential election, researchers at the Advancement Project find that in a number of battleground states there might not be enough voting machines on election day. The report additionally finds that voting machines, privacy booths and poll workers might be misallocated, and this might have a disproportionate impact on communities of color. Recommendations are made including leasing or buying more voting equipment, reallocating voting equipment, recruiting more poll workers and encouraging early and absentee voting.

[Analysis of Selected 2008 Voter Registration Databases](#) – By Michael McDonald, George Mason University, October 13, 2008

McDonald analyzes new voter registrations in both North Carolina and Ohio in 2008. 674,724 new registrations have been filed in North Carolina this year and 859,734 new registrations have been filed in Ohio. He examines the demographic breakdown of new registrants in each state and discusses the purging of voters from the rolls in Ohio where 327,323 voters have been purged since the beginning of the year.

[Losing Fewer Votes: The Impact of Changing Voting Systems on Residual Votes](#) – By Michael J. Hanmer, Won-Ho Park, Michael W. Traugott, Richard G. Niemi, Paul S. Herrnson, Benjamin B. Bederson, and Frederick C. Conrad, Political Research Quarterly, Sept. 22, 2008 (Subscription required)

Residual vote rates - voters who unintentionally fail to vote for a certain race or who voted incorrectly and do not have that vote counted – and the effects of changing voting technology are tracked in both Florida and Michigan, comparing election results from 2000 and 2004. Where new technology was introduced, the residual vote rate dropped in both states. The authors note that while technology change was a significant factor in this drop, better ballot design and better education also played a role. However, technology was important, and over-voting was almost entirely eliminated in both states.

## IV. Opinion This Week

National: [Voter ID](#); [Voting machines](#); [ACORN](#)  
Alabama: [Voting rights](#)  
Arizona: [Proposition 105](#)  
Colorado: [Election Day, II](#); [El Paso County](#)  
Florida: [Palm Beach County, II, III](#); [Hillsborough County](#)  
Georgia: [Election Day](#); [Early voting](#); [Election laws](#)  
Indiana: [Early voting](#); [Voter ID](#)  
Iowa: [Election changes](#)  
Kansas: [Voting rights](#)  
Maine: [Early voting](#)  
Maryland: [Early voting](#); [Election Day](#)  
Massachusetts: [Election Day](#); [Vote fraud](#)  
Michigan: [Voter rolls](#)  
Minnesota: [Instant-runoff voting](#)  
Missouri: [Election day](#)  
New York: [Phantom voters](#)  
Oklahoma: [Voter registration](#); [Absentee ballots](#)  
Oregon: [Election-day registration](#); [Kate Brown, II](#); [Measure 65](#)  
Pennsylvania: [Election workers](#); [Voter fraud](#)  
South Carolina: [Voting machines](#)  
Texas: [Displaced voters](#)  
Washington: [King County](#)  
West Virginia: [Voter registration](#)  
Wisconsin: [Voter ID](#); [Poll workers](#); [Overseas voting](#)

*\*\*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)*

**Chief Deputy** — L.A. County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Los Angeles, Calif. The Chief Deputy Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk reports to the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, and acts as assistant head of the Department of the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. This one position is distinguished by its executive and administrative responsibility for assisting the Registrar-Recorder/ County Clerk in the planning, organization, and direction of all operations of the Department including those of the County Clerk operations, Registrar operations, and Recorder operations. Minimum Requirements: Five years of progressively responsible experience in an administrative or management capacity directing or assisting in directing through subordinate managers, a major organizational unit with responsibility for multiple high profile functions or services, including elections administration and legal document processing or functions of a similar level of complexity. This experience may have been in either a public or private agency or businesses providing public services. **Salary:** \$129,045-\$195,320. **Application:** Submit statement of interest and resume to: Marco Morejon, Department of Human Resources, Executive Recruitment; Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration; 500 West Temple Street, Room 555; Los Angeles, CA 90012; Phone: (213) 974-2675; Fax: (213) 613-4773. E-mail: [mmorejon@hr.lacounty.gov](mailto:mmorejon@hr.lacounty.gov). [Web site](#). **Deadline:** Open.