

The Election Center

an international service association of election and voter registration officials

12543 Westella, Suite 100 Houston, TX 77077 281-293-0101 FAX: 281-293-0453 or 293-8739

Please call us at the main number if you encounter difficulty with either line or E-Mail: electioncent@pdq.net

WEBSITE: www.electioncenter.org

MEMBERS:

Today, September 27, 2005, the U. S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) released the 2004 Election Day Survey Results. The Election Day Survey represents the largest and most comprehensive survey of voting and election administration practices ever conducted by a U.S. government organization.

Spanning 266 pages, the report explores results and analysis compiled by Election Data Services. A survey consisting of 43 questions was administered to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories. Responses were received from 6,568 election administration jurisdictions. Topics covered in the survey and resulting analysis include voter registration, election results, provisional and absentee ballots, overvotes and undervotes, polling places and workers, voting equipment and disability access.

Key 2004 Election Facts expressed in the report include (these are the EAC's words, not ours):

- 60.7 percent voter turnout rate (based on citizen voting age population)
- 96.9 percent of absentee ballots were counted
- 64.5 percent of provisional ballots were counted
- Lowest presidential drop-off rate since World War II at 1.02 percent

Look for further exploration of the 2004 Election Day Survey Report as the Election Center presents the findings in digestible pieces throughout the next few weeks. The full report is available online at www.eac.gov.

The initial review of the giant report shows an excellent effort by the EAC to start gathering data about elections in the United States. It is not a perfect report and there will be items that will engender some controversy about why they are included or the data analysis that accompanies, but as a beginning of gathering election day activities in the US, the EAC is to be commended for starting and producing its first major effort on election numbers, activities, and methodologies.

We will be sharing the data with you on a fairly regular basis so we can break down the report into digestible segments for our members. We will also seek your input on whether some of the data (as analyzed or published in the report) is particularly useful or only serves to confuse.

Admittedly, we have not had enough time to fully understand and read all of this so we may have to revise comments later on. However, one of the kinds of data that made us a bit wary of how the data gets used (as an example) is listed in a section exploring "Percentage of Ballots Counted by Voting Age Population". I had to scratch my head on that one and a few others: voting age population is an artificially high number in any jurisdiction and includes an estimate of all people (not qualified voters) who are 18 or older. Since significant numbers of VAP are not qualified to vote (non-citizens, nonresidents of the state, residents but not registered voters, etc.), why would we compare the numbers of ballots counted in an election to voting age population? There is validity to publishing percentages of ballots counted to actual number of voters participating in a given election.

My point is not to quibble with the overall good that will come from the report and the effort of the EAC – this is a very good beginning. But there are some things that we will all need to look at and comment on. If you don't want to wait for the shortened "Reader's Digest" version that we will try to share over the coming weeks, then be sure to download the full report and start your own analysis.