

FLORIDA OVERCOMES GHOSTS OF PAST ELECTIONS

By: Bill Cowles, Orange County Supervisor of Elections



Bill Cowles
Orange County
Supervisor of
Elections

No election is perfect but, from what I'm hearing from my colleagues from around the state and the nation, Florida's clouded past is now history. Our supervisors succeeded in administering a good election – new voting equipment was used in many counties, new registration and election laws were implemented statewide and we effectively dealt with an unexpected Executive Order from **Governor Crist** extending early voting hours --- all of this done under the microscope of intense national and international media attention.

Here in Orange County we witnessed early voting records being set daily during the 15 days prior to the election. With the **League of Women Voters'** help in encouraging voting by mail, we saw a record number of voters requesting absentees. So with roughly 42% of our voters having cast their ballot prior to Election Day, November 4th was far more manageable at the polling places as I'm sure your **Adopt-A-Precinct** team at Precinct 510 will attest.

It might come as a surprise to most people, but my staff and I have already begun the process of preparing for several municipal elections in early 2009 and the 2010 elections. While the internal clean-ups from the November election will continue into the first quarter of 2009, we're reviewing our processes and procedures looking for ways to improve and better serve the needs of our community. I'm sure we'll face changes to some of our election laws when the Legislature reconvenes. The Florida Association of Supervisors of Elections will be lobbying lawmakers to allow more flexibility in early voting locations. I'm hoping to see some much needed change there.

We look forward to continuing our efforts to encourage residents to register and exercise their vote in the coming elections. We thank the Orange County League for your support and partnership in serving the needs of our voters.

ORANGE COUNTY:

Total registered voters as of 10/6/2008 book closing deadline: **604,243**

Total Ballots Cast in the General Election: **466,002**
(77% turnout of registered voters)

Early Voters: **145,276** (31% of Total Ballots Cast)

Democrats: **82,829**
Republican: **33,008**
Other: **29,439**

Absentee Voters: **119,287**

(79.6% of those mailed were returned)

Total Ballots Mailed: **149,879**

TOP 10 COUNTIES	REGISTRATIONS	VOTER TURNOUT
DADE	1,243,315	70.2
BROWARD	1,008,656	73.4
PALM BEACH	831,423	71.5
HILLSBOROUGH	701,464	73.6
PINELLAS	643,423	72.8
ORANGE	604,243	77.1
DUVAL	536,588	77.4
BREVARD	351,488	82.5
POLK	332,015	74.3
VOLUSIA	326,854	75.2

~LWVOC ELECTION CYCLE PROJECTS ~

Thanks to all members who participated and donated their time!

LWVOC On-line Voter Guide profiling key candidates in Orange County (January, August and November elections)

Adopt a Precinct: LWVOC staffed all three 2008 elections at the Winter Park Lake Island Recreation Center

National award-winning website: www.voteanywhere.org (expanded to include links statewide)

Eleven electronic billboards in Central Florida:
Stay Home and Be Counted: www.voteanywhere.org

LWVOC Voter Services Phone Banks: WKMG/Local 6-TV and WESH/Channel 2-TV

LWVOC website continued to expand with up to the minute voter information and news

Top 5 Election Questions of the Week: press releases distributed to Central Florida media

LWVOC members joined Mayor Buddy Dyer for early voting at the downtown Orange County Public Library

LWVOC sponsored candidate debates and WMFE candidate forums

WEB LINKS RECOMMENDATIONS

For the most up to date Florida News, go to:
www.safiereview.com

For the latest statewide coverage:

What's Happening with Legislative Session?
What are Florida's Editorial Boards Saying?
Agendas for Cabinet Meetings, Commissions, Boards
Political Links
Research Links
Latest from Florida's Top Columnists

Thanks to those who brought in food for Adopt a Precinct workers!

Lynn Eberly
Kaia Forget
Brian Henties
Adrienne Katz
Andrea Kobrin
Deirdre Macnab
Sara Segal
Charley Williams

and the good folks at **Strollos' Cucina Café**

Some Observations from Adopt A Precinct: *Why Voting Matters*

by Laurie Wack



**PRECINCT #510~
LAKE ISLAND RECREATION CENTER
450 HARPER STREET, WINTER PARK**

The League of Women Voters of Orange County (LWVOC) accepted the job of running three elections for 2008 in the program called "Adopt A Precinct" (AAP). **Bill Cowles, Orange County Supervisor of Elections (SOE)**, oversaw it and delegated operations to a few terrific employees brought in solely for this purpose during a huge presidential election year.



**Laurie Wack
AAP Chair**

There were 262 precincts for which he had to be accountable, all needing a minimum of nine people each. By running several of them as AAPs, the strain of staffing was mitigated. The League was able to provide excellent volunteers from our ranks, and to contribute competency to the process. The extra benefit of earning the day's fee as a fundraiser made it all the better.

Precinct #510 is predominately African-American, and as such, experienced particularly large voter turn-out during this historic year of nominating and electing a person of color to the office of the Presidency. First-timers came in droves, both the young and newly energized first time older voter. **Internet Oath Person (IOP) Chrissy Garton** connected to the downtown SOE and patiently reactivated citizens who had literally 'fallen off the rolls' over the years. She was able to process every solvable problem voter, enfranchising dozens.

**AAP Earned over
\$3000 in 2008!**



November 4th at 6 AM, the early crew arrived at AAP headquarters fired up and ready for voters.

Left to right:

Valerie Christian, Carolyn Arnold, Dede Caron, Susan Pins, Jan Richmer, Laurie Wack, Todd Ruopp, Jan Tunnell, Lynn Eberly and Terri Day.

Not pictured:

Chrissy Garton, Sandra Powers, Karen Breakell, Kaia Forget, Cathy Karunaratne, Michele Levy, Allan Stevenson, Charley Williams and Deirdre Macnab.

Everyone will have his or her own special memories of this effort. Perhaps it was the brother in a wheelchair, pushed and coaxed by his sister, or those harried mothers with numerous youngsters who also got their special "I Voted" stickers. Perhaps it was the ex-felon, a big, muscled individual, who came in and knew that his rights had been restored, paperwork in hand, excitedly chattering about what a special day it was. Or maybe it was the first-time 18-year-old voter whose father broke into thunderous clapping in recognition of her casting her first ballot. Everyone in the room followed suit.

Working those days from 6 in the morning until the close of the polls at 7 PM and beyond, having every action observed by poll-watchers, striving to accommodate each individual voter with kindness and dignity, accounting for every single ballot cast, *modeming* all results downtown quickly, delivering the enormous amount of paperwork to the correct place on election eve, working together as a team, all of this is why voting matters and why LWVOC continues to make a difference in the lives of the people in Orange County and our members.

LWVOC members joined Mayor Buddy Dyer for early voting at the downtown Orange County Public Library



Thank you to the numerous capable people who volunteered for November's Election Day. It was a great year of voting involvement for the League with the January Primaries, the August Primaries and the November Presidential Election. We should be very proud of the good job we did at Precinct 510.

**Laurie Wack—Clerk
Jan Tunnell—Assistant Clerk
Sandra Powers and Lynn Eberly—Ballot Issuers
Deirdre Macnab—Backup
Todd Ruopp and Allan Stevenson —Deputies
Chrissy Garton—Internet Oath Person
Dede Caron, Kaia Forget, Jan Richmer, Karen Breakell, Cathy Karunaratne and Terri Day —PR/PL
Valerie Christian—PR/PL and Spanish Speaker
Michelle Levy and Carolyn Arnold —Tabulator Inspectors
Susan Pins —Touch Screen Tech
Charley Williams —Backup**

Everybody's Voting for the Weekend

By STEVE ISRAEL and NORMAN J. ORNSTEIN



Washington

By November 4, more than \$5 billion will have been spent trying to persuade voters to cast presidential and congressional ballots one way or another. Despite all the money and the news media hysteria, and even with record numbers of Americans heading to the polls, the United States won't even come close to the top nations in the world for voter turnout. We will be well behind — to name just a few — Iceland, Sweden and New Zealand.

What do those countries, among many others, have in common? Their citizens all vote on a weekend day. But in the United States, for more than 150 years, we've voted on Tuesday. Why? It's not in the Constitution. It isn't to avoid holidays. And it's not because people hate Mondays.

The reason we vote on Tuesday makes perfect sense — at least it did in 1845. To understand the decision Congress made that year, let's imagine ourselves as members of early agrarian American society. Saturday was for farming, Sunday was the Lord's day, Monday was required for travel to the county seat where the polling places were, Tuesday you voted, Wednesday you returned home, and Thursday it was back to work.

It's a safe bet that today most Americans don't follow the same schedule as our farming forefathers. In fact, for many, Tuesday is one of the most inconvenient days to hold an election. One in four people who didn't vote in 2006 said that they were "too busy" or had "conflicting work or school schedules."

Legislation now before Congress would finally tailor our voting system to modern American life by establishing weekend voting for national elections. (Mr. Israel is sponsoring the bill in the House.)

Here's how it would work: The presidential election would be held on the Saturday and Sunday after the first Friday in November, while for those who aren't often home on the weekends, there would be a few days of early voting.

Our current system penalizes single parents, people working two jobs, and those who have to choose between getting a paycheck and casting a ballot. Two weekend days of voting means those working families would have a greater chance of making it to the polls. It means easing the long lines during rush hour at the polling sites. It means more locations, more poll workers and more voters.

Some have suggested making Election Day a holiday, but that would involve a serious cost to the economy. Moving Election Day to the weekend means more convenience and less expense. Making a change like this won't be easy, but it's not unprecedented. In 1968, Congress passed the Monday Holiday law, which moved Memorial Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day and Washington's Birthday from their original dates to Mondays. If we can alter our federal holidays to benefit shoppers and travelers, surely we can change Election Day for the benefit of our voters.

Let's take a cue from the Congress of 1845 and ensure that voting is available to as many working Americans as possible — not just those who can make it to the polls on a Tuesday.

Steve Israel is a Democratic representative from New York. Norman J. Ornstein, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is the co-founder of Why Tuesday?, a non-partisan group seeking to increase voter participation.



President Deirdre Macnab congratulates Robin Murphy and Flo Neidig on 50+ years of LWVOC membership



Jennifer Anderson
Susan Sheffield



New LWVOC Directors
Sara Au and
Lisa Franchina



Todd Ruopp
LWVOC Director



Fannie Hillman and daughter, Mary



Jan Tunnell
Director



Susan B. Anthony visits Evans High School. Deirdre participates in an all day program on *Citizenship and YOU; Changing the World through Action*



Flunking the Electoral College

November 20, 2008 *NYTimes Editorial*

On December 15, the United States will endure a quadrennial ritual born in the economics and politics of slavery and the quill-pen era. Members of the Electoral College are scheduled to meet in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia to formally choose the next president.

There is no real doubt about how the electors will vote, but it is disturbing that they have any role at all in making this vital choice in the 21st century. The Electoral College is more than just an antiquated institution: it actively disenfranchises voters and occasionally (think 2000) makes the candidate with fewer popular votes president. American democracy would be far stronger without it.

There is no reason to feel sentimental about the Electoral College. One of the main reasons the founders created it was slavery. The southern states liked the fact that their slaves, who would be excluded from a direct vote, would be counted — as three-fifths of a white person — when Electoral College votes were apportioned.

The founders also were concerned, in the day of the wooden printing press, that voters would not have enough information to choose among presidential candidates. It was believed that it would be easier for them to vote for local officials, whom they knew more about, to be electors. It is hard to imagine that significant numbers of voters thought they did not know enough about **Barack Obama** and **John McCain** by Election Day this year.

Voters in small states are favored because Electoral College votes are based on the number of senators and representatives a state has. Wyoming's roughly 500,000 people get three electoral votes. California, which has about seventy times Wyoming's population, gets only 55 electoral votes.

The Electoral College also makes America seem more

an Electoral College map, California appears solidly blue and Alabama solidly red. But if you look at a map of the popular votes, you see a more nuanced picture. More than 4.5 million Californians voted for **Mr. McCain** (roughly as many votes as he got in Texas), while about 40 percent of voters in Alabama cast a ballot for **Mr. Obama**.

One of the biggest problems with the Electoral College, of course, is that three times since the Civil War — most recently, with George W. Bush in 2000 — it has awarded the presidency to the loser of the popular vote. The president should be the candidate who wins the votes of the most Americans.

The best way to abolish the Electoral College is to amend the Constitution. Until that happens, a national popular vote movement is working to get states representing a majority of the electoral votes to agree to award their votes to the candidate who has the most votes nationally. That would effectively end the Electoral College. Several states, including New Jersey and Illinois, have already enacted popular vote laws, and others are considering it.

When the 2012 presidential election approaches, efforts to reform the electoral system will be viewed through a partisan prism, with a focus on which party they would help or hurt. With the next election still four years away, now is an ideal time to get serious about abolishing the Electoral College.

The LWVUS position on Selection of the President:

Promote the election of the president and vice president by direct popular vote and work to abolish the Electoral College.

Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.



Bob Graham/Lou Frey Report: Florida's Civic Health Index

In partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship and with the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University and others, this report takes a first step toward the development of a continuing index of Florida's Civic Health — an index that will allow us to chart the condition of our civic life as well as chart the condition of our economic life.

. It also sheds light on some of the major factors that shape citizen engagement in the state. Finally, it considers public support for policy changes that would institutionalize pathways to partnership for Florida's young people. The report is based on data provided by the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and an online sample of 506 Florida residents.

Florida's civic health is among the worst. Compared to other states, Florida ranks:

- 32nd in Voter turnout;
 - 40th in percentage of our citizens who have worked with others in their neighborhood to solve a community problem;
 - 47th in the percentage of our citizens who attend public meetings; and
 - 49th in the average rate of volunteering;
- Taking all of this into account, Florida's Civic Health Index for 2007 puts it at 47th in the nation.

Education plays a critically important role in shaping the nation's civic health.

Education — especially intentional civic education — provides the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are essential to engaged citizenship. Reflecting that, Florida citizens who have attended college are significantly more engaged in their communities and more engaged in electoral participation than are those with a high school degree.

The lack of formal education creates lifelong barriers to engaged citizenship. High School dropouts are virtually unrepresented in Florida's active civic life. This is especially critical in Florida since the state ranks 45th in the percentage of entering high school freshmen who actually graduate — more than 1 out of 3 high school freshmen fail to do so. This means that many of our citizens face a lifetime of not only economic hardship, but 2nd class citizenship as well.