

To: Madison Election Advisory Committee, for the May 12 meeting
From: Paul Malischke
Date: April 30, 2009

There were severe ballot shortages in the April election. In order to avoid a similar situation for future elections, please consider adopting the following policy:

- The number of ballots prepared for each ward shall be at least 130% of the highest number of ballots cast at that ward for any comparable election in the previous eight years.
- For November elections, the number of ballots prepared for each ward shall be at least 140% of the highest number of ballots cast at that ward for any comparable election in the previous eight years.
- Before each election, the city clerk shall publish on the city website an Excel spreadsheet with the number of ballots prepared for each ward, along with the number of ballots cast at comparable previous elections. This shall also include a citywide total.
- If there is insufficient history of comparable elections due to ward boundary changes, guidelines shall be developed and used that are similar to the above, including using the citywide totals.

A comparable election is classified as follows:

- February election with no presidential primary (2010)
- February election with a presidential primary
- April election with Supreme Court contest (2011)
- April election with no Supreme Court contest (2010)
- September election with gubernatorial or US senate primary (2010)
- September election with no statewide primary
- November gubernatorial (2010)
- November presidential

During the recent April election, many wards were significantly short of ballots. Ballots were xeroxed on Election Day to remedy this. See specific ward information below. Ballot shortages involved the following problems:

- 30 minute wait for voters because there were no ballots, or voters needing to make a return trip.

- Copied ballots were significantly smaller than the original ballots, making them harder to read.
- The Automark ballot-marking terminals for voters with special needs could not be used, since there were no original ballots left. Xeroxed ballots do not function in the Automark.
- It took longer to service each voter, as the unusual circumstances (small ballot, not inserting it into the tabulator) needed to be explained.
- Voters had less confidence in the tally of ballots and Madison’s ability to properly administer elections.
- Pollworkers had to travel to other polling places to try to borrow ballots, instead of helping voters.
- Pollworkers who had worked all day had to stay late to hand-count ballots.
- Pollworkers had received no prior training on the best method to tally votes.
- The combination of hand-counting and machine counting can lead to errors in addition, or forgetting one batch entirely.

In ward 72 (Van Hise School), there were 498 printed ballots cast (some borrowed from another polling place). The pollworkers reported at 11 a.m. that they were running short. By the end of the day, 264 people used xeroxed ballots. The 762 total voters in April 2009 fell short of the 823 that voted in the April 2007 Supreme Court contest. The table below shows that the 2009 turnout was not extraordinary.

Members of the Dane County League of Women Voters reported voting on non-standard copied ballots in late morning (Stephens School), 2:00 pm (Odana golf course), and dinner hour (Thoreau School). O’Keefe School started borrowing from adjacent polling places shortly after 4 p.m., and later used about 100 copied ballots.

Ward	----- Previous years -----			2009	
	2003 ballots cast	2007 ballots cast	2008 ballots cast	2009 ballots prepared	2009 ballots cast
34 O’Keefe	1481	1392	985	1035	1210
67 Thoreau	1355	1186	839	778	1004
72 Van Hise	922	823	675	491	750
84 Odana	723	666	472	374	584

Note: “ballots cast” is the number of total votes in the April Supreme Court contest. There were probably more ballots cast that did not show a vote in this contest.