

## **electionlineWeekly — October 22, 2009** **electionline.org**

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

#### **Oakland County, Mich. introduces new online reminder system**

*Email program reminds voters two weeks and 24 hours before local, state and federal elections*

By [M. Mindy Moretti](#)

Several hundred voters in Oakland County, Mich. got something new in their e-mail inboxes this week: A reminder from the county Clerk & Register of Deeds office reminding them about the upcoming election on November 3.

This month, the county launched a pilot program — believed to be one of the first in the nation — that will send out e-mail reminders to voters two weeks before upcoming local, state and federal elections and again 24-hours prior to the election.

“Everyone is so busy these days, but voting is important. With this pilot program, we decided to offer what is essentially an electronic Post-it note to remind voters about upcoming elections,” said County Clerk Ruth Johnson. “Instead of putting it on your refrigerator, we’ll send an e-mail to your home or office to remind you about upcoming elections.”

The inaugural email went out on October 21 and included a message from Johnson, links to the county elections Web site and a list of the townships and school districts conducting elections. By clicking on the link for each township and school district listed, the voter was taken directly to a list of proposals and candidates the voter could expect to find on their ballot.

Johnson said her team was brainstorming about strategies to increase voter turnout and encourage as many people as possible to participate in elections. She said the idea for the Election Reminder service came out of that session.

“We have already made huge strides in engaging voters, from our online campaign finance records to a voter outreach DVD that’s available on our [Web site](#). We believe the Election Reminder is one of the first online reminder services offered at the county level,” Johnson said.

According to Johnson, the county already had a mechanism in place to e-mail residents who wanted to sign up for updates on services across county government so it was easy for the elections department to implement. All it required was an update to the elections Web site. The implementation was handled internally by the elections department staff so there was almost zero financial impact and required only minimal staff time.

Johnson has been an outspoken opponent to what she calls “stealth” elections where elections are minimally advertised and seemingly held at off-times, which often discourages widespread voter participation.

“Sometimes small elections and special elections are not very well publicized and this will be one more way to get the word out,” said Johnson.

For example, less than 15 percent of registered voters turned out for the last three elections in the county in May, August and September — the county did however have a 72 percent turnout for the November 2008 election.

In order to notify the public about the new service, the elections office sent out a press release to all the local television, radio and newspaper outlets. They also promote it on the elections Web site and at various community and special events.

Within the first few weeks of the service 400 county voters had signed up. Johnson has much bigger hopes.

"As I understand it, we do not have a maximum capacity for the system. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could get every one of Oakland County's 886,232 registered voters to cast their ballot on election day?"

Although a pilot program, Johnson said the county is thinking about ways to enhance the system.

## II. Election Reform News This Week

- The three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals suggested this week that another set of judges may have got it wrong in ruling that Arizona can require people to submit [proof-of-citizen documents](#) when using a mail-in federal form to register to vote. The judges heard arguments on an appeal of parts of a trial judge's ruling upholding a 2004 state law on voter identification and citizenship. The law requires that people registering to vote show a birth certificate or other papers proving citizenship, and an issue in the appeal is whether that requirement violates a federal voting law that requires states to permit use of mail-in cards. According to The Associated Press, one of the judges sharply challenged State Solicitor General Mary O'Grady when she said the first panel correctly ruled that the state law did not violate the National Voter Registration Act. "We do accept and use the form but we also require that they meet the criteria of Arizona law," O'Grady said. However, retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, sitting as a temporary 9th Circuit judge, said it appeared the earlier ruling was "clearly wrong."
- In other citizenship news, the [U.S. Department of Justice \(DOJ\) once again rejected](#) Georgia's system of using Social Security numbers and driver's license data to check whether prospective voters are citizens. The department first rejected Georgia's request for preclearance for the checks in May. The state asked the department in August to reconsider that rejection. In a letter sent to Georgia Deputy Attorney General Dennis Dunn, Assistant U.S. Attorney General Thomas Perez said the state's August request contains so many changes to the original voter registration verification process that it constitutes "a new change affecting voting that the state desires to implement." "I remain unable to conclude that the State of Georgia has carried its burden of showing that the original voter registration verification program has neither a discriminatory purpose nor a discriminatory effect," Perez wrote. Perez also provided a list of additional information Georgia would need to provide for the Justice Department to consider the state's changes to the system. Matt Carrothers, a spokesman for Georgia Secretary of State Karen Handel, said that Georgia provided all of that information with its August request.
- A steady request for absentee ballots has [caught elections officials in some Maine towns and cities off guard in this off-year election](#). Elections officials told a local television station the requests for absentee ballots have broken all records and that their offices are insanely busy. Elections officials in Portland have already run out of ballots. Worsening the situation, the city clerk in Portland said she's short-staffed after she lost two people to layoffs. City and town clerks throughout Maine are scrambling to keep up with the demand with Election Day two weeks out. South Portland City Clerk Susan Mooney tested fax machines and other election equipment inside a janitor's closet at the community center on Monday. Her office has also been inundated with requests for absentee ballots. "I did run some statistics. As of today, we've had almost 2,000 people request absentee ballots -- about 49 percent of those have been returned. Two years ago, we had issued 279," Mooney told the station. One item on Maine's off-year ballot that may be

driving turnout is Question 1, which will allow voters to decide whether or not Maine should allow same-sex marriages.

- Counties conducting all vote-by-mail elections in Colorado this year are experiencing mixed results. The [El Paso County Election Department](#) mailed more than 278,000 ballots, of those, the department has received approximately 9,000 of those ballots back because they were undeliverable as addressed. By law, ballots cannot be forwarded by the Postal Service. Consequently, if a voter has moved, and failed to update their address with the Election Department, the ballot will be returned by the Postal Service as an undeliverable ballot. In [Routt County](#), Clerk Kay Weinland said the all-mail election is going much smoother than previous elections, with only a few questions from voters who have not received their ballots. Weinland said the mail-in election is “definitely less expensive,” too, because of the reduced employee demands and, she said, surprisingly reduced printing and mail costs. In [Boulder County](#), with less than 2 percent of ballots returned and two weeks until election day, county workers began counting the ballots that had made it back to the office. Under state law, county clerks may begin counting ballots 15 days before the election. No specific results, however, may be released until after polls close on Election Day. Jessie Cornelius, a spokeswoman for the clerk's office, told the *Daily Camera* that 3,360 ballots have been returned to the county as undeliverable. That usually means a voter hasn't updated his or her new address. Otherwise, she said, “everything is going smoothly” with the election so far. Ballots are starting to trickle in in [Aspen](#). County Clerk Janice Vos Caudill said the county is saving between \$16,000 and \$20,000 by not operating traditional polls during this election. The election department has, however, promised to provide a voting machine for disabled people who, for any reason, cannot fill out a paper ballot.
- U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), the Chairman of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee and a senior member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, recently raised [new concerns over Diebold's proposed sale of its voting machine business to its biggest competitor](#), and announced that his Rules Committee staff would begin a formal review of potential problems posed by the merger. Schumer announced he would be seeking input from state and local election officials to investigate the deal's impacts on the administration of elections across the United States. The findings will be compiled into a public report that could be shared with the Department of Justice. “Since this merger was announced, we have heard from election officials across the country worried about the effects of this deal,” Schumer said in a statement. “We intend to give local election officials the opportunity to inform Congress about their concerns over this merger's effect on the business of elections. Our review will be thorough, and our findings will go to the Justice Department.” As part of the review, Schumer's office will solicit information and complaints of competitive problems in the voting machine industry. In the coming days, Schumer said his office would even provide ways for information to be submitted anonymously in the event that officials are concerned about making a public complaint for fear of retaliation.

### **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@pewtrusts.org](mailto:sgreene@pewtrusts.org).*

[Improving State Voter Registration Databases](#) – National Academy of Sciences, Oct. 21, 2009: In a report funded by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, the National Academy of Sciences makes a series of recommendations to improve statewide voter registration databases. Short-term recommendations include new approaches to how voter registration information is disseminated, improved voter education and changes related to administrative processes such as human review of registrations that are computer-indicated for removal. Long-term recommendations focus on more funding for maintaining statewide databases; improving data collection and entry; matching procedures; privacy, security, and backup; and database interoperability.

[Declining Public Assistance Voter Registration and Welfare Reform: A Response](#) - R. Michael Alvarez, California Institute of Technology, Jonathan Nagler, New York University, Demos, October 2009: Previous [research](#) that found that the welfare reform of the mid 1990's has played a significant role in the decline of people registering to vote at public assistance agencies is examined. The authors conclude that the previous research has methodological flaws and that the certainty and precision of the results is overstated.

## IV. Opinion

California: [Overseas ballots](#)

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

District of Columbia: [Voting rights](#)

Indiana: [Voter ID](#)

Michigan: [Absentee ballots](#)

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

Mississippi: [Voter ID](#)

New Jersey: [Vote-by-mail, II, III](#)

New York: [Instant-runoff voting](#); [Election reform](#)

Ohio: [Cuyahoga County](#); [Absentee ballots, II](#)

South Carolina: [Voting machines](#)

Utah: [Voter turnout](#)

Washington: [King County](#); [Ranked-choice voting, II](#); [Secret ballot](#); [Vote-by-mail](#)

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

**Business Development/Sales Manager (two positions)**— *Scytl USA Secure Electronic Voting* located in Richmond, Virginia and its parent *Scytl S.A.* located in Barcelona, Spain are rapidly emerging as the global leader in the development of secure electronic voting solutions for the public and private sectors. Associates of Scytl USA enjoy an entrepreneurial setting, competitive salary, continuous development and education, career advancement opportunities, and a great team environment. Reporting directly to the Managing Director, Scytl USA, the candidates will: Build and execute company business plan for achieving revenue and pipeline objectives; identification and prospecting of new business leads, including qualification and needs assessment; build and maintain regional sales opportunity pipeline utilizing company CRM tools; presentation and positioning of Scytl USA's solutions and services to prospective State and Local Election Administrators/Officials, and State Legislators; supporting the development of effective proposals and closing new business; adhering to Scytl USA's selling methodology for developing sales pipeline; maintaining direct client relationships and building new business relationships; and providing market and legislative feedback internally concerning the effectiveness of Scytl's core products and consulting services. **Requirements:** Bachelor's degree in Business Administration or Engineering (e.g., Computer Science); proven 10+ years experience in state and local government technology sales – preferably in election related products and services; software familiarity expertise in the following technologies – Web based applications/Cryptography (SSL, PKI, digital certificates and signatures...); excellent communications skills – must have strong oral presentation experience; advanced user experience in Microsoft Office, specifically Power Point, Word and Excel; and ability to travel. Scytl USA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Please visit us at [www.scytl.com](http://www.scytl.com) to learn more about how we are revolutionizing the secure online voting environment. **To apply**, please send a cover letter and resume to the following (email accepted): Hugh Gallagher, Managing Director; Scytl USA; 6012 Glen Abbey DR; Suite 1L; Richmond, Virginia 23059; [ScytlUSA@scytl.com](mailto:ScytlUSA@scytl.com)