

TO: Election Board of Brown County  
cc: LWVBC Board, Abigail Youmans, B.C. Democrat  
FROM: Shari Frank, President, League of Women Voters Brown County  
SUBJ: Summary of Media Watcher Observations and Follow up Questions  
DATE: January 9, 2022

The work of the Brown County Election Board (CEB), the Clerk and Clerk's office is greatly appreciated to ensure secure elections.

This report is to provide feedback on the November 8, 2022 Election process. On Election Day, three members of the League of Women Voters Brown County (LWVBC) served as media watchers with the Democrat newspaper, and one worked a precinct. We attended poll worker training to familiarize ourselves with rules and procedures. We hope the summary of our observations may be useful to the CEB in continuous improvement efforts to ensure compliance with Indiana election guidelines and service to voters.

Members of LWVBC served as Media Watchers at: Hamblen 1, Hamblen 3, Jackson 1 and 2. In addition, observations were made at Washington 3, Jackson 4 and Early In Person voting by LWVBC members serving as an election official or simply voting. LWVBC members included are: Shari Frank, Sonia Leerkamp, Pam Raider, and Laurie Teal.

We strive to for accuracy in our observations. Please contact us if we can provide any clarification and please let us know of any errors.

As observers, we use a basic check list to consider whether precincts were in compliance with election guidelines including:

- Adequate staffing (2 clerks, 2 judges, 2 sheriffs, 2 judges, 1 inspector)
- Required postings are visible (Voter Bill of Rights Poster, Sample ballots)
- Voting booths ensure privacy of voters
- Precinct organization is ADA compliant with clear pathways for walkers/wheelchairs
- The Voter check in process is bipartisan and every effort is made to "find" voters in SVRS
- Voter assistance, when requested, is provided by a bipartisan team, or voter companion, and required documentation is completed
- Inspectors periodically check voter count between poll book and total on optical scanners, and analyze any discrepancy
- Absentee Mail in ballot return or surrender is managed per procedures
- Provisional ballot process is followed, ensuring ballots are initialed, clear documentation is provided regarding reason(s) ballot is provisional and voter is provided written and verbal instructions on requirements to "cure" their ballot by deadline
- Chute is monitored to avoid electioneering
- Voter wait time is not significant

First, we want to recognize the dedication of all election officials and the County Election Board to ensure the elections go smoothly. In every election for the past few years since LWVBC has served as media watchers, election workers pride themselves on ensuring voters have access to voting, and that legal guidelines are carefully observed in all processes.

Our observations on Election Day took place during the afternoon through poll closing, so we have no feedback on early morning. General observations include:

- **No Electioneering:** A sheriff was able to quickly quell the only incident of attempted electioneering observed; the individuals agreed to stop inappropriate discussion upon request.
- **Wait time:** No excessive waiting lines were observed on Election Day. Early in person voting did exhibit ½ hour or more lines at times.
- **Voter not found in poll book:** Poll clerks took required next steps trying to locate voters
  - As recommended in training, calls increased to BC Clerk to help find voters
  - When the voter still could not be found in SVRS, inspectors followed the provisional ballot process carefully, ensuring the issue was documented by both the inspector and the voter; and that the voter was given instructions for follow up in writing and often verbally.
- **Voter in wrong precinct.** Some voters reported to the wrong precinct to vote, in particular in Washington 3.
  - In many cases, voters were assisted in finding their correct precinct to vote.
  - As observers, it was not always clear to us whether voters were informed how to find their correct precinct, prior to being offered a provisional ballot. We would recommend this be discussed in future training to ensure inspectors help a voter locate their correct precinct, before offering a provisional ballot, since voting in the wrong precinct is disallowed
- **Voters informed of ballot errors:** In affected precincts (Hamblen 1), poll clerks were observed following Brown Co. Election Board guidelines to advise voters regarding the ballot errors for Tina McCormack's name misspelling and incorrect party identification.
- **Clerks explained straight party ballot limits.** In some cases, Clerks explained that voting a straight ballot did not include a vote on the judges' retention questions or on the school referendum. It is not clear how consistent this was, or if voters were also told school board candidates would not be included in a straight party vote.

There were some issues observed at different precincts that could benefit from additional training or rule clarifications.

- **Surrender Mail-in Ballot.** A voter surrendered a mail in ballot to vote a regular ballot at their precinct on Election Day. Voter was required to complete an ABS 5 form rather than simply cancelling the mail in ballot to vote a regular ballot.
- **Family member delivered mail-in ballot.** A voter delivered a completed mail in ballot for a family member and was not required to fill in the mandated form (ABS 19)

- **Voter Wait times.** The lines during early in person voting in the Salmon room were long at times, leading to voters waiting longer than normal. It appears voters were being asked to complete an application for an absentee ballot which required an extra step beyond checking in with the electronic poll book. In 2020, we had been advised that the application is not required when an electronic poll book is being used to check in early in person voters. We recommend checking on the legal guidelines to determine if the application is required when an electronic poll book is in use. If it is not required, the process can be streamlined. If it is required, consideration might be given to adding additional poll workers at peak voting times.
- **Running vote totals:** At the end of the night, some precincts were not aware they must run separate tapes for ballots with and without public questions. They mistakenly gave “zero” tapes to some Media watchers and didn’t know how to run correct tapes when the error was discovered. The work around was to take photos of the tapes with vote totals.

The 2022 General Election training sessions were much more thorough than prior trainings. We were pleased to see implementation of many recommendations submitted from the *2021 Poll Worker Training Ad-hoc Committee*, including step by step instruction and hands on practice. Separate inspector training allowed time to more thoroughly review their complex duties. Inspectors were then able to attend subsequent, separate training sessions for poll clerks, etc., which helped reinforce their knowledge.

The improved training for election workers, in particular inspectors, improved confidence and preparedness in our observation. CEB poll worker feedback surveys praised the training improvements as well, while also highlighting suggestions for future improvements. Many thanks to the CEB for implementing these significant changes, and for continuing poll worker surveys to get feedback and suggestions to further strengthen election management.

In summary, recommendations include:

- Continue to improve inspector and poll worker training
- Review the guidelines for checking in voters during early in person voting to seek ways to reduce the wait time
- Clarify election worker guidelines for voters who go to the wrong precinct to vote
- Clarify the poll worker requirements for mail in ballot management during early voting and election day, including surrendering mail in ballots to vote in person, or turning in a family members absentee ballot
- Provide sample ballots to all candidates on the ballots prior to printing to help catch errors such as name spelling or party affiliation
- Train inspectors in the process if multiple tape tallies must be printed eg. with/without public questions