

## Voters cry foul over treatment

Some in line before 6 p.m. cut-off turned away

**Meghan Holden**

[mholden@jconline.com](mailto:mholden@jconline.com)

Tuesday's primary election didn't go without its share of mishaps and mistakes in Tippecanoe County.

Some voters said they were turned away from a polling location after the 6 p.m. deadline and a few others said they didn't get to cast their ballots because their names

didn't show up on the voter registration.

While the incidents sparked frustration among those who weren't allowed to vote and others who've experienced similar problems in the past, the county says it will ramp up training and outreach to avoid these types of issues in the future.

The Journal & Courier reported Tuesday that poll workers at the Eagles Lodge site turned away some people in line to vote after the polls closed at 6 p.m. The poll workers were legally allowed to dismiss people past the 50-foot mark from the entrance, but Tippecanoe County Clerk Christa Coffey said she would've preferred to allow everyone in line to vote.

Coffey said 26 people voted at Eagles Lodge after 6 p.m.

It's hard to say whether the lost votes affected any races, she said.

Dusty Sturgeon was one of the rejected voters. She initially brought her two kids with her to the Tippecanoe County Fairgrounds polling station about 5:10 p.m., but there was a long line and a poll worker told her she'd get through quicker at the Outpost Catering or Eagles Lodge locations.

She went to the Outpost and saw another long line, so she headed to the Eagles Lodge. After waiting in a line that went to the parking lot for 20 minutes, Sturgeon said a poll worker came out and told everyone who was past the white chalk line they wouldn't be able to vote.

Sturgeon said the group of 20 to 30 people tried to talk with the poll worker but he "threw his hands in the air and said, 'Don't yell at me about the law, I'm just a volunteer.'" She said she wasn't aware of the 50-foot law and thought anyone in line by 6 p.m. could vote. If the county is going to enforce the law, Sturgeon said, it should put up a sign outside polling locations with the information.

"We're in an important election season, and I believe that every vote counts and it's our chance to be heard," Sturgeon said, adding she usually votes early.

Jan Beach said she was in a similar position in the 2008 primary election. She brought her daughter to the fairgrounds right before 6 p.m. to vote for the first time but they and several other people were turned away.



## **Voters cast ballots Tuesday at the Tippecanoe County Fairground in Lafayette.**

JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER

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“I mean, we were right there,” Beach said.

A few people also had issues voting due to poll workers searching misspelled names in the registration, Coffey said.

In Sherri McGlothlin’s case, her name didn’t appear on the list at the polling location or online although she was registered. She said the poll workers didn’t offer any other options and she didn’t learn until the next day that she could’ve called the voter registration office to sort out the issue.

Coffey said McGlothlin should’ve been given a provisional ballot.

She said Tuesday’s incidents will be taken into consideration during poll worker training for the general election this fall.

Poll workers are given multiple numbers to call if there’s an issue, Coffey said, and training this season involved poll workers role playing how to handle different scenarios.

She said the county is considering a contact option that’s specifically for people to call if they’re having problems voting.

“This has created some issues that we’ll definitely address in training for November,” Coffey said, adding she commends poll workers who work hard during elections.

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