

## **electionlineWeekly—December 11, 2008** **electionline.org**

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

*The end of the election season has not meant a lull for the Pew Center on the States. This week, electionline and Make Voting Work released two publications, one offering a first-blush analysis of what went right and wrong on November 4 and the other, a look at data collection efforts in the elections field from experts from around the country.*

### **Election 2008 in Review**

Predictions of historic turnout, an overburdened election system and polling place meltdowns never materialized on November 4. In fact, the 2008 election might have restored sagging voter confidence.

[Electionline.org Briefing: Election 2008 in Review](#) offers a first-blush look at what went right – and wrong – in the 2008 vote. It details surges in early voting, registration problems at the polls, vast monitoring and observation efforts at the polls and analyzes turnout from 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The report finds:

- The 130 million Americans who participated did not break turnout records. Larger percentages of eligible voters cast ballots in previous elections. It did, however, mark the most ballots ever cast in U.S. history.
- A larger percentage of voters cast ballots before Election Day than in any previous vote. An estimated 38 million voters cast absentee ballots, either in person or by mail, or went to regional early voting centers. Thirty-four states allowed voters to use at least one no-excuse early voting method.
- Despite the heavy turnout, the system functioned fairly well. Electronic machines had problems in some parts of the country while new optical-scan systems and high-speed ballot printers had difficulty meeting heavy turnout demands in South Florida and other parts of the country during early voting.
- Voter registration troubles were the most frequently reported voter problem on Election Day. Unprocessed or mishandled registration applications kept some eligible voters off rolls. Widespread concern over falsified registration forms and fraud by third-party voter registration groups did not seem to have a significant impact on Election Day. Some experts said they were rethinking the disparate voter registration system nationwide in favor of universal (or automatic) registration nationwide.
- Thousands of observers from campaigns, nonpartisan organizations and political parties kept a close watch on polling places and early voting centers throughout the election. Election Protection, the most prominent organization, had more than 100,000 volunteers at polling places and logged complaints and concerns in person, by phone or through a Web site. Monitors from the U.S. Department of Justice were on hand as well. More than 800 monitors were deployed to 23 states on November 4.

The publication is available [here](#). Hard copies can be requested by emailing: [sturner@pewstrusts.org](mailto:sturner@pewstrusts.org)

### **Data for Democracy – Improving Elections through Metrics and Measurement**

Good data is the basis of good policymaking. In the elections field, a lack of data has often left policy makers and election officials without the tools necessary to assess successes and failures in the field. When data is available, it has usually been limited. With numerous changes to elections since 2002 – and

a growing focus on the administration rather than only the outcome of elections – data collection efforts have been steadily increasing.

[\*Data for Democracy – Improving Elections through Metrics and Measurement\*](#), a compendium of research that grew out of a Pew Center on the States and JEHT Foundation-sponsored conference, begins to look at how data is collected in the field. It highlights states that do a robust job of collecting and reporting data, examines challenges faced in data collection in the field and assesses the diversity of data and data collection mechanisms among local governments.

Among the data collection efforts highlighted in the publication:

- An effort by Maryland to assess voting patterns through the use of electronic poll-book data.
- An information reporting system in Maricopa County, Ariz. enabling a review of voting-machine performance, supply and distribution problems and poll worker effectiveness.
- A look at how data and transparency could have averted the “double bubble” problems in Los Angeles County’s 2008 presidential preference primary.
- The use of geographic information system (GIS) data to maximize the efficiency of polling-place locations in Forsyth County, Georgia.

The publication includes a dozen essays by national experts in voter registration, election technology, election administration and election reform, laying out an ambitious agenda for the future efforts in the field.

The publication is available by clicking [here](#). Hard copies may be requested by emailing: [sturner@pewtrusts.org](mailto:sturner@pewtrusts.org).

## II. Election Reform News This Week

A New Jersey General Assembly committee approved a bill that would [push back the retrofitting the state’s voting machines](#) by an additional two years. According to *The Record*, the legislation would roll back the January 1 deadline to alter 10,000 machines with printers that produce voter-verified paper audit trails. The bill would allow for local tests of those machines, plus trials of optical-scanning technology used elsewhere in the country. "Let the consumers really test what works," the bill's sponsor, Assemblywoman Joan Quigley, testified before the Assembly Appropriations Committee. If passed by the full Legislature and signed by the governor, the bill would lead to the third deadline extension for the project. The proposed November 2010 deadline would be a year after next year’s gubernatorial election.

The Minnesota U.S. Senate recount [ended last week with the race still unresolved](#). The search continued for 133 missing ballots in Minneapolis and while [some uncounted ballots were found](#), the [133 in question were not](#) and the search was called off. [Both](#) candidates [withdrew hundreds of challenges](#) this week. The next question in the recount is how the [process of reviewing the challenged ballots](#) will work. According to *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*, it's still not clear whether the campaigns will be allowed to argue their case to the board on each ballot, whether a simple majority of the five-person board will prevail in the case of split decisions, and how long this phase of the recount will play out. And with [absentee ballots](#) taking center stage, candidate Al Franken released a [YouTube video of emotional voters](#) demanding that their ballots be counted.

In personnel news this week, long time [Fayette County, Ky. Clerk Don Blevins](#) is planning to retire at the end of the year. Blevins has been clerk for 27 years. The “race” for the [Colorado Secretary of State position](#) has been narrowed to three finalists. All three are Democrats and outgoing state legislators. [Ginger Nickerson](#) was named the new director of the Dougherty County, Ga. Board of Registration and Elections. Nickerson had been deputy director for seven years. In Kansas, Republican Party Chairman

[Kris Kobach](#) said that he will probably run for secretary of state in 2010. The race for the new elected [King County Elections Director](#) has kicked off with current, appointed director Sherril Huff announcing that she will seek the position. And in a sign of the times, the [El Paso County, Colo. Clerk & Recorder's office](#) announced this week that it would be laying off 19 employees including three in the elections department.

### 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).*

[Blacks and the 2008 Elections: A Preliminary Analysis](#) – Prepared by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, December 2008

A first look at the turnout rate of black voters in the 2008 election finds record highs nationally at nearly 67 percent. Exit polls show the share of black voters as a percentage of the national total grew to 13 percent this year, up from 11 percent in 2004. Black turnout at the state level varied a great deal, with six states seeing large increases while other states saw lesser increases or decreases.

### IV. Opinion

National: [Voting system](#); [Instant-runoff voting](#)

Alabama: [Overseas voting](#)

California: [Riverside County](#); [Humboldt County](#); [Ranked-choice voting](#)

Colorado: [Secretary of state position](#)

Florida: [Early voting](#)

Georgia: [Runoff law](#)

Michigan: [Teaching moment](#)

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

New Jersey: [Voting machines](#)

New York: [National popular vote](#)

Oklahoma: [Voter ID, II](#)

South Carolina: [Voting system](#); [Aiken County](#)

Texas: [Dallas County](#)

Washington: [King County](#)

West Virginia: [Voting system](#)

*\*\*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)*

**Election Administrator, Benton County, Wash.** — position is under the direction of the County Auditor, an independently elected official, and is responsible for the management of voter registration and elections for Benton County. In addition, the County Auditor conducts elections for several junior-taxing districts ranging from cities, towns and school districts to library and drainage districts. The County currently has 87,000 registered voters. The Election Administrator will supervise a full-time staff of 3 plus up to 20 additional staff during elections, as required. **Qualifications:** Extensive management experience with a minimum five years in election administration, or any combination of education and experience that would likely provide the required knowledge, skills and abilities, is qualifying. An in-depth knowledge of election laws, regulations and rules is desirable. In addition, the qualified candidate must have prepared and managed annual budgets, have experience in the management of automated information systems, and must have proven ability to meet deadlines, lead an experienced staff, and have served in some capacity in the public eye. The position requires that the Election Administrator be conversant with

pending legislation and its potential impact on Election Department operations. Candidates with a college degree and/or certification as an Election Administrator by the Washington State Secretary of State will be highly considered. **Salary:** \$52,068 to \$67,572. **Application:** Please submit an application (available online at: [www.co.benton.wa.us](http://www.co.benton.wa.us)), resume, cover letter and five work-related references to: Bobbie Gagner, Benton County Auditor; c/o Benton County Personnel Resources Department; 7122 W. Okanogan Pl., Bldg. A; Kennewick, WA 99336. **Deadline:** Open.

**Project Manager, Make Voting Work, Washington, D.C.** — the project manager would lead a set of defined initiatives identified from within our areas of concentration and our evolving scope and strategy. While the specific focus will be dependent on the experience of the successful candidate and the roles assigned to existing staff, the project manager is expected to develop long-term strategies, generate and oversee a set of initiatives and research that advance the strategy, oversee consultants for related projects, build partnerships with critical allies and design campaign strategies. Working with the MVW team, and in consultation with colleagues across PCS and Pew, the project manager will assist in developing and executing strategic and operational plans for the project. The project operates in a highly collaborative environment that emphasizes teamwork and values input from a variety of perspectives. The project manager will be expected to contribute at multiple levels, taking lead responsibility for the design and implementation of certain activities, assisting in the execution of other activities, and filling in on duties where needed. The ideal candidate will have an educational and employment background in public policy or a related field, deep knowledge of the election system, and work experience undertaking projects involving many partners, complex issues, extensive writing and live presentations. The candidate preferably will have experience at the state or federal level with issue campaigns, communications strategies, and grassroots or grassroots organizing. This position is term-limited with an end date of December 2009. Application: For application instructions and to view the full job description candidates are invited to visit the Careers@Pew page on our Web site at [www.pewtrusts.org](http://www.pewtrusts.org).