

## GUEST COLUMN

# What goes into conducting an election

**Christa Coffey**

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With continuing coverage of the recent primary, I want to share information about the process of conducting elections in Tippecanoe County. Although an election for president is very important, to election administrators and all candidates who run for elected office, every election is a critical event.

Election processes begin five months in advance with candidate filings; once that deadline passes, ballots are prepared and undergo several layers of review. To comply with the federal MOVE Act, ballots must begin delivery 45 days before Election Day to military and overseas voters. From then through statutory end dates, ballots are sent out daily as applications are submitted.

Voter registration closes 29 days before every Election Day. Just as drivers are required to maintain current information with the BMV, it is the responsibility of voters to maintain accurate registration records, including name or address changes. With the online tool at [www.indianavoters.com](http://www.indianavoters.com), that process has never been simpler for those who hold an Indiana-issued ID or driver's license; for those who do not, the form can be downloaded from the website and mailed or delivered.

For this election, over 400 hours of in-person voting time was available before May 3. That begins 28 days before Election Day in the Board of Election Office. There were also 19 satellite locations, all open to the public, including long-term care facilities, a Purdue campus site and a Saturday morning in three small towns. Satellite voting concludes with eight days of noon-7 p.m. voting at four Pay Less Super Market locations. During the final 10 days, bipartisan teams also visit confined voters who need assistance with voting.

For those who prefer to cast their ballot on Election Day, there were 16 vote centers across Lafayette and West Lafayette, along with centers in Battle Ground, Dayton and Clarks Hill. While vote centers are designed to each process larger groups of voters, never has it been stated there will be no waiting. (Personal note: In contrast to lines last week, I waited 2.5 hours at my precinct in November 2004 to cast my ballot.) Poll workers who volunteer to serve for one or more days every six months are wonderful public servants, and they deserve our gratitude and thanks. They use vacation leave, change job schedules, are retired or are county employees who also serve our citizens in this way. They are required to attend training that covers the legal guidelines, critical factors for each election, and are trained to use the electronic poll book. Finally, they are provided with a copy of the election handbook issued by the Indiana Secretary of State and Election Division.

On Election Day, poll workers are required to appear by 5 a.m. to prepare the vote center and begin a minimum 12-hour day of voting. When the day ends, they must

reconcile and verify information for their site, prepare voting equipment for pickup, pack computers and equipment and return materials to the County Office Building in downtown Lafayette.

In preparing for the November election, we will have every available computer and voting machine deployed. We always need additional poll worker staff for satellite and Election Day voting.

However, while we do everything possible to avoid it, voters should expect and plan for lines. Along with offices from president of the United States to local school boards and judicial retentions, there will be a state constitutional amendment proposal. We will do our best to provide advance education about these issues, but it is ultimately the responsibility of each voter to be informed when casting a ballot as citizens of our great democracy.

*Coffey is Tippecanoe County clerk.*

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**Voters cast ballots May 3 at the Tippecanoe County 4-H Fairgrounds in Lafayette.**

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