

**The Why, How, What and When of Precinct Boards:
Reactions from the Front Lines**

A Survey of California Poll Workers in the Primary Election of 2006

By:

**Karin Mac Donald and Bonnie Glaser
Election Administration Research Center
University of California, Berkeley
<http://earc.berkeley.edu>
510.642.8506**

FINAL REPORT

September 30, 2006

Please do not cite or quote without permission from the authors

The authors wish to thank Anita Lee, Shaw Li, Matthew Gibbs, Veronica Herrera, Nicole Boyle, Peter Fong and Saurabh Dhamdhare, for the countless hours of competent research assistance they gave to this project. We would also like to thank the Secretary of State's office, especially Debbie O'Donoghue; the leadership of the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO), in particular Steve Weir, and Freddie Oakley and Gail Pellerin, for their encouragement and support!

In the following pages we provide a summary overview of a study conducted by the Election Administration Research Center (EARC) at UC Berkeley, and an analysis of results from data collected from election poll workers (or precinct board members), who worked at polling places throughout California during the Primary election on June 6, 2006. This study was jointly funded by the California Secretary of State's office and EARC, and conducted in collaboration with the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO).

Project Overview

California's 58 counties had roughly 25,000 polling places in the Primary election that were staffed by approximately 100,000 poll workers. By law, California's polling places have to be staffed by a minimum of 3 poll workers, but some counties, depending on availability, will hire as many as 6 workers to fill special needs, usually to add workers with second language skills. On average, a precinct board consists of 4 members. All counties use the title 'inspector' for the worker who has the primary responsibility for administering the polling place on Election Day. Most counties also use the title 'clerk' or some variation of it (e.g. ballot clerk, roster clerk, etc.). A few counties have 'judges,' who take over the responsibility for the polling place when the inspector is on break. Some counties use the title "judge" rather than clerk, so a precinct board would have one inspector and at least two judges. At least one county has begun to refer to the entire precinct board as a 'team' and poll workers are referred to as 'team members.' The more 'rigid' the job title for a poll worker is, the less cross training and/or rotation of duties there seem to be.

The initial goal of the study was to deploy the survey instrument (see Appendix 1) to all 58 California counties. Due to the late date of the grant award and subsequent contract approval, and thus the late arrival of the surveys to the respective Registrars of Voters or County Clerks, many counties were unable to include the surveys into their precinct supplies because those had already been packed or sent out to poll workers. In the 3 weeks before the election, EARC distributed over 55,000 surveys to 25 counties.¹ Most of the counties that did not participate during the primary have indicated that they would like to deploy the survey during the General Election in November.

The survey instrument consisted of 32 questions, printed on a double sided 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper. EARC stapled a self-addressed postage-paid business reply envelope to each survey, coded them by county, and collated them into packs of 4, 5, 6 or 8, depending on requests by counties. The surveys were then packaged into a large envelope that was stamped "For Inspector and Poll Workers", one for each precinct, and delivered to the counties for inclusion into the precinct supplies.

¹ The counties that received surveys were: Alameda, Colusa, Contra Costa, Fresno, Humboldt, Kern, Lassen, Los Angeles, Mariposa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Solano, Tuolumne and Yolo.

The assumption by researchers was that poll workers, upon unpacking their supplies, would find the envelope, distribute the surveys amongst themselves, fill them out either on or after Election Day, and drop them into the mail to EARC. During a pilot study in Yolo County during the fall 2005 special election, EARC received responses from 68% of surveyed workers. Our expectation was that the response rate to a state-wide survey would be lower, but still relatively high as compared to other social science survey response rates, which are currently around 30 percent.

To date, we have received back approximately 42 percent of the surveys state-wide. Responses are still coming in however, at this point they have slowed to a few per week.

For this report, we created a state-wide dataset by merging all the counties into one report. We also created separate county level datasets. The State data are necessary to be able to analyze the variables that are relevant on that level, and to provide a baseline for each county to compare their responses to. Many of the questions included were designed to allow the poll workers to provide county specific feedback. Answers to those are included in the county reports. We received the first responses about one week after the election. To date, we have coded, entered and analyzed 15408 responses total.

The participating counties used a wide variety of voting technology. Some had scanners in their precincts, some used paper ballots that were centrally scanned, and others used touch screen or other DRE voting machines. To meet the HAVA accessibility requirement, some of the optical scan counties had ballot marking assistance devices and some used DRE machines. Overall, the sample is representative for the State of California.

For this report, we analyzed representative samples for each large county, and all responses received and opened by August 21, 2006 for the smaller counties. One county, due to an unfortunate oversight in its warehouse, did not distribute the surveys. We expected to encounter further problems along the way, but only found one. We were notified by one county that their poll workers seem to not have found the envelope in their supplies. This county had changed its precinct supply packing system from a box to a suitcase on wheels with many pockets since the last election. Poll workers seem to not have found all their supplies. This was one of the unanticipated findings of this study, and resulted in the recommendation that counties should consider indexing the materials that are packed, and have poll workers check them off on the day of the election upon unpacking them.

Findings

Below are the results based on the responses coded and analyzed as of today. The responses are listed in the order they appeared on the survey and the percentage for the State is listed in parenthesis after each response.

Of the poll workers that responded to the survey 86.20% attended a formal training held by one of the counties for the Primary election, while 13.43% had not. Please note that this number does not reflect the actual percentage of poll workers that were trained, either in a specific county or state-wide. We suspect that workers who did not attend training did not feel like the survey was designed for them, and thus many did not fill it out. Poll workers that were trained are without doubt over-represented in these results.

The primary reason for why poll workers said they did not attend training was that they had a conflict 31.91%, which included having to work, being out of town, or having some type of an emergency. With 30.20%, the second most frequently mentioned reason was that it was too late to attend training. We believe that this is a reflection of the extreme poll worker shortage that the counties faced for the primary election, and the last minute recruitment efforts. 14.85% however believed that it was not necessary to attend training. They gave a variety of reasons for this, mostly saying that they'd attended training before, or that they knew the materials already, or they thought training was only for inspectors. 14.3% said that no training was available, and 6.48% could not get to the training location.

More than half of all workers, 63.06% had been trained before, and 35.03% reported that they had not. 14.17% had attended 1 previous training, 10.93% had attended 2 trainings, 9.58% had attended 3, 8.65% had attended 4 previous trainings. 20.10% reported attending between 6 and 10 trainings, 8.26% attended 11 or more, and 22.19% of respondents who had attended training in the past did not answer this question.

A majority of workers, 57.55%, rated the convenience of the training location as better than 3 on a 5-point scale, with 1 being poor, and 5 being excellent. 25.38% rated the location as 'good,' and 8.17% thought it was less than good or poor. The schedule of the classes was slightly less well received with 52.16% of respondents reporting that it was better than good, i.e. above 3 on the 1 to 5 scale, and 3 or 'good' received 27.21%. 7.97% thought it was less than good or poor. We should note here that most respondents who did not attend training for one reason or another did not answer this question. There is consequently an under-reporting of problems with training time and location in this question because many of those who did not attend, did not do so because they could not take off work and there were no evening or weekend classes available, or the training class was in an inconvenient location.

Of the poll workers that attended training for the Primary election, 85.12% reported receiving training materials, and of those that received them, 91.96% said that they reviewed them before Election Day.

We asked why those who reported not reviewing the materials did not do so, and the primary reason was that they did not believe review was necessary 38.96%. It was followed by 15.22% who reported having some type of a conflict that prevented them from reviewing the materials and 16.32% did not receive any materials to review. 6.51% did not review materials because they were a last minute recruit and consequently lacked the time to do so. Another 6.78% simply forgot to review them or didn't get around to

doing it. We would recommend that especially if the reference and training materials contain essential information that is not at all or only partially covered in training, the importance of reviewing the materials prior to Election Day is stressed when they are handed out, or mailed to the poll workers. This survey and other data we have collected also point to the need of providing materials to every poll worker, no matter what their position, job duty, experience or training status.

Overall, the poll worker work force on Election Day was quite experienced. 67.80% of respondents reported that they had worked in previous elections. 31.43% had not worked before. Of those who answered the question asking how many times they had worked in previous elections, 11.43% said that they had worked once before, 38.12% had worked between 2 and 5 elections, 25.59% worked elections between 6 and 10 times and 15.12% of respondents had worked as poll workers in more than 11 elections. 9.74% of those who indicated they worked previously did not answer how many times they had worked.

Our sample contained 21.01% inspectors and 64.36% clerks. Not every county uses the job title 'judge' and only a small percentage of poll workers reported this as their title 10.47%. This is an expected and reasonable breakdown because there is usually only one inspector per polling place, but often more than one clerk. In fact, it seems that at least 2 and sometimes 3 clerks staff most polling places throughout the State. 25.61% of the returning poll workers who responded to this question reported having worked as an inspector at some point in the past. 68.67% had been clerks and 16.67% were judges in a past election.

The following questions were scored on a 1 – 5 Likert scale, one being poor and 5 being excellent. 3 or 'good' was in the middle, indicating 'could be better, could be worse.' 0 was the option for Not Applicable. Please note that the following percentages will not add to 100 because not all poll workers answered them. Also, not every county in our sample deployed voting equipment and thus, poll workers would either leave the question blank or check a 0. Consequently, for the voting equipment questions these percentages are slightly skewed. For our final report, we will tease the counties apart to be able to provide numbers that are more relevant.

At this point, our research indicates that a N/A response up to 7% on the next six questions, which concern general preparation, voting equipment, handling voters and voters with impairments and limited English skills, can be attributed to those who did not attend training at all. A higher than 7% N/A rate seems to be attributable to training not having included the respective component.

General preparation for Election Day:

Poll workers felt quite confident in their abilities to run a polling place. Upon being asked how well they felt the training prepared them for Election Day, 34.90% said 'good' or a 3 on the 1 – 5 scale. 46.16% felt very well prepared, rating training preparation at 3.5 or above. 8.66% felt poorly or less than well prepared for Election Day, and 6.36% checked N/A.

Working with Voting Equipment:

The next question asked poll workers to rate their preparation to operate voting equipment on Election Day. Here we see a drop in the responding poll workers' confidence as compared to the first question in this series; 30.52% said 'good,' 41.03% rated this part of training above 3.5 on the 1 to 5 scale and 11.62% felt poorly or less than well prepared to deal with voting equipment. 12.43% said that this question was not applicable. Again, please note that these percentages include counties that did not deploy equipment.

Respondents were then asked whether training had prepared them to demonstrate the equipment to voters. 29.87% rated the training as 'good' or 3, 42.78% as 3.5 and above, and 11.22% rated it below 3. Similar to the question above, 12.22% checked Not Applicable.

Handling voters:

Poll workers were then asked whether they felt prepared to manage different voter situations and questions from voters. 34.67% answered that they thought the training was 'good' in preparing them for Election Day, 40.55% felt that they were prepared better than good. But a slightly increasing number of 14.63% felt not adequately prepared, answering this question at below 3, and 6.47% checked N/A.

Dealing with voters with impairments or limited English proficiency:

The poll workers who responded to our survey felt least prepared on the next two issues. 31.63% of poll workers said that their training preparation for dealing with voters that have disabilities was 'good,' and 38.46% rated their preparedness at better than good. 14.36% did not feel that training prepared them well, and 10.96% indicated not applicable, which, if we deduct 7% for those who checked N/A because they did not attend training, might indicate that more than 3.96% did not receive training on this issue.

We see a big change in the numbers in the question on how well training prepared poll workers for dealing with voters that either do not speak English at all or not well. 25.68% of poll workers said that it was 'good,' and 24.94% rated it above 'good.' 24.56% rated this part of the training as less than good or 'poor.' On this question, we see the largest incidents of Not Applicable with 18.76%. Again, deducting 7% of the N/A percentage for those who did not attend training leaves 11.76% of poll workers who may not have received training on how to deal with voters with limited English proficiency.

Of the participating twenty-five counties, thirteen are currently covered under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act (see Appendix 2), which requires that once counties exceed an established percentage of people of limited English proficiency, they must provide language assistance to that group, including translated voting materials and training to

poll workers on how to assist voters. Some counties that are not covered by Section 203 may not provide training on this issue, and thus the state-wide total for this question may be lower if we exclude those counties from the analysis. Training is obviously a difficult and complex process, and most trainers only include what they believe to be absolutely necessary. However, we should point out that even if a county is not independently covered, the entire State of California is covered under Sec. 203 for the Hispanic language group. In addition, the Department of Justice has sued various jurisdictions (for example the City of Boston in 2005²) under Section 2 of the VRA for abridging the right to vote of limited English proficient members of language minority groups, even when that minority group was not covered under Section 203. Thus, taking the saying that a good offense is the best defense, we believe that even if a county is not independently covered under Section 203, it would be wise to incorporate into its training a component that educates poll workers about what to do when a voter with limited English skills enters their polling place, and how to accommodate voters that do not speak English.

Training, Reference materials and processes ON Election Day:

The last three questions in this series were applicable to all respondents, whether or not they attended training.

Poll workers were asked how helpful their colleagues were in training them on Election Day. This is particularly important for poll workers that did not attend training or are inexperienced. 26.32% indicated that the training on Election Day was 'good' and 49.73% rated it better than 'good.' 7.78% were less impressed with it, checking a number below 3 and 8.21% said: 'what training?' by answering N/A. As stated above, we attributed anything below 7% to those who did not attend training in earlier answers, however, with these questions, not applicable either means that the respondent was on 'auto-pilot' and didn't read the question properly, thus assuming that it did not apply to them or that they indeed did not feel they received any instruction from their fellow poll workers. Judging the surveys as a whole, we believe that this result is more applicable to the latter than the former reason. We found that a very large number of respondents answered the survey very carefully and thoroughly. If there was any 'auto-piloting' bias, we tended to see it more with those who just can't find anything wrong with the process at all, and who check the highest answer everywhere, even when it is not applicable to them.

On the question about adequacy of the available reference materials, (29.60%) found them 'good,' 58.43% rated them above 'good' and 6.98% found them inadequate, checking a number below 3 (good). Only 2.09% found this question to be not applicable.

As the last question in this series, we asked how well Election Day processes went at their polling place, and 24.98% answered 'good,' 64.79% indicated that it went better

² For complaint, see: http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/litigation/recent_sec2.htm#boston

than good, and 5.72% felt less than 'good' about election processes in their polling place. Only .70% checked N/A here.

In the next section, we asked whether poll workers thought that class training is valuable for working at the polls. An overwhelming 88.96% of respondents said yes, even when they indicated that training could be better or that training was too long. Only 2.37% thought that it was not valuable, and 5.85% said that they did not know or were not sure, mostly those who had never attended a training class. 2.82% did not answer this question.

An equally large percentage of 90.25% of poll workers thought that there were adequate reference materials available to them on Election Day. 2.67% disagreed and 3.34% were not sure or didn't know. 3.73% did not respond to this question.

Two open ended questions in the next section asked respondents why they chose to become poll workers and what they do when they are not working at the polls. Please note that we coded respondents' 2 primary reasons or job titles, i.e. answers might be: "It's my civic duty and the money helps," this would be coded as 'civic duty' and 'money.' Or, I am retired and volunteer at the senior center and the food bank. This would be coded as 'retired' and 'volunteer.' We have added the two responses to come up with the reasons for working and the jobs held by poll workers. They will not add up to 100.

On the motivations to become a poll worker, the top reason with 22.63% was 'community service/volunteering in the community' closely followed by 'interest in the election process/system' with 19.17%. The third most mentioned motivation factor was 'civic duty' with 15.58%, followed by 'recruited by someone/organization' at 13.33%. All other reasons came in with single digits, 9.05% thought that it might be fun, 8.42% said that they liked working with people and enjoyed seeing their neighbors, 8.82% did it for the money, and 4.83 % said that they had heard about a need for workers. We should note here that we believe that the financial motivation is understated. In the open ended questions, many poll workers indicated that money was a factor in recruiting them or keeping them working even when they did not list it as a reason to this question. Respondents might be ashamed to admit that they are working for financial reasons because participation in the process is being 'marketed' as a civic duty.

We asked poll workers what they do when they are not working at the polling place. 45% of all poll workers that responded to our survey indicated that they are retired, 10.07% self-identified as professionals of some type (teachers, lawyers, accountants, etc.), 11.51% are government employees, and 6.84% said that they are employed in business/sales etc., 5.73% are stay-at-home mothers or fathers, and 6.09% are college students.

In terms of being able to retain poll workers, the future looks good: 88.85% said that they are willing to work again, and only 4.56% said that they would not. 4.28% of responding

poll workers said that they might possibly/maybe work again, and 2.31% did not respond to this question.

We analyzed the responses of those who said that they would not work again. The primary reason with 26.11% for not returning to work as poll workers was that they felt the day was too long. The second most frequent reason at 20.43% was that some type of conflict will prevent them from working again. This included moving away or being unable to get time off from work. 16.44% said that a particular aspect of the process needed change, and they would not return until it did. This included items such as something being wrong with the polling place, not feeling trained sufficiently, closing taking too long, etc. 13.44% reported that they would not work again due to age, or a physical limitation. 5.15% simply don't want to work again, and 13.66% did not state a reason for why they will not return.

Additional Analysis at the State Level

Our data show that state-wide, poll workers who are still in the work force are less likely to have attended a formal training. This is an interesting data point to consider if the goal is to recruit more non-retirees to work on Election Day.

Looking at only those respondents that reported not going to a training class across the state, we found that 35% were retired versus 59% who work. The latter group reported that the primary reason 24.8% for not attending training was that they had a 'conflict' – usually work related. 24.5% could not make it to training due to late sign-ups or last minute recruitment, and 12.2% were either not informed about training or a class was not available for their position. 10.6% decided not to go to training because they felt that they did not need it.

For the retired group state-wide, the most cited reasons for not attending training were slightly different, mostly in that more of them thought training was unnecessary. 23.9% reported a scheduling conflict, though less work-related, many retirees travel or lead generally busy lives that prevent them from attending daytime training sessions. 21.9% did not attend due to late recruitment or last minute sign-ups. 13.3% believed that training attendance was unnecessary, and 9.2% were not invited to attend training.

State-wide, whether or not poll workers were trained had a very slight impact on their willingness to work again. 89.2% of those trained were willing to work again and 87.3% of those not trained were willing to work again.

Voices from the Polling Place

The following section lists specific recommendations that were gathered from the survey responses. In contrast to the data above, these responses came from the open-ended questions in which poll workers were invited to elaborate. We summarized the responses that met one of the following three criteria: One, they were mentioned repeatedly by poll workers from more multiple counties; Two, in our observations and interviews with

trainers and election administrators, we found that they are implemented by at least one county; Three, they are applicable more broadly, to more than one county. Or, they are simply good, common sense suggestions that might be considered.

These recommendations are grouped into 7 broad categories. Because there is variation in the counties, based on technology and other factors, not all recommendations are relevant for all counties.

General recommendations:

- **Inform election office staff that registered voters in California can work as poll workers in ANY county.** Election office staff and potential poll workers should know that they can work in any county in California. This is especially important when recruiting college students who are more likely to be registered in a county different from where they spend the semester and go to school. It is also a factor in recruiting commuting workers who may live in a county different from that in which they work. We found that potential poll workers were told that they could not work in a county in which they were not registered to vote by election staff in various locations.
- **Train all poll workers.** Many poll workers suggested that all poll workers, including substitutes, should receive formal training. Many of those who were not trained felt insecure and often overwhelmed by the process. Those that had to work with untrained poll workers felt that the process was slowed down, that they had to work harder, take on additional tasks, and shouldered too much responsibility.
- **Split shifts.** Have splits shift whenever possible; if you can absolutely not offer formal split shifts, encourage household partners or friends to divide the day amongst themselves and share the paycheck. The number one complaint about working the polls is that the hours are too long. Many poll workers report that they know others who would work if they were allowed to split the day in half.
- **Reassess your training and reference materials.** Some counties may have reached the point where the entire training process and the materials that are used, should be recreated from scratch. It appears that most counties take the existing materials and training outlines and add to or subtract from them as new laws are implemented or procedures change as technology does. This piecemeal approach has led to overly complex, confusing and counter productive materials that often do not correspond to the training in terms of technology and process descriptions. Many poll workers have commented that this issue has contributed to the process becoming overwhelming and potentially error prone.
- **Provide a safety net.** Poll workers should have access to a help line and/or their roving inspector via telephone. The help line has to be adequately staffed and

reachable, especially during the early morning hours and the evening/closing hours. Help line access is becoming more important as additions of printers make the malfunctioning and unavailability of voting machines twice as likely. Access to a telephone in polling places that are not equipped with one can be provided via election office issued cell phones (many counties have negotiated very good rates for this) or by asking poll workers to use their personal phone and paying them a stipend (\$5 or so) for its availability. When issuing cell phones, verify good coverage in your polling places: it does not help to have a phone only work 300 feet from the polling place when trying to talk a poll worker through a trouble shooting situation with a voting machine. Also go over the cell phone's basic operation during class and remind poll workers to charge the batteries before Election Day.

Training class logistics

- **Schedule classes frequently - have evening and weekend options.** We found that many non-retired poll workers were either not attending training at all because there was no option to attend during non-work hours, or they were resentful about having to do so.
- **Avoid scheduling classes that go through lunch in the middle of the day.** Especially poll workers with medical issues were critical of this type of scheduling, noting that if poll workers were expected to sit through class during lunchtime, food should be provided for them. Others mentioned that it effectively wrecked their workday to have a class scheduled in the middle of it.
- **Note the length of the training class on the schedule.** Many poll workers assume that training will take one hour unless otherwise told. With technology implementations, however, training classes have tended to become longer. Without advanced notice, poll workers may simply leave after one hour, thus missing important information (especially since changes in processes tend to be covered later in class). This results in some poll workers not being as well trained or differently trained than others.
- **Refreshments and breaks keep poll workers happy.** If classes are longer than 2 hours, provide refreshments like water and coffee. Some counties have donuts or candy available. Schedule a break during long classes.
- **Assign experienced poll workers to different classes than inexperienced ones.** When experienced poll workers have to sit through presentations of processes that have not changed and that they know well, they feel that their time was wasted and they may not pay attention to the items that have changed or are new. Similarly, new poll workers report being overwhelmed by classes that are geared toward experienced poll workers. They cannot follow the presentation, are unfamiliar with the materials that are referenced and feel ashamed to ask

questions. The result is high anxiety, frustration, and a reluctance to serve on Election Day. If you can not separate poll workers into different classes based on their experience, consider inviting newcomers an hour earlier to the first part of class when the basics are covered, and add the experienced workers for a later part of the class that covers an overview of procedural changes.

- **Small classes and hands-on training.** Keeping classes small will allow for hands-on training and enable more people to see and hear the presentation. A frequent complaint, especially from retired poll workers was that it was hard to hear the trainer or see the videos because classrooms were too large, crowded or in noisy locations. Most poll workers from counties that implemented electronic equipment mentioned that hands-on training is essential, and many asked for more hands-on time, and that everyone should have an opportunity to work with machines during training.
- **Hold training in easily reachable locations.** Poll workers should be able to reach training locations via public transportation to minimize situations in which they report not attending training due to not being able to get there. Include directions or a map with the training schedule.

Specific Training Recommendations:

- **Outline your training.** Provide an overview or an outline of the training class, and either pass it out at the beginning or have it posted where everyone can see it. Reserve time at end of each section of the training class for questions and answers and tell students to hold questions until that time. Begin with the “Big Picture:” i.e. the mission of poll workers, their duties, and how voters should be treated. Emphasize the laws and purposes that underlie the procedures, to make them less arbitrary and senseless.
- **Train your trainers.** Most trainers need to have pedagogical training. They need to know how to run a class in a way that keeps students from different backgrounds learning, allow for questions at the appropriate time, keep the crowd entertained but not rowdy, make sure that some poll workers do not dominate the process and, for example, ‘hover’ over machines, not allowing access to them by others.
- **Provide hands-on training.** Set up a mock-precinct including a table with all materials and machines, for poll workers to get a visual idea of a proper set-up. Use it for roll playing of different voter situations, emphasizing key issues. For timely results on Election Day, train poll workers on closing procedures. This will not only make the process quicker but also more accurate.

- **Train on cultural sensitivity.** An alarming number of poll workers mentioned in their survey that people with limited English skills should not be allowed to vote, or questioned the wisdom of second language materials. Others suggested that disabled voters should be encouraged to vote absentee. There is a great need to educate poll workers about the laws and purposes of specific procedures relating to these populations, to encourage appropriate conduct and to discourage possible violations of the Voting Rights Act at the polling place. At the same time, there were some poll workers who asked for more training to deal with second-language situations, especially in polling places without non-English materials.
- **Provide at-home training options.** For last minute fill-ins, a take-home DVD or video can provide helpful training. Some counties provide an on-line course that can be either a good supplemental training or be used for those who missed training. Poll workers need to be reminded that generally, the DVD/Video is meant to supplement the training, not to replace it. Point out that reviewing the take-home training materials is still important even if poll workers are experienced. Find a way to highlight changes and additions in some way. People will not read instructions they think they already know. If you are mailing reference materials to your poll workers, consider sending them before the training so that people can ask questions about them in class.

Recruitment and Retention:

- **Recruit year-round!** Recruit poll workers throughout the year not just right before an election. One suggested way is to tag onto town hall type meetings that are already being held by city council members, mayors, etc. to introduce the opportunity to people who might never have heard about it. Include a brief orientation to poll worker service, i.e. what is a precinct board, what happens on Election Day, what are the tasks and requirements of the different poll worker jobs. Provide a general overview of the applicable laws (esp. HAVA and the VRA) and general objectives of polling place voting. This will serve to inform voters and potential poll workers alike.
- **Recruit and get feedback while socializing.** Hold an after-election social event for continuing poll workers, such as a picnic or a BBQ. This is a great way to show your poll workers that you appreciate them and also to collect feedback and suggested improvements. Additionally, you might invite poll workers to bring a friend who might be interested in working at the polls, thus turning it into a recruitment event.
- **Recognize long-time workers.** This can be done by sending them a certificate of appreciation or trying to get the local paper to write a human-interest story about

them. Create an anniversary program that honors them for working the polls for 5, 10, 15, etc. years.

- **Explain job duties.** Make sure each person who is recruited understands the varying responsibilities of each position before signing them up and assigning them to a particular job; for example, inspectors must know in advance that their duties include having to pick up, take home, check, and carry in supplies.
- **Increase the pay!** Many poll workers, experienced and inexperienced alike, commented on the fact that poll working is/has become increasingly complex and that compensation should be commensurate to the tasks assigned and the hours worked. Recent increases have resulted in much positive feedback. The compensation should also be equal to that of the neighboring counties. There were frequent comments about a bordering county paying more and questions about why this is the case.
- **Same pay for same position.** Beware of hiring temp workers and paying them more than you pay your other poll workers! Nothing breeds contempt quicker!
- **Identify good workers.** Provide ways for precinct board members to offer feedback on their fellow workers. This is a good way to identify especially good workers who might be promoted to inspector and to weed out those that should not be working at the polls.
- **Have poll workers help the recruitment effort.** Offer to pay a small ‘finders-fee’ or a ‘bounty’ to poll workers who recruit new poll workers. Our data show that many poll workers enter the process by being asked by friends to help or join a precinct board. Creating an incentive for poll workers to do this will make a very effective recruitment tool even more successful.
- **Involve local business.** Many poll workers suggested that local businesses should be encouraged to designate one (or more, depending on size of company) employee as a poll worker for each election. The local election official might consider thanking the business on the official website for their contribution, thus providing an incentive. Local restaurants or food-related establishments might be asked to provide reduced-price lunches or vouchers to poll workers on Election Day, again based on the same principle that the Registrar/County Clerk would publicly acknowledge the contribution.

Selecting workers for Precinct Boards

- **Avoid inexperienced inspectors and screen for competence.** Try not to assign inspector duties to a first time poll worker. We have received a lot of feedback from poll workers about the problems that inexperienced inspectors create, and comments from first time poll worker/inspectors about how overwhelmed they

were by their responsibilities. Screen potential inspectors carefully for competence, sense of responsibility, and social skills. The inspector sets the tone for the polling place and poll workers pick up cues on how to act from their team leader.

- **Combine experienced with inexperienced poll workers.** Have poll workers with varying levels of experience on your precinct boards. Avoid boards that are made up of all new workers. Many workers report that experienced fellow poll workers provide their best training on Election Day. Take advantage of this opportunity.
- **Build team spirit.** Keep well working precinct boards together. A good team makes a big difference in a board's effectiveness, efficiency and retention of workers. Promote team building by encouraging precinct board members to meet and sit together at training. Provide contact info of all board members to all board members to enable communication with each other before Election Day. Consider providing contact information for members of other precinct boards in the same polling place to facilitate ride sharing, information exchange, etc. Try to place poll workers close to their home, in a location where they have previously worked, possibly in their own precinct. This increases the chance that poll workers know each other, decreases the chance that they have trouble finding the polling place, eliminates the need for them to vote at a far-away polling place and may give them an opportunity to go home for lunch and dinner.
- **Test your poll workers.** Implement a testing process for new poll workers and ask continuing poll workers to self-administer a take-home test to assess their skills. This will help weed out people who either do not have the skills a poll worker needs to do a good job or for whom the job has outgrown their skills. We received many reports of poll workers who were not able to do their jobs anymore, and consequently made it difficult for the rest of the precinct board to do theirs in a timely fashion. Respondents also reported that some poll workers had difficulties with basic reading, writing and arithmetic.
- **Eliminate communication barriers.** Inspectors are usually instructed to call their poll workers before Election Day, but some mechanism should be in place to contact inspectors. Especially in counties where training takes place many weeks before the election and where supplies are delivered to the polling place, there is no way for the county to know whether an inspector will show up on Election Day. Poll workers should be instructed to contact their inspector if they don't hear from him/her by a given date, and alert the county if they can still not get in touch.
- **Utilize students to their fullest potential.** If you want student poll workers to be full members of the precinct board, inform them and the rest of the board of this. We have found that students are often only used for menial tasks like updating the street index. The rest of the time they are bored. Bored students will not return!

Make sure everyone is informed of their duties, and if students are working as clerks, they should be treated equally and not like lesser members of the precinct board.

- **Minimize physical limitations.** The composition of poll workers in each precinct must reflect the ability to do the required heavy lifting or the county must find another way to manage physical requirements of polling place set-up, packing and delivery of supplies and ballots. Simply packing supplies into multiple boxes may alleviate this problem. Additionally, many poll workers say that curbside voting with electronic equipment that has to be carried is impossibly for them to conduct due to the weight of the machines. Adding one physically able poll worker to each board will lessen this concern.

Reference and Instruction Materials:

- **Test and check your materials.** Verify that all materials are accurate and up to date in terms of current procedures. Cross check that all materials have consistent information, the same wording, abbreviations, and most importantly employ the same terminology. Then set up a mock polling place and use the instructions and materials to go through realistic processes. Finally, invite a couple of experienced and inexperienced poll workers to do the same. This will serve to catch inaccuracies and ambiguities before the reference materials are printed.
- **Double check take-home supplemental training media.** If poll workers are provided with DVDs or videos to view at home, make double sure that the information contained is accurate. Double-check materials that were developed by vendors! For example, a DVD that says that the polls open at 8 will result in confusion, unnecessary phone calls to headquarters and latecomers on Election Day.
- **Have training and reference materials available for all workers.** Training and reference materials should be available to all poll workers, not just the inspector. Redundancy is good! Workers have reported that their inspector has refused access to materials when only one copy was provided. Our data show that poll workers, no matter what their job titles are, use the materials if they have access to them! Many have asked to be provided with the materials at training, to be able to familiarize themselves with them, take notes and then use them on Election Day as reference materials. Ask your poll workers to bring their manuals on Election Day.
- **Save on printing – go online.** Have all training and reference materials available online in addition to the hard copies. Particularly younger poll workers have asked for this option in our survey. This may also serve to cut down on printing costs, and provide an additional way for poll workers to access materials who have misplaced or did not receive them at training.

- **Consolidate information.** Poll workers love the “What to do if”- books. Flip pages make finding information easy. Expand on this idea and consolidate all other information into either one or two binders or manuals. Try to minimize loose leaf paper. Create detailed step-by-step instructions with check-off boxes for opening and closing procedures. These lists could be incorporated into the back of the “what to do if” booklet. Poll workers are often not quite awake when they arrive at the polling place on Election Day, and we have observed that many tend to ‘freeze’ – i.e. not know where to start to set up. They are also tired when the polls close. Detailed checklists will help to get the process moving and minimize the procedures that are not completed. Provide check lists to all poll workers so that they don’t have to share one copy. Encourage them to place a check mark next to each process that was completed.
Develop and incorporate a Frequently Asked Questions document from new questions that arise at training and on Election Day. Incorporate this document into the reference materials.

Polling Place logistics:

- **Get voters to the proper polling place.** Consider printing a map showing the polling place on the sample ballot, especially if the location has changed. If there are multiple polling places in the same location, consider placing a ‘conductor’ at the entrance who prescreens voters and directs them to the proper polling place. Print the precinct number prominently on the sample ballot so voters who bring it have some prior idea about which table is theirs. Make sure the voting location is adequate for the number of polling places allocated. Crammed locations with multiple polling places are prone to errors as voters tend to get confused and their voted ballots often end up in the wrong ballot box. Create some type of a physical delineation that keeps voters in the proper polling place, for example tape or string may be used.
- **Get poll workers to the proper polling place.** Provide directions to the polling place. Especially poll workers who are not likely to go online to find directions have had problems finding the polling place. Ask poll workers who arrive at the polling place first to immediately put signs outside so that late coming poll workers can find the location quicker. Alternatively, encourage all poll workers to help with setting-up their polling place on the night before Election Day. This avoids being rushed in the morning and any efforts to make the polling place available prior to Election day has been appreciated by the poll workers in our survey. Having the entire board show up will reduce the number of poll workers who can’t find their polling place the next morning.
- **Eliminate bottleneck situations.** If different booths for different parties are used, consider whether they can be eliminated: there are too many complaints by voters and poll workers about not having enough of them available for one party

while those for the other party are empty. Remind your poll workers not to excessively socialize on Election Day, to speedily process voters and avoid lines. This will also contribute to better record keeping, and provide a quiet environment for voters to concentrate on voting.

- **Educate voters standing in line.** Provide a handout to voters that are waiting to be processed, that explains the voting method, what ballots they may request (in the primary) depending on their registration, etc. This will give waiting voters something to do and poll workers a break from having to explain the same thing over and over.

Dear Poll Worker: Please complete this confidential questionnaire to assist a University of California study on poll worker training in California, and then return it in the postage paid envelope. As a poll worker, your expertise is essential to our research and your participation is much appreciated. We hope our research helps to improve the poll worker experience and election process for everyone. (Please complete both sides of this page.) **THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

ABOUT YOUR TRAINING BEFORE ELECTION DAY

1. Did you attend a training class for the June 6, 2006 Election? Yes _____ No _____
 If No, why not? _____

2. Have you attended trainings in the past for other Elections? Yes _____ (If Yes, how many)? _____ No _____

	(for questions below please circle the number that applies)					
3. How convenient was the training location?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
4. How convenient was the training time?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)

5. Did you receive any reference materials (manuals, checklists, etc.) at training to take home? Yes ___ No ___ N/A ___
 If Yes, did you review any of the materials before reporting to your polling site on Election Day? Yes ___ No ___
 If you did NOT review materials received, why not? _____

6. Do you have additional comments about and/or suggestions for improvement of **poll worker training**?

ABOUT YOUR ELECTION DAY EXPERIENCE

1. Have you worked as a poll worker in previous elections? Yes _____ No _____
 (If Yes, in **how many elections** have you worked as a poll worker?) _____

2. Please circle your job title on Election Day June 6, 2006:

Inspector Judge Clerk Other _____

What were your job titles in past elections? _____

	(for questions below please circle the number that applies)					
3. How well did the training prepare you for Election Day?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
4. How well did the training prepare you to operate any voting equipment (such as ballot marking devices, ballot scanners, electronic machines) on Election Day?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
5. How well did the training prepare you to demonstrate to voters how to operate any voting equipment (such as ballot marking devices, ballot scanners, electronic machines)?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
6. How well did the training prepare you to manage different voter situations and questions on Election Day?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
7. How effective was the training in preparing you to serve voters with disabilities?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
8. How effective was the training in preparing you to serve voters with limited English proficiency?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
9. How helpful was the training/instruction you received <u>on Election Day</u> from other poll workers or election staff?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
10. How adequate were the available reference materials for guiding you through Election Day processes and procedures?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)
11. In your opinion, how well did Election Day processes go at your polling place?	0(N/A)	1(poor)	2	3(good)	4	5(excellent)

(please turn over for Page 2)

ABOUT YOUR ELECTION DAY EXPERIENCE (continued)

12. Do you think class training is valuable for working at the polls? Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure/Don't Know _____

13. Did you have adequate reference materials available to you on Election Day? Yes__ No__ Not Sure/Don't Know _____

What materials were most useful on Election Day? _____

14. Do you have additional comments about and/or suggestions for improving **written poll worker reference materials**?

ABOUT BEING A POLL WORKER IN GENERAL

1. Why did you become a poll worker?

2. When you are not serving as a poll worker, what do you do?
(for example: high school student, college student, retired, county employee, state employee, teacher, in business, etc...)

3. Are you willing to work in future elections? Yes _____ No _____ (why not?) _____

4. Do you have additional comments about and/or suggestions for improving **your county's poll worker program**?

