Marion County Election Board

Voter Experience Project: Public Feedback

Supplemental Report | Presented November 13, 2013
Executive Summary

In the summer of 2013, the Marion County Election Board was presented with the Voter Experience Project’s Study Group report, which consisted of feedback from the 18-members involved in the first phase effort. Five key themes emerged from the report:

- Voting should be accessible and convenient;
- A new system must be cost effective;
- Technology should improve the process;
- Overall voting process should be fundamentally fair and nondiscriminatory; and
- The public must have confidence in the system.

These themes formed the foundation for the six public meetings held in September and October. Additionally, Election Board staff posted an online version of the survey used during the in-person sessions. The online survey ended on October 31, 2013. Fifty-four people responded to the survey and the detailed results and comments are included in the appendices.

Three survey questions aligned closely to two themes – voting equipment must be accessible to voters, especially those with disabilities and technology should improve the process for voters and poll workers. Out of the 54 survey respondents, an average of 79% either agreed or strongly agreed with these three study group recommendations.

In the Report, the 18-members of the study group did not reach consensus on whether or not a hard copy paper record (i.e. voter verified paper trail) was necessary. Many members felt strongly a physical paper ballot was critical to ensure confidence in the system; others believe paper could be phased out because of its redundancy and expense. More than 78% of the public survey respondents noted a voter verified paper trail as an important requirement, while only 5% disagreed with this statement.

Survey respondents largely did not have a preference on voting on a paper ballot or touch-screen ballot; however, more people (39%) preferred using a paper ballot compared to 22% of those who prefer a touch-screen machine. Study Group members reported to the Board that the public may not have confidence in an all-electronic system, but over time, this attitude would change. The data from the survey, albeit a small pool of respondents, supports the Group’s opinion as most respondents were neutral to either a paper-ballot or all electronic system, suggesting an open-mind to either technology though paper ballots were the preference of those with a strong, positive opinion.

The remaining five questions gauged where and when voters in our community vote. The survey asked whether or not voting before Election Day was important. More than 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 29% of respondents felt strongly about voting on Election Day. Interestingly, about 43% of respondents were neutral on the question of voting on Election Day compared to 13% of the question relating to voting before Election Day.
The survey also asked a series of questions relating to where we vote – in my neighborhood, closest to home or wherever it’s most convenient to me. For the most part, the response was “yes!” (an average of 69%) to all three – voting in my neighborhood, near my home or where it’s most convenient. The data would suggest respondents define convenience as near their home or neighborhood, but may also depend on the voter’s personal definition of convenience.
Appendices

Survey Responses (pp. i-iii)
Comments (pp. iv-v)
Survey Document (pp. vi-vii)
Summary

- 54 surveys were completed in a 2 month period.
  - **Source**: 13 in person; 41 online
  - **Gender**: 24 Females; 28 Males
  - **Age of the participant**
    - 16 and under: 1
    - 17-24: 2
    - 25-34: 10
    - 35-44: 10
    - 45-54: 9
    - 55-64: 8
    - 65-74: 10
    - 74 and over: 4
  - **Race**
    - Asian / Pacific Islander: 1
    - Black or African American: 8
    - Hispanic or Latino: 2
    - Native American or American Indian: 1
    - White: 39
    - Other: 1
    - No Response: 2
  - **Registered voter in Marion County**: 50 YES; 4 NO
  - **Have voted in Marion Co within the last 3 years**: 49 YES; 5 NO
  - **Poll worker in Marion Co within the last 5 years**: 16 YES; 38 NO
Questions (Responses ranked on a scale of 1 to 5)

- Voting machines should be more accessible to those with mobility and/or vision issues.
  - Strongly Disagree: 1 (1.8%)
  - Disagree: 0
  - Neutral: 9 (16%)
  - Agree: 17 (31%)
  - Strongly Agree: 27 (50%)

- Voting machines should be easier for poll workers to set-up and tear down.
  - Strongly Disagree: 0
  - Disagree: 0
  - Neutral: 12 (22%)
  - Agree: 14 (26%)
  - Strongly Agree: 28 (52%)

- A voter verified paper trail is important to me.
  - Strongly Disagree: 2 (3%)
  - Disagree: 2 (3%)
  - Neutral: 7 (13%)
  - Agree: 10 (18.5%)
  - Strongly Agree: 33 (61%)

- I prefer to vote using a paper ballot.
  - Strongly Disagree: 6 (11%)
  - Disagree: 4 (7%)
  - Neutral: 23 (42.5%)
  - Agree: 5 (9%)
  - Strongly Agree: 16 (30%)

- I prefer to vote using a touch-screen voting machine.
  - Strongly Disagree: 12 (22%)
  - Disagree: 3 (5.5%)
  - Neutral: 24 (44%)
  - Agree: 8 (15%)
  - Strongly Agree: 7 (13%)

- Voting before Election Day is important to me.
  - Strongly Disagree: 3 (5.5%)
  - Disagree: 3 (5.5%)
  - Neutral: 7 (13%)
  - Agree: 9 (16.6%)
  - Strongly Agree: 32 (59%)
• Voting in my neighborhood is important to me.
  o Strongly Disagree: 2 (4%)
  o Disagree: 3 (6%)
  o Neutral: 11 (20%)
  o Agree: 15 (27%)
  o Strongly Agree: 23 (43%)
• I prefer to vote closest to my home.
  o Strongly Disagree: 3 (5.5%)
  o Disagree: 3 (5.5%)
  o Neutral: 12 (22%)
  o Agree: 18 (33%)
  o Strongly Agree: 18 (33%)
• I prefer to vote wherever is most convenient to me.
  o Strongly Disagree: 3 (5.5%)
  o Disagree: 1 (2%)
  o Neutral: 12 (22%)
  o Agree: 11 (20%)
  o Strongly Agree: 27 (50%)
• I prefer to vote on Election Day.
  o Strongly Disagree: 6 (11%)
  o Disagree: 9 (16%)
  o Neutral: 23 (43%)
  o Agree: 7 (13%)
  o Strongly Agree: 9 (16%)
What do you think about the future of voting in Marion County?

- The voter experience could be significantly improved through the improved quality of the poll worker.
- I feel it should be more like license branches. You go to where ever is convenient to vote and vote before Election Day to avoid long lines.
- I believe we have a right to vote and we should make sure that this right is not taking away from us by anyone or party.
- We need early voting in several locations throughout the city. Our voting hours should be until 7:30 or 8 PM like they do in other states where I have lived. It is wrong to make us have to go to great length to get to the polling place after work before it closes at 6. Do not say it is too expensive. The more barriers people encounter to vote, the more our civil spirit is permanently degraded. I personally believe that putting barriers up or failing to take barriers down is politically motivated. The long lines at early voting show me people committed to voting with their physical presence. I will not believe any explanation to leave barriers in place as other than excuse and pretense.
- Touch screen voting would be less expensive long term. Electronic Election equipment would be able to more easily access specific precinct information vs. printing each ballot. Electronic poll books should also be considered as a cost saving measure. Marion County also should move to early voting at satellite locations located throughout the County vs. a central location as we do today.
- More early voting options will increase voter turnout
- Access, access, access. NO matter if it is "low" tech or high-tech, we should allow all American citizens the right to voice their choice. The future of voting in Indiana, to me, looks like a place where poll workers engage in a highly secure but friendly system of set up, tear down and assistance to the voter. Voters engage in one of the few shared experiences across generations, socioeconomic statuses, and educational levels. Voters engage in an experience with knowledgeable poll workers (about the voting system, but restrain from engaging in talk about candidates). Voters are allowed to cast their ballot in various ways (paper, electronic, mobile, etc.) with measures taken to ensure that they are born in American. Yet, these measures must ensure that as many people as possible (homeless, various racial groups, 18-100 years of age) are not disenfranchised. I would think, if done with integrity and solidarity for ensuring a large voter turnout, employers should allow for polling locations at a place of work (although, I am well aware of the historical background of many employers telling employees they must vote for a certain candidate if they are going to vote, or take time off to vote, or otherwise) so that may not be possible. Finally, I LOVE early voting. Please keep that going and possibly open more locations to handle the load.
- There should be fewer barriers to voting. Vote centers--or voting by mail, as in several West Coast States--should be considered.
When you have more than one precinct voting in one polling place, you should hang up maps at the door so that people can look and see what precinct to go to. At my polling place now, people have to wait in line to find out whether or not they are in the right line. I know maps are available to the inspectors, but why not just post them up for the voters to see before they start the process.

If there could be vote centers on the North, West, South, and East sides of town, and as well in Center Township, that would be my dream.

I should be able to vote any time up to two weeks before Election Day. I should be able to vote at any one of maybe 50 spots in Marion County.

I want to be able to vote via email or at the grocery store. I don't like going to a precinct. I am concerned about the implications of 621 bill on voting. I don't think 621 was helpful. I also want to see satellite options. I favor an all of above approach on voting options.

I would prefer to vote either close to my home or place of employment, but ample, free parking and short wait times matter to me MUCH more than where the voting occurs.

I really like the current voting system with the paper ballots and scantron machines. It seems that this combines the best features of a verifiable paper ballot and the speed electronic vote counting. I understand that electronic voting machines may be easier for people with disabilities, but I don't trust them.

With so many advances in technology, moving away from paper ballots is a must. Electronic machines would result in a huge cost savings though there would be an initial cost to purchase new equipment. I am against a verified paper trail. This will only create problems with employers/unions asking to see if you voted for their candidate, and this comes from a black democratic voter.

Updated machines are much need.

Voting early in neighborhoods and by mail should be universal and as easy as possible.

While I personally enjoy the experience of going to my neighborhood poll on Election Day, preserving and extending voting rights is critical in our changing culture. Flexibility in voting locations and timing should be a realistic goal for our voting systems, given the technology that surrounds us.

Don't spend a bunch of money on a new system. The current one is working.

The quality of poll workers needs to improve for the future to be more positive.

We must keep the ability of people to vote close to home, within easy walking distance and on bus lines near stops. Early voting is also extremely important.

My wife and I voted at the County City building last year and enjoyed it. The people there working--voting staff and security were pleasant and did their jobs well.
Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

1 – Strongly Disagree | 2 – Disagree | 3 – Neutral | 4 – Agree | 5 - Strongly Agree

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Please tell us in a few sentences what you think about the future of voting in Marion County:
MORE SURVEY QUESTIONS ON THE REVERSE SIDE

The following responses are optional.

1.) Please circle YES or NO:

- I am registered to vote in Marion County, Indiana: YES NO
- I have voted in Marion County, Indiana within the last three years: YES NO
- I have been a Marion County poll worker within the last five years: YES NO

2.) Please indicate your gender: Female Male

3.) Please specify your age?

- 16 and under
- 17-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 74 and over

4.) Please specify your ethnicity or race:

- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or American Indian
- White
- Other