



City of Show Low

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September 6, 2006

The Honorable Ken Bennett
President of the Senate
1700 W. Washington, Senate Wing
Phoenix, AZ 85007

The Honorable James P. Weiers
Speaker of the House of Representatives
1700 W. Washington, House Wing
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Subject: Report on City of Show Low's 2006 Mail Ballot Elections

Dear Sirs:

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-409(B), the City of Show Low is submitting the following report on the results of its mail ballot elections that were held in March and May 2006. The City's first ballot-by-mail elections were held in 2002. The Show Low City Council opted to hold traditional elections in 2004.

1. Changes in voter turnout

The Show Low City Council approved the mail ballot election process for the 2006 elections. Voter turnout improved from an average 14-15% turnout for a traditional election to 34% for the March 14 Primary Election and 25% for the May 16 General Election.

General 2006	25%	(mail ballot election, one name on ballot for one council seat)
Primary 2006	34%	(mail ballot election)
General 2004	32%	(traditional election, first directly elected mayor)
Primary 2004	32%	(traditional election, first directly elected mayor)
General 2002	48%	(first mail ballot election cycle)
Primary 2002	37%	(first mail ballot election cycle)
Primary 2000	14%	
Primary 1998	14%	
General 1996	31%	(traditional election, combined with school bond election)
Primary 1996	15%	

2. Relative cost of the mail ballot elections compared to traditional elections

The City of Show Low contracted with Navajo County's Election Services Department to conduct the 2006 mail ballot elections. Research shows that the 2006 mail ballot elections cost less than the traditional elections in 2004. The cost per voter in 2004 was \$3.23, which included the county's charge of \$1.25 per active registered voter for using the new optical scan voting equipment, county charges for poll lists, and election board expenses. The cost per voter for the 2006 mail ballot elections was \$1.00, a 69% reduction from 2004, which included postage to and from the voter.

To not confuse the issue, I did not include any consultant fees or other mailings. The 2004 Primary Election ballot included the Alternative Expenditure Limitation proposition, and a publicity pamphlet in English and Spanish was prepared and mailed to all registered voters. The 2006 elections included a mailing prior to the Primary advising voters of the mail ballot process. Compared to previous years' elections, the costs continue to decrease. The cost per voter in 2002 (the city's first mail ballot elections) was \$6.60 for the Primary and \$4.88 for the General. In previous traditional elections, the city typically paid approximately \$9.23 per voter.

3. Suggestions for improving or refining the mail ballot program

As a result of mailing errors during the Primary Election (explained in item 4 below), the city's consultant realized that he needed to improve quality control. Consequently, the General Election went very smoothly.

There were no comments received from voters during either election that they were confused by the mail ballot process. Presumably, it was the result of voters having experienced a similar election in 2002.

Also, the city clerk's office used many venues to advise the public that the spring elections were mail ballot elections. These included the city's website, government access cable television channel, newsletters mailed with the monthly utility bills, and public bulletin boards, as well as the local weekly newspaper and radio stations. A postcard was mailed to registered voters prior to the Primary advising them of the mail ballot process. A voter registration outreach and education booth was also set up at a local retailer prior to the Primary.

4. Frequency and severity of mail ballot irregularities

The City contracted with a consultant to prepare, print, and mail the ballots directly to the voters. Due to an inadvertent error by the consultant's mailing company, up to 38 Show Low voters may have received Town of Payson ballots for the Primary Election. Some voters received the correct ballots but the exterior envelope was

labeled "Town of Payson." The media was contacted immediately to advise voters of these errors and voters were invited to receive a replacement ballot at the county recorder's office or the city clerk's office. Only ten voters responded and they voted provisional ballots at city hall.

5. Voter satisfaction with the election process

Other than a few comments received after the incorrect ballots were mailed (such as, "You see what can happen when you have a mail ballot election"), the majority of voters expressed satisfaction with the process, primarily because of its convenience.

6. Number of nondeliverable ballots

The County's Election Services Department mailed 4,208 ballots for the 2006 Primary. Of these, 265 ballots were returned as nondeliverable. The County mailed 4,279 ballots for the 2006 General and 185 ballots were returned as nondeliverable. The value of nondeliverable ballots is that they help clean up voter registration rolls.

In summary, the mail ballot process has increased voter turnout, cleaned up voter registration rolls, and is much more convenient to our voters than a traditional election.

Sincerely,



Ann Kurasaki
City Clerk