

# Interest continues in early voting in Tippecanoe Co.

**Matthew Kent**

mkent@jconline.com

Early voting for the May 3 primary is continuing to draw interest from the public as officials project to exceed 2012 voter turnout numbers at four Pay Less grocery stores.

Tippecanoe County Clerk Christa Coffey, who monitors early voting numbers on a daily basis, said Friday afternoon that she thinks voter turnout at Pay Less Super Markets will be higher for the upcoming election compared to four years ago. The sites will be open for early voting from noon to 7 p.m. Saturday through April 30.

"I think it'll be definitely higher than 2012, but I don't think it'll be anywhere near 2008," Coffey said. "The big-

gest change is both sides have active presidential campaigns still, so there hasn't been the crossover there was in 2008."

In 2012, the Pay Less store on Beck Lane saw 1,115 people cast votes early, while the Pay Less site in West Lafayette was second with 1,094. Coffey also warned about long lines.

"So if someone has the option to go at a different time during the week in the earlier hours of the workday, it's typically less busy, so people who have that opportunity, that might be a better option for them than being there, say after 5 o'clock, or on the weekends," Coffey said.

Early voting at the county's election office has exceeded levels seen during the 2008 and 2012 elections, according to the Tippecanoe County Clerk's Office. Five hundred and forty-two people had cast their ballots

early as of Thursday in comparison to 293 ballots in 2012 and 386 in 2008, records show. Early voting at Stewart Center on Purdue University's campus earlier this week also resulted in 488 absentee ballots, a figure that outpaced the 35 ballots that were cast there four years ago.

Officials said earlier this month that the Indiana primary could shape the presidential race. Coffey, who originally predicted a 27 percent voter turnout on Election Day, said Friday that figure remains unchanged. In 2008, the county had a 45 percent voter turnout, and in 2012, that figure was 16 percent.

Coffey also said her office is prepared for the primary based on what she has seen so far. The polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. May 3.

"The turnout's been good, but I think we have everything planned well for Election Day," Coffey said.