U.S. Election Assistance Commission
Workshop
Cost-Saving Practices for Election Management

The Westin Tabor Center
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VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

The following is the verbatim transcript of the Workshop of the United States Election Assistance Commission ("EAC") held on April 15, 2009. The workshop convened at 2:49 p.m., MST. The Workshop adjourned at 3:56 p.m., MST.

WORKSHOP

CHAIR BEACH:

Hi, welcome back. We'd like to reconvene the second portion of our meeting, which is a workshop on Cost-Saving Practices in Election Administration. As you know, today is April 15th. It is tax day, and a day that I think everybody is thinking about budgeting and finances and how we go about paying for things. So, we thought it would be appropriate to hold a workshop about cost-saving practices for election administration, and are particularly hopeful that this would benefit a lot of our local election administrators that are here today and throughout the week for The Election Center, and to everybody that is watching our Webcast.

Throughout 2008, the EAC has held a series of workshops about real-world election issues, such as contingency planning and voter registration databases. Providing a national platform to showcase and share best practices is certainly a part of our clearinghouse responsibilities under the Help America Vote Act. As Chair, my priority will be to continue to provide a central resource of information, especially for local election officials, who may not be able to travel to these conferences like the one being held today or this week by The Election Center, and ones that may not be able to

attend ones in the future. And this year, I will be especially mindful

of the challenges that local election officials face, including

budgetary restrictions and work to deliver solutions from election

officials around the nation, that you can implement in your own

jurisdictions.

Today, you will hear from three local election officials about

cost-saving practices, and I'm pleased that you were able to join us

today and to share the successes that you've had in your

jurisdictions. A Webcast of this meeting and the participants'

presentations will be available tomorrow at eac.gov. We ask that

before you begin, I will introduce each one of you and you give your

remarks and that you confine your remarks to ten minutes. And

after you each give your presentations, we'll have time for

questions and comments by the Commissioners.

So, first I would like to introduce Connie Schmidt. She

retired as Election Commissioner from Johnson County, Kansas, in

2004. She is a recipient of the 2004 National Association of

Secretaries of State Medallion Award, and the 2007 recipient of the

Elections Hall of Fame Award from The Election Center. As the co-

project manager for the EAC's Election Management Guidelines

program, she has helped the EAC produce Election Management

Best Practices, covering everything from pre-election testing to poll

worker training.

Next we have Jill LaVine. She's a Registrar of Voters for Sacramento County, California. She has 22 years of experience in elections. She's been the co-chair of the Legislation Committee for the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials. She's a member of the Postmaster General's Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee, representing the interests of election officials nationally.

And finally, we have Scott Doyle, who is from Larimer County, Colorado, Clerk and Recorder since 2002. He's completed the Certified Elections/Registration Administrator program, the highest certification available, from my understanding, Election Administration. He's certified in public administration and has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Engineering. In 2005, Mr. Doyle was named -- the National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks named him "Public Official of the Year." He developed the vote center concept in Colorado, which we look forward to hearing about today. And Mr. Doyle I'm especially interested in hearing whether vote centers produce cost savings, as well as the other innovations you've implemented in the state and in your jurisdiction.

So now we'd like to turn to Ms. Schmidt.

MS. SCHMIDT:

Oh, great. Madam Chair and Commissioners, thank you very much for the opportunity, again, to join you today to participate

in this important workshop on cost-saving techniques at the local election officer level.

Just a little background. I'm a lifelong employee of local government for over 30 years. Beginning at the city level, at the very -- government really reaches the people closest at the city level and at the county level. During that time I've always strived to serve the public effectively and efficiently while operating within very tight budget constraints. So, my mindset, from day one, has always been the taxpayers' dollars, just if they were my very own, and to make decisions based on that, as many election officials always do.

So, managing elections, I found, it's a very unique challenge because of state and federal mandates; certain things we must do. And, second, because each election is so different and unique. I can vividly remember long discussions with budget officers when they were cutting our budgets countywide. The only problem, a lot of times, was, that was during a Presidential election year, and it was very difficult to get the budget officials to understand that elections are four-year cycles, and you can't compare one budget this year to last year. And we didn't operate like all the other county departments. So, that's always been a very unique challenge to get that message across and to make them understand that

Presidential elections are unique by themselves and they cost a lot of money, to serve that large amount of voters.

That said, our office worked very, very hard, always, to develop and implement cost savings and innovations. And so, when I was asked to be here today, I stopped to look back on my time there and I decided that the two main categories that really represent that are the things we did in developing partnerships and our ability to implement technology solutions. Those were the two big areas.

So, I want to talk a little bit about the partnerships we developed. Again, we operated with no budget for public relations or getting the vote message out. We, basically, had a bare-bone budget. I always like thinking of Election Day as, it's a celebration, it's a community-wide event and it's something that's happening all over every community. So, we started by looking to that community to find partnerships that could help us, you know, put forth this big event. So, when you have no money for advertising or public relations, you have to find other ways. So, we piggybacked on every publication that we could find that was being printed and distributed by another organization, or a municipality or a school district, Chamber of Commerce, a city hall newsletter, a homes association newsletter, anything that was already being printed and sent out by someone in our community, we got a hold of them and

asked if we could have our information in there as well. And that worked, really well, because it didn't cost us any money at all. It was already printed and we went ahead and did it. And we also made a standard practice, once we implemented our Web site in January of 1996, that anything that we printed or a message we wanted to get out it automatically went to that Web site. I think we've all figured out that the Web is a huge cost savings, because it's a phone call you don't have to answer; people are ready to get the information at all time. And we did manage to implement that Web site with existing staff. So, those are things that can be done if you empower the staff to do that work.

We also developed, my favorite part, is the community and the school outreach programs, which we did at no cost. And I know that election officials across the country, many of them are already doing this, speaking engagements at area schools, civic organizations, basically, taking your show "on the road" and doing that with existing staff. This all can be done at no cost. And these efforts paid off really well for us, because we, then, through those efforts developed the Adopt a Polling Place Program in 1997, where civic organizations joined us on Election Day to be poll workers. We did a bi-state corporate Making Voting Popular Program in 1998 where we joined with counties on the Missouri side of the Kansas City metropolitan area to reach out to

corporations to find poll workers. And we did our Student Poll Worker Program in the year 2000. And those programs are all still in place, and they are bringing in poll workers to us, and we really had little or no cost to make those things happen.

We, then, developed a Celebrate Patriotism non-profit foundation, again, because we had no money, and it was managed by a Board of Directors that we sought out in the community; representatives from the League of Women Voters, community colleges, school districts, corporations. Through those private contributions and donations we were able to supplement our community and voter outreach program. I just wanted to talk about my favorite one, of course, which is the Celebrate the Vote Program. And the foundation provided supplies to area grade schools, and the young students designed their own handmade vote signs, and they were placed either in their home front yard with their parent the night before Election Day, or on their school grounds. And, it was really neat because the schools, many times, were polling places on Election Day, so the voters were greeted by the students' handmade vote signs. And we were hoping to make a memory in a student, that Election Day was important, kind of like, putting the vote sign out in their front yard.

Of course, we all know the resources of election officers are stretched to the max, and so, we had to find other ways to find

partnerships to do the election business, which, we went internally

to our city and county staff and departments to ask them to be a

part of this community wide event that was happening on Election

Day. We had city and county employees who volunteered to serve

as openers and closers on Election Day, to help the poll workers,

and they were all volunteers that came out and joined with us on

Election Day. The county maintenance employees designed and

built all of our handicapped accessible ramps, and put the

handicapped accessible signage in the polling place parking lots on

the night before Election Day. So, we had a lot of people that were

working with us to get it all done. Information technology staff, I

think those departments we can reach out to big time and have

them help us support the technology aspects on Election Day;

voting equipment, computers and everything. And they all did that

free of charge to the election office.

And I also wanted to mention the partnership with the media.

The media can provide a lot of things to election offices if you work

on developing that partnership, and the resources they give you are

totally free of charge. Any time we could get a story about

elections, or how we were doing elections, printed in the

newspaper, seen on the television or heard on the radio, our office

benefited. And we had no costs from that.

In 2004, we developed what we called our Partners in Democracy. So, we took it another step and got polling places to -- businesses to voluntarily provide polling places to us at no cost. And then we recognized all of those people at a County Commission meeting with certificates.

Technology is probably the word that describes the things that changed the most during the time I was Election Commissioner in Johnson County. I inherited the 3 x 5 paper voter registration cards that were still being hand alphabetized by lots of temporary staff people or hand pulled.

The first thing we did was to develop our Web page in January of '96. And, again, that was done in-house at no cost. We put the sample ballot there and the candidates and the media knew to go there to get election results. So, we reduced phone calls coming in and we made the ballot more accessible to voters. Thirteen years later, we all know the Web is, really, now, truly, a 24-hour a day, seven day a week information link for everyone relating to elections; voters, candidates, the media. Now, we have voters who can check their voter registration status on their own, find their polling place, view a map that tells them how to get to their polling place. And that Web, I think, continues to grow and expand in the way it can be utilized to become, really, a virtual election office, where people will know that their ballot is in the mail to them, or

their ballot has been received; all kinds of things that the Web can do.

When we moved from mainframe technology to desktop technology, the door opened really wide to implement and utilize technology and to streamline workflow and allow staff to grow within their own jobs, to grow their own job to wherever they wanted to take it.

So, scanning of voter registration applications, as we all know, eliminated data entry. So, sometimes I think we need to step back and talk about the way we have saved costs, when we're talking internally within our budget offices and at our county level, because many of these things have already been done. We eliminated hand alphabetizing paper cards, implemented a lot of cost savings because, you know, staff doesn't have to do that by hand. And now, the voter image of the card is available on every desktop computer, which really made everybody more efficient and able to do their work.

Easy access to all kinds of data, now, in the voter registration software, provides us all the necessary tools to develop our work voter turnout projections, and by that we were able to consolidate polling places, which results in cost savings. The old practice, in many jurisdictions, of opening the same number of polling places for every election, is now changing, and they're

opened based on expected voter turnout. And our voters, at least, are notified and educated that poll places can and do change with every election, based on how many voters are coming, and how many polling places we need to open.

Integrating GIS software, with the voter registration database and software, provided some really neat abilities to join the census data and boundaries to the mapping system, which is then integrated to the voter registration database. With the touch of just a few keys now, we can move the boundary lines and assign voters to new districts. And that replaced the old method, where each street range had to be hand edited by a staff person and proofed by another person.

And, of course, bar code technology is out there, and it has really provided for quick and fast updating of all the records that we used to do by hand, and receiving mail ballot envelopes and inventorying of equipment, all of that.

Electronic poll books are now coming along and they're replacing the paper alphabetized lists.

So, technology is streamlining everything that we do within the office and how we serve voters on Election Day, and leading up to Election Day. And it's going to continue to be the one tool that empowers election officials to innovate cost-saving solutions, and

that's really important to give them the tools in order to be able to find their own solutions.

In closing, I just wanted to talk about one issue that I continue to feel very strongly about at the local level, and that's planning for the future in elections at the local level. If there's one thing that I could change in government offices, through all my years of working at the local level, it's reacting to the situation we have right now, which is less revenue coming in, so everybody just needs to cut everything across the board, but instead planning for how we're going to manage in to the future. And I think that's really important, now, with technology taking place in election offices all across the country. We know that every four years we have a Presidential election and it's a very expensive election. We also know that voting technology changes and we have to replace equipment and software. At some time in the future, there may not be federal or state funding to help local people do that. So, I'm a strong believer that every election office should work with their budget office to have a designated contingency fund where money is put away, a certain amount of money is put away every year and budgeted as a routine, as a savings account for a Presidential election. And that will eliminate that surge in the budget that happens every four years for local offices. In the same regard, replacement funds must be established for voting equipment,

desktop computers, software upgrades; all those things that are going to hit at some point in the future, and they're big dollar items. And, if we can get those in place and designate, again, a certain dollar amount every year, we now have a savings account to pay for those large expenditures when they arrive.

And so, I think that would be the closing of my comments, and I would be happy to take any questions you might have.

CHAIR BEACH:

Thank you, Ms. Schmidt. Now we'll turn to Jill LaVine.

MS. LaVINE:

Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairwoman Beach, Commissioners Hillman and Davidson, Executive Director Tom Wilkey and members of the Election Commission staff. Thank you for this opportunity for me to come here and appear before the Commission regarding cost savings.

My name is Jill LaVine. I am the Registrar of Sacramento County. We have 677,000 registered voters. I've been the Registrar for almost six years now, but I have worked in elections for 22. I actually started off as a temporary worker checking the tabs on the back of ballots.

On Friday, April 3, the county released our new budget numbers for the year and I promptly broke out my stash of chocolate, because I knew this wasn't going to be a good year, but

I had no idea how bad it was going to be. We had over a 26 percent reduction in our budget, and it doesn't look like there's going to be any magic rabbit coming out of a hat to save us from this. But I appreciate this opportunity to share some of the ways that we save costs, and I've actually noted down some ways that Connie has spoken of, and I'm looking forward to the next speaker also.

As we look at our cost savings, our goal is always to keep in mind that the most important thing is to keep the customer service at a high level, we don't want to cut costs just to save us, and to keep the employee moral high.

And many of our cost savings come from the changes in technology and the use of automation.

As has already been spoken about, the Web site is one of the biggest. Our voters really like to use the Web site. It's quick, it's fast, and we like it that they don't come into our office. It saves us time answering their questions, and usually fee copying charges.

Voters can get information from everything on our Web site, from whether they are registered to vote, if we have received their vote by mail, to one of our many "How to Guides" such as, How to Place a Measure on a Ballot, How to Recall an Elected Official or Important Filing Dates. And I've even directed more than one of my

Board of Supervisors back to the Web site to review the candidate's guide, a very helpful book when running for office.

Also available during an election cycle is the polling place information. They include directions and even a picture of the building to help them find the location. We include a copy of their ballot and voting information. I was very impressed that during the November election we had over 50,000 visits to our Web site; 7,000 of these hit the page of the sample ballot. This saves staff time, postage costs in sending out requested information, especially since some of the inquiries came from Fiji, Turkey, South Africa, and many from the military.

Our Election Night results are posted on the Web site after each update, and while we have staff available to answer any phone calls in case someone should call in, they are the most bored employees on Election Night, because no one calls anymore. We dropped our phone staffing from four to one.

If you can't find your answer on our "Frequently Asked Question" page, because we do have 43 FAQs there, there is always the option to hit the bottom button and email the office with your question. This is a cost savings because it cuts down the number of phone calls to the office, and allows our staff to answer the questions by return email at a time when they are not so busy. It's a more efficient use of their time.

A voter can even apply for a vote by mail ballot on line. In November we had over 300 voters use this method. The file is automated, so there's no additional entry for our staff.

Last year we started poll worker training online. This cuts the number of classes that we had to offer for November, saving over 50 hours of the instructors' time. And over 600 precinct officers took advantage of this. Since it was our first year, we're hoping to build on that.

Legislation in California has required us to report our vote-by-mail ballots at the precinct level. With close to over 300,000 vote-by-mail sorted into 900 precincts, it is a very large sorting job. We were setting up trays all over in our training room, and we would have close to 30 people with a stack of ballots walking around the room finding the correct tray to put it in. This was not efficient and definitely there were some accuracy problems.

With our HAVA funds, we were able to buy the automated mail sorting equipment. And this equipment, not only sorts the ballots at the precinct level, but it also will capture the signature of the voter. So now, instead of having 20 people checking signatures all day and ballots spread out all over the office and 30 people getting dizzy from sorting, we now have three staff members verifying the signatures during the election cycle for about a half day each, and the ballots are securely locked up. The sorting is all

done by machine, and it takes two people a couple hours every day to sort the ballots down. The accuracy has increased, the costs have decreased. We did a time study on this, and contrary to the notes I've sent you, I have an update for November. So, in November, we sorted 264,000 ballots and saved 1,528 hours over the manual sorting.

Another automation that we use is the Intelligent Character Recognition program. During November, we had a lot of voter registration cards coming in, and instead of having staff enter the data, our staff was able to scan it through, up pops the file, they check it for accuracy, and then it is added to the file. This saves keystrokes and increases the accuracy of the file.

We are very fortunate, too, to have a GIS technician in our office. This was a long fought battle with our HR department, because they had no idea why we would ever need a GIS person, but it was well worth it. Now updates can be done to the map instantly and they can be printed in-house. Previously, they had to be hand drawn and then taken to a special copier. We have sold over $5,000 worth of maps just this last year; some of them specialty maps ordered by campaigns.

Internally, we have made maps for our equipment delivery routes, technician routes and, of course, the big wall map that shows all the polling places in the county. In the past, these

delivery routes were drawn, by hand, with our Thomas Guide map books. So, not only is our GIS technician saving us money, he is making money.

Sacramento County uses an optical scan ballot, and it is always our best guess of how many ballots we're going to need. You want to order enough, but not too many. Using the numbers from the primary and general election last year, we did some comparisons. We destroyed 799,000 unused ballots, at a cost of 49 cents each for a total of $391,510. So, we are starting to use ballot on demand. We're taking these as baby steps, so, while we still have to send out, because it is legally required, 75 percent of our ballots to the polling places, and we print our ballots needed for our permanent vote by mail, if you go into our ballot room the shelves are almost empty. As they come in, on request, that is, when we print our ballots. We had to be approved to be a ballot printer by our Secretary of State, but it has shown to be a cost saver. And as my comfort level increases and I can handle those bare shelves -- because the first election I had to have something on the shelves, I just couldn't quite do that -- I know it will save even more money. And the estimate we did showed a potential savings of 297,000.

Another area that I look to cut costs is by looking for and applying for grants. In January, our Secretary of State invited the

counties to apply for some HAVA accessibility grants. Our office put together two grants; one for an online video voter pamphlet, for the Web site, and the other one to enhance accessibility of the Web site for the disabled. And I am pleased to report that with the help of our Disability Compliance Office, we were awarded $250,000 for these projects.

We have also used grant money to save approximately 286,000 for such items as luggage carts, surveying tools and training equipment.

One cost that an election office does not have much control over is postage. And I found that it is very important to work closely with our postal representative for cost savings. We make sure any material that we print, such as post cards or envelopes, are printed correctly, the size is checked so we can get the best discount. We have met the requirements of the Move Update program, so that we can get the best rates possible, and we are moving towards the Intelligent Mail barcode and we'll soon be taking advantage of those savings.

Looking towards the future, Sacramento has an election in May, and we will be implementing a new way to capture voter history. In California, it is necessary to record the voter history by scanning the roster books for each signature before we can process the provisional ballots to ensure that no voter had voted

twice. This process in November took 29 people seven days to complete, slowing down the entire canvass process. We worked with our election vendor and they have developed a way for us to scan the entire page at one time and capture it and put it into the file, changing the process to require only two people and four days.

I've also worked with my Board of Supervisors and presented a cost saving idea of conducting only elections by mail. For a statewide election, I've estimated the cost savings to be about $500,000. I finally got my Board to support this legislation and I have the opportunity now to pursue it, similar to that that is being used in Washington State.

So, with these cost savings ideas I have not solved all my budget woes, but I feel that with these ideas we are a step ahead.

Thank you.

CHAIR BEACH:

Thank you very much. Now we'll turn to Mr. Scott Doyle.

MR. DOYLE:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Commission for the opportunity to speak here today. I'm here to talk about efficiencies as associated with Election Day vote centers as experienced in Larimer County, Colorado.

First of all, I guess, what is a vote center? Simply said, a vote center is a polling place where any voter in the county may go

to vote. There's no longer a wrong place to vote in a county when you're utilizing vote centers. Larimer County first put into play vote centers in 2003 and they were developed to save resources, make voting easier and to address the Help America Vote Act issues with regard to equipment and accessibility. What was learned from our experience with vote centers was election administration processes were greatly improved, election equipment quantities were reduced, and the number of election judges could also be dramatically reduced, as I'll talk about in a few minutes. However, the cost of vote centers seemed comparable, in that there's been so many legislative changes since we put the model into place in Larimer County, and the state has made the legislative changes that seem to affect everything that we do in elections these days that I don't know that I can give you a dollar amount or study the model to make -- to tell you whether it's cheaper to do vote centers or not. So -- but the costs are comparable. I want to take a few minutes and quickly review the model, the vote center model, and try and pull out some process gains that defray costs that are apparent and should be apparent to us all, which, I believe, really gives us a look into the vote center model as where we get a bigger bang for our buck. So the election-based efficiencies is what I'll be talking about a little bit here.

A little bit about Larimer County. The size is 2,600 square miles, so it's quite large. We're urban and rural. We have mountains, we have cities, ranches to go with that. Our population base is about 275,000, we have 212,000 registered voters, 181,000 active registered voters, and this last election we had 167 ballot styles. We draw lines for 153 precincts and we have 30 vote centers that service the whole of the county on Election Day, as we vote that way. Voting in 2008, utilizing vote centers with permanent mail-in ballots, and that's something that was relatively new to Colorado over this last year, was that, if people want to vote mail ballots in Colorado now, and do it permanently, and not have to apply for it on an annual basis, they can do that and make note of that. Those ballots go out 30 days prior. And that number voting in my county was 64 percent this time, whereas, in the past it's been mid 40 percent that's requested an absentee ballot. We exercised early voting sites. We upped those a couple of sites in Larimer County for this election, thinking it was going to be a really big election. We ended up with 19 percent of our voters voting at early voting at those seven locations. And those opened two weeks prior to Election Day. Then, on Election Day, what did we have left to vote at our vote centers? We had 16 percent of our voters that wanted to come in and vote in a vote center. Now vote centers really operate well, but we didn't know as many people would want

to vote early as had, and so we ended up having 30 vote centers with a lot of thumb twiddling going on. And, in the future, I would think what we would do is really try and estimate how many people we're going to have vote through the mail and down the number of vote centers that we would have to make that a more efficient process based on that. So, our total vote in Larimer County was, of our active registered voters, was 93 percent, but 84 percent of those voted before Election Day. I think that there's other counties in Colorado that had higher numbers than that, and I hope you're surprised by that and delighted.

The technology aspect, we have an electronic poll book where the voter registration data is housed on it, where voters are given instant credit for voting. Poll watching becomes easier with vote centers, in that you don't -- the parties and issue committees don't have to have watchers at each one of the locations to be able to get the names of people who have not yet voted. We create a database and mail that to the voters electronically -- to the campaigns electronically every couple of hours throughout Election Day. So there's no -- those other people can be busy making phone calls and getting that vote out. Vote centers have multiple computers that we qualify our voters before they get a ballot and get to vote. Well, those computers, multiples per vote center, are all hooked -- are connected via T-1 lines to a CITRIX farm where

the voter registration electronic poll book is housed in the courthouse. There's some real benefits in this, in that we can do grid monitoring, we can watch what's going on out there in the grid monitoring. We can have someone from our office watching how many voters are voting a particular ballot style, at a particular location, and oftentimes can have, if necessary, more ballots on the way, prior to the judges at the vote center knowing that they're getting low on ballots. So that is a plus. One thing that we've really experienced, that I think is a real positive, and it's hard to brag about when you only have 16 percent of your voters voting on Election Day, but in previous vote center elections, we've had no end-of-day lines. Our voters are usually done by 6 o'clock, we're waiting for seven clock, in that vote centers are very efficient and we can move a lot of people in a hurry.

How did we make that happen? With public education, we did mailers, public appearances, did a lot of talking about vote centers. We carried out a complete communication campaign to our voters. All press releases directed voters to our Web site, and our Web hits really increased over time.

So, the results of the educational piece was early voting increased dramatically, voters brought IDs and signature cards as requested, voter turnout increased. That was a study that was done by Rice University, Professor Robert Stein who has, in his

study, surmised that the increase in voter turnout is as high as seven percent higher with the use of vote centers. There's an overwhelming voter acceptance of vote centers. Our voters absolutely love vote centers, and education is crucial to the success of the use of them. I believe that.

So, the vote center administration piece; the design of the sites are 1,500 to 2,500 square foot each. Usually, that means it's a ballroom in a hotel, a large church, municipal or other government buildings. And that answers a lot of questions with regard to accessibility through the Help America Vote Act; it's already taken care of. If there's anything that I can say about that is 99.9 percent of our voting locations are HAVA compliant with regard to accessibility, based on that one-tenth of one percent, a door might stick or a piece of concrete might have sunk an inch or so. We use smaller facilities in the rural and mountain communities. They have some libraries up there, community centers and that sort of thing. And since we're just looking for a few sites to vote at, as opposed to one for every precinct, it seems that we've been able to put our finger on locations that work well that way. ADA compliant, connectivity is with T-1 lines, and located in acceptable geographic locations that we hold public hearing, as well as, meet with our major political parties to agree upon sites for vote centers.

So, how do they operate? One of the nice things and I think a gain for us with election efficiencies comes from, we put a supervisor that's trained to be a supervisor in each one of our voting locations. That supervisor is an employee from my office who we've had the time to really give them the training, along with a troubleshooter from my office, as well, being a clerk staff member, that takes care of the lines and technology issues. The supervisor takes care of election questions and oversees the processes of elections on Election Day.

The election judges that are working in the vote centers, we recruit them from, like most people do, political parties, student judges. We have a very strong student judge program in Larimer County. We use Motor Vehicle staff, as we can, because they're trained on the use of technology, county employees, as such. And one of the nice things about -- or crucial things, with regard to training Election Day judges for vote centers, is, each one of our judges now is not responsible for the total administration of a precinct polling place; they're trained to do one specific job in a vote center. So, if they're checking voters in on a computer, that's what they do all day long. If they're issuing ballots, that's what they do all day long. And it goes through the whole of the job titles that way.

There's a greeter station that checks for IDs, looks for signature cards, and directs them to the appropriate area.

Electronic poll book stations, we train our judges to get our voters through in 90 seconds or less, and oftentimes that's 15 or 20 seconds. So, they're quite good at it. It's a bar code scan, they check the ID, they mark the poll book, and the master poll book gives them instant credit for voting in that election.

We have a provisional station if that's needed. Ballot stations; they sign their signature card, they get their ballot, they go vote and they deposit their ballot or return their voter access card and leave. It happens pretty quickly in a vote center environment.

So, the observations and results. Voters love them. I maybe shouldn't use the word "love," but they certainly highly enjoy them. It's all about convenience. People like taking their kids to soccer practice and being able to stop by a vote center nearby, going to the store, whatever the case might be. There's no hurry to rush home. They're easier to manage. Election Day issues are reduced. There's fewer problems. And I can assure you, there's a whole lot less stress, which is really quite a thing to be able to say, this day and age in election processes. And improved coordination.

They were okayed by the Colorado Legislature in 2004.

The future of vote centers, in Colorado, I think, is strong. There's over 20 counties now utilizing vote centers here. They

seem to work quite well. I don't think that -- I would never project this as a model for everyone, but I do think that a lot can be said for them and done with them, if administered properly. The Colorado voter registration system has been built to accommodate the model. Other states are looking into it. There's some models around the country. Rice University has studied this. As I had said before, Professor Stein has taken a look at it and has really some strong data to support increased voter turnout and those particular populations that do turn out utilizing vote centers. And there's some National Election Reform Committees that seem very interested in this, as well.

Costs of elections have increased. Increased legislation has driven those changes for us. It's hard to try and budget for elections when, in the same year the legislation is happening, you're holding the election. And so, the only thing I can do is give you the example that I give from Larimer County. In 2000, we held four elections for 1.2 million. In 2008, our budget for the November election was $3 million for the total of the year, at which point, we spent 1.4 in November of that money.

Legislation has passed technology. We need the technology to operate. I would plead with you to advance your opportunities to push some technology our way, if you can. It's highly needed.

I think that concludes my testimony. Again, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity and I'm ready, also, for any questions you might have.

CHAIR BEACH:

Thank you, Mr. Doyle. All of your remarks are certainly helpful. And, I'd like now to turn to Vice-Chair Hillman, if she has any questions or comments.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Thank you. Connie Schmidt, a question for you. In the course of your work, did you ever incur instances where you could see cost savings procedures but you couldn't implement them because of a requirement under law?

MS. SCHMIDT:

I think my answer to that would be, coming from the largest county in the State of Kansas, we had developed software that was beyond a voter registration database, it was an election management software that managed our entire operation. When the statewide databases came into place, we -- we lost that ability. And so, that's kind of the reverse of your question, but we went backwards for a period of time. I think there's a real need, now, to build the statewide systems to meet the needs of the largest jurisdictions in the states, because for the largest jurisdictions, a lot

of times we did go back, or they are still running dual systems in order to manage elections.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Okay. And also, my overall question for you is, cost savings at what cost. And that is, any lessons to be learned that you would share that would say, it looked like a great cost saving, but in the end it just created more work, or caused confusion or backlash from the community or the voters, such that, while it may have saved a few dollars, in the end it really didn't save us any money?

MS. SCHMIDT:

You know, I can't think of any because most of our solutions, you know, we thought through them and had no money -- a lot of money to implement them, and we used the existing software tools that we had already purchased, and had staff people that were able to grow their skill sets so that they could go to another level. We were -- we did not increase our staff in ten years, full-time staff, and we are a growing county in the greater Kansas City area. And so, to me, the need for no additional full-time staff members that occurred, only because of our ability to use technology to keep everything efficient and cost effective.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Thank you. The same type of question for you,, Jill LaVine, and that is, cost savings at what cost. Now, I am told by some, in

the community, that ballot on demand may be cost savings for the

Administration, but it costs the voter additional time, in line, to wait

for the ballot to be printed. So, I wonder if you would describe your

ballot on demand process and what, if anything, it means, in terms

of the length of time the voter has to be in line to complete the

process.

MS. LaVINE:

At this time, our ballot on demand -- like I say, I'm not

comfortable with totally empty shelves. So, what we are doing, is,

we have the five or ten ballots, per ballot type, on the shelves, so

there is no wait for the voter. They'll take those off the shelf, we will

reprint and put those back on the shelf. So, that is what we're

doing at this particular time, until we can get -- unfortunately our

Secretary of State does not -- is not comfortable with a direct

connect to our printing and our voter file, so we have to do, kind of,

a second step in there. So, there is no, at the counter just pushing

the button, and getting the ballot; it's a second step, of taking that

ballot type, entering that into the printer, and then getting the ballot.

So, that's why there will always be, at least, five to ten ballots on

the shelf until we can get that particular system certified.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

And then, with respect to, cost savings at what cost, in your years of experience have you ever encountered what looked like a brilliant idea, but it turned out to be not really a cost savings?

MS. LaVINE:

Oh, yes. We had the brilliant idea, since we are a bilingual county, to separate the two languages, thinking that would be much easier and much faster, because we could get the English ballot printed, and then not spend, because we have very few. Out of 677,000 registered voters, we have less than 2,000 Spanish voters. So, we are printing everything in two languages for a very few people, but at the same time, that is one of the requirements. So, we had this wonderful idea of separating those two languages and put them on two different ballot cards. Well, if we would have started in a November general election, we might have thought it was a cost savings. However, we made the huge leap at this point in a primary election, so not only did we have two different languages, but we also had ten different parties. So, each ballot for a precinct office, they had on the table close to 20 ballots, and we hadn't thought that all the way through. So, it was not a cost savings in the end, because we couldn't tell where they were going to vote and how many. We're back to a one-ballot card, two languages on that same card.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Thank you. Mr. Doyle, my question for you revolves around the early voting versus absentee. You gave us an indication of the number of people who voted early. Did that include absentee?

MR. DOYLE:

No, madam. It -- the number that I gave you voting early was strictly for the two weeks of early voting, the 19 percent of our voters in '08.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

People who showed up at a center?

MR. DOYLE:

Showed up at one of the seven early voting sites located in Larimer County. The 64 percent number I gave to you, regarding early mail-in ballots, was strictly mail. The 19 percent was separate and in addition to that.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Okay. So the mail-in -- early mail in/absentee, the same voter?

MR. DOYLE:

I'm sorry?

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

When you used the term, "early mail in," is that the same as an absentee? Or do you track those two things separate?

MR. DOYLE:

We track them separately. It's an early ballot, and we look at it as trying to calculate what we're going to need on Election Day for resources to serve our voters properly. And so, when we ended up with 64 percent of our population -- or our voters voting early -- voting in the mail early, we were quite surprised that we had that many requests. And so, in those seven early voting sites that we had open, another 19 percent came to vote, and at that point we were sort of scratching our head, "Wow, what are we going to do on Election Day?" And then, we had another 16 percent show up to vote. That's been the highest number prior to Election Day, ever, for us. When we first started vote centers, it was higher numbers voting in Election Day vote centers than there were early. As a matter of fact, early voting was quite dismal. I suppose you could surmise, "Well, boy, vote centers direct people away from Election Day voting," but that was quite the contrary in this election, in that the campaigns and everyone was thinking Election Day would be a big day for voting, and so, was encouraging people to get a mail in ballot, which they did.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

How do you estimate -- you said something about 143 ballot styles or something. Did I hear you correctly?

MR. DOYLE:

It was 167 but, yes.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

167, okay. So, how do you estimate how many of each ballot style for the various vote centers?

MR. DOYLE:

Well, that is quite a process when you sit down to do your ballot order based on what you're going to need in each one of the vote centers. But, now that we've done and completed vote centers successfully several times, since 2003, in several elections, we've got a pretty good handle on where our voters are going to vote. The first time we moved to the model, we over-geared it, so we wouldn't infringe on voters not having a ballot present when they showed up to vote in an outlying vote center. The other piece that we have, in play, is what we call road runners that have extra ballots with them in trucks -- in vans, and there's also a couple of technology people that are there that can respond to those kinds of things. And then, with the grid monitoring, as well, with what we're watching from the courthouse, we know how many ballots we have, of each ballot style, in each voting location, and if we see them starting to get low, we have our technology set up to raise the flag and say, "We need more of these ballot styles at this particular vote center." We can mobilize and get them there before we're out.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Okay. And my final question for each of you, is, other than the cost of employees, both full-time, permanent and temporary, what is the single item that increases most in cost, with each year of election cycle, whether that's machines or paper or, you know, fuel, transportation costs, whatever it might be, I'm just sort of curious, but setting aside the cost to pay employees, Ms. LaVine?

MS. LaVINE:

I would say, actually, the printing costs. And I would include the printing of the ballots, and California printing of the sample ballot book. Those costs do keep going up; the mailing, postage, the whole thing, but it is the printing of the ballots.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Connie Schmidt, do you have any observations on that?

MS. SCHMIDT:

Well, I would agree with Jill. I think paper, people, and postage, is the way I always described it. Depending on the size and the amount of voters we're expecting, we need a full deployment of part-time temporary people. That's the people. Postage for sending ballots out, as the postage costs continue to go up. Postage relates also to the NVRA requirements to send the confirmation mailings out, to send the voter certificates out, to send the reminder notices about polling places. So, postage is a huge cost factor that continue to go up. And paper, as Jill said, paper to

print the poll books, to paper for the confirmation notices, paper for

the voter registration certificates. There's still a lot of paper

requirements; ballots.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Mr. Doyle?

MR. DOYLE:

Although, I would agree with all of that, I also must say that

that cost increase -- there's some that come from the printers

themselves, but a great deal of what we're printing and sending is

based on legislative change and increase from that end of the

world. That really drives my costs up.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Legislation?

MR. DOYLE:

Legislation. We need left alone for a little while.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

I've heard that before.

MR. DOYLE:

I'll bet you.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

I have two comments in closing. One, is, Internet voting

would certainly cut down on printing costs a whole lot, wouldn't it?

And, secondly, that in the quest for cost savings -- and I have great

sympathy with respect to looking up and seeing what your budget is, and saying, "Oh, my Lord, how do I make this work? -- that the planning for voters not underestimate what voter turnout is likely to be, because it's sort of a Catch-22; then voters get discouraged and go away and don't come back again. So, while we may have saved money to the budget, we haven't really done much for democracy, if people don't feel encouraged to vote because they get there and there aren't ballots for them, or the lines are long because there's not enough equipment or not enough poll workers, or whatever the thing might be. And that's just, sort of, my observations, in passing. And I see an expression on your face, Mr. Doyle, that says you have a response.

MR. DOYLE:

Well, I usually have a response for everything, but everybody doesn't want to hear them, always. Well, I will say, I was thinking as you were saying that, Commissioner Hillman, that, in fact, democracy is not about the budget, but the budget is, in fact, about democracy. And when you're in our positions, as county clerks, and you have commissioners that are hammering you about your budgets, and we have no money coming from the Federal Government or the state that is earmarked for election use in our counties, based on the increased mandates from those legislative bodies, it's pretty -- it puts us in quite the pinch point, especially

when we're faced with technology needs, issues with printers.

We're very dependent on manufacturers and vendors of all types.

And so...

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Okay, so I guess the voters need to take their hammers to the legislators. Any parting shots? It's fair that you get a parting shot, as well.

MS. LaVINE:

I would like you to come to my budget hearing next week, please.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Absolutely, I have no problem.

COMMISSIONER DAVIDSON:

Except her budget.

VICE-CHAIR HILLMAN:

Just hope when I leave you have something left.

CHAIR BEACH:

Okay, thank you. I was just advised that we have about 15 minutes left for this workshop, as the hotel conference center here needs to utilize this room for another event. So, I'm going to turn to Commissioner Davidson for any questions she may have.

COMMISSIONER DAVIDSON:

I'll try to make it as fast as I can. One thing about it I can say

is every election official throughout the nation is some of the best

budgeters there is, because they're last on the totem pole when it

comes to being able to get money from their commissioners or the

body that has that ability to hand them money. They'd rather put a

little bit of money in road repair or taking care of the citizens

another way. They think elections is, until lately, the least

important. And lately, it has been moved up on the totem pole.

But, as I heard all of you testify, obviously election costs are

going up. I think that we can say that throughout. Have you seen

any difference? I know Scott has definitely testified to that. How

about you Ms. LaVine, how do you feel?

MS. LaVINE:

Oh, yes.

COMMISSIONER DAVIDSON:

Percentage wise, can you give me an estimate of how much

your election costs has gone up in the last, we'll say, I don't care

whatever you want to say, two years, four years, whatever?

MS. LaVINE:

Well, I think the biggest impact was when we changed from,

unfortunately, our punch cards, which were maybe three cents

each, to our optical scan ballots, which are now 49 cents each, and

quite often, we need two of those for each election. So, just that

cost alone just has skyrocketed, you know, when I talk about the

cost of printing. So, a three cent ballot versus a dollar ballot, and

that's within the last four years, five years.

COMMISSIONER DAVIDSON:

So, you definitely would say technology is something to look

forward to in the future, whatever that might be?

MS. LaVINE:

Yes, please.

COMMISSIONER DAVIDSON:

Okay. Scott, do you tend to agree with that? I mean, I'm

skipping over a lot of questions. And pardon me, it should be Mr.

Doyle. I apologize, we know each other too well. How do you feel

about that? What's the percentage of your cost increase that

you've seen in your state because of legislative changes, because

of rulemaking, you know, whatever the case might be?

MR. DOYLE:

You know, it varies from election to election, of course,

based on candidates and issues driving what we think a turnout will

be, and what type of election it is. But, when I can compare a

Presidential year of 2000 to 2008, from 1.2 million of holding four

elections, to spending 1.4 million for November, the math is there.

And, I think what I found is, it's universal, not just in Colorado. The

people that I talk to across the country and have a network with are

reporting the same thing. We're having a difficult time with finances, and being able to conduct our elections based on costs.

COMMISSIONER DAVIDSON:

You know, Ms. LaVine, I did hear you say that your budget was being cut, I believe, 26 percent. And the cost savings that you talked about was really done before you got this budget, now that they're wanting you to cut 26 percent out. Do you have any ideas how you're going to cut 26 percent out of your budget? That's a...

MS. LaVINE:

Actually, the 26 percent was our first number. It has gotten worse. It has gotten to the point, right now, in order to meet the number, the budget number they've given me, that I cannot -- I cannot meet all the mandates, the legal mandates. And we're talking everything from translation into the Spanish language, which is required, sending out sample ballots. And, in addition to that, I -- I will be forced to cut 11 of my staff, and I only have 38 to start with. So, I am not sure what we're going to be doing. That's why I was hoping you would come testify at my budget hearing. We've got, you know, just some numbers that have been thrown out, and they do not look good at this point. So, I am not sure how we're going to make those costs.

COMMISSIONER DAVIDSON:

Well, obviously, sharing information from people at conferences like this is always very important, we learn from each other. And that's where I would say it's great. Like you said, you learn from each other and that's a great point. It is going to be a big effort, I would say, throughout the nation, and this conference here today -- or starting tomorrow is on cost savings also, so, hopefully, there's lots of good ideas that's shared by everybody that's attending.

MS. LaVINE:

I'm writing them down.

COMMISSIONER DAVIDSON:

So, I'll turn it back because I know we're very short.

CHAIR BEACH:

Okay, I know.

COMMISSIONER BEACH:

Thank you.

CHAIR BEACH:

Thank you, Commissioner Davidson. Mr. Doyle I had the opportunity to visit some of the vote centers here in Colorado during this past Presidential election, I was in Adams County and Broomfield. And I'm curious, how were these centers in Colorado identified? Were there particular things you took into place, as far as -- I know you mentioned, like, accessibility and others. But for

the exact location, were there certain demographics that were taken into account when vote centers were selected? Could you explain, briefly, the process?

MR. DOYLE:

What we do, is, we have a team from my office that goes out and has a look at different facilities, and we've been doing this for awhile, so we know where they are. And for a particular election, we know how many vote centers that we're going to want to have. And so, we'll try and pick those ones that we think, as election officials, are going to be best suited for our voters. We then bring in our political parties, and we sit down and we go through the map and show them where they're going to be located. At that point, we put it on the hearing schedule for the commissioners with a two-week prior public hearing notice, and if anyone from the public sector has issues with how we operate, they can come to the hearing with the commissioners and make that known, at which point we have maps and discussion about where they're located. To this point, in Larimer County we have not had any issues with where vote centers are located, from any active group or citizenry or political parties.

CHAIR BEACH:

That's good to know. I'm glad there's a transparent process for that.

Ms. LaVine, you discussed the online poll worker training that you have, and I know that's something that the EAC has been interested in. We did a study on poll worker training, and it's something I know that Congress and other groups are looking at. How exactly did your online poll worker training work, as far as when people had questions or they went through the course? What type of interaction was there or response? How did you identify whether or not they went through the program, et cetera?

MS. LaVINE:

The online poll worker training is, actually, geared so you know that they've gone through it, you know. You, actually -- it gives you feedback of who's logged on, because you've given them, like, an identification number. You know, when they've completed it, or if they've only completed certain parts of it. And, they have to have that certificate and they bring it to class. At this point, we still ask that they come in for a hands-on training, so they bring that certificate with them, and then we will pay them for the, you know, for the entire class. As for questions, there is an opportunity that they can ask questions if they didn't get it the first time. And, of course, they can always go back, you know, review the answer, and then try again. It is all based on our precinct officer training manual, so, if they had a copy of the manual, which

they could go online or they can pick one up, they were able to

actually see and do the training at the same time.

CHAIR BEACH:

Okay, great. It sounds very familiar to continuing education -

- legal education courses that I take online, where they give you

certain numbers, an identifying number in the middle of a course,

so they know you have to insert it at the end, that you've actually

watched the whole two, three-hour course, et cetera. And there's

an opportunity to ask the professor, or email, he or she, the

instructor questions. So, thank you.

And lastly, Ms. Schmidt, you talked about the GIS software,

and I know that the census comes out every ten years. How

exactly does the software -- and Ms. LaVine you can interject, as

well -- work, as far as the boundaries and the data that's

downloaded when you get the information?

MS. SCHMIDT:

We were able to implement the census tracks and match

those to precinct boundaries, so that so many census tracks are

within the precinct boundary. So, when the state reapportions and

the feds reapportion, that information flows down to us from the

state, and we utilize, in our choices, which shows the same GIS

software that the state was using with that goal in mind. But, when

that reapportionment comes down it can come to us electronically,

and it's just then merged with all the other information that's in the

GIS software. And, it automatically then updates what's called our

street index, which contains, you know, all the addresses and which

addresses are in which districts. And, it automatically, then,

reassigns the voters by just a couple of keystrokes.

CHAIR BEACH:

Anything to add Ms. LaVine?

MS. LaVINE:

I think the other option, because we do the -- we draw the

lines for our supervisors and, of course, they want options. And

we're able to take the options to them with this GIS software and

say, "Okay, if you put the line here, this is how many voters you'll

have. If you put the line here, this is how many voters you'll have."

So, it's very helpful before you have to draw the line and redo all

the math, you just recalculate as you move the line, and it's just

very wonderful with that.

CHAIR BEACH:

Well, thank you, and I know we have time constraints here.

So, I do want to thank you all for participating and for coming here

to Denver and sharing with us your best practices and ways that we

can have cost savings in administering our elections.

And with that, do any of my colleagues have any closing

comments? Okay, thank you. We are now adjourned.

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[The workshop of the Election Assistance Commission adjourned at 3:56 MST.]