

City of Show Low



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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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The Honorable President
Arizona State Senate
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Phoenix, AZ 85007

The Honorable Speaker
Arizona House of Representatives
1700 W. Washington, House Wing
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Subject: City of Show Low's 2008 Mail Ballot Elections

Dear Sirs:

In September 2007, the Show Low City Council unanimously approved the mail ballot election process for all current and future municipal elections unless directed otherwise by the Council. Show Low holds elections every two years because of the staggered terms of its mayor and six Council members. Subsequently, the City of Show Low held mail ballot elections in March and May 2008. Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-409(B), the City of Show Low is submitting the following report on the results of its 2008 mail ballot elections.

1. Changes in voter turnout

In addition to 2008, the Show Low City Council approved the mail ballot election process for the 2002 and 2006 elections. The Council opted for the traditional election process in 2004. Historical data show that voter turnout averaged 14-16% prior to the Council approving the first ballot-by-mail election in 2002. In 2008, voter turnout calculated to 44% for the March 11 Primary Election and 33% for the May 20 General Election.

General 2008	33%	(mail ballot election)
Primary 2008	44%	(mail ballot 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%	(second mail ballot election, included recall election)
Primary 2002	37%	(<u>first</u> mail ballot election, included ballot question of direct election of mayor)
Primary 2000	14%	
Primary 1998	14%	
General 1996	31%	(regular election, combined with school bond election)
Primary 1996	15%	
Primary 1994	2%	(three incumbents ran unopposed)
Primary 1992	17%	

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

The City of Show Low contracted with Navajo County's Election Services Department to conduct the 2008 mail ballot elections. The 2008 Primary Election ballot included two propositions, one to approve the Alternative Expenditure Limitation and one to approve the General Plan. A publicity pamphlet in English and Spanish was prepared and mailed to all registered voters. The consultant's fee for preparing the ballots, publicity pamphlet, and other election materials (such as an election notification postcard) is not included in the calculations below.

The cost of 2008's two mail ballot elections, based on votes cast, is lower than a traditional election of years past when the City historically paid approximately \$9.23 per voter. Based on votes cast, the cost per voter was \$3.61 in the 2008 Primary Election and \$4.73 in the 2008 General Election. These charges include the County's charges for conducting the mail ballot elections and precinct registers.

However, if compared to 2004's traditional-style elections, the cost per voter is slightly higher. The cost per voter in 2004 was \$3.23, which included the County's fees of \$1.25 per active registered voter for using the optical scan voting equipment and for precinct registers, plus election board expenses. The County's fees per active registered voter have increased substantially since 2004, accounting for the variance.

3. Suggestions for improving or refining the mail ballot program

Because the City has held ballot-by-mail elections in prior years, most voters are familiar with the process. In addition, a media campaign was launched to notify voters to expect ballots in the mail. The campaign included press releases sent to local print media, articles in the City's monthly newsletter distributed with utility invoices, information posted on the City's website and public bulletin boards, and a televised interview with the mayor about the elections process that was aired on the City's government access channel. Also, all registered voters received informational

postcards prior to the elections. Consequently, both elections ran smoothly and there are no suggestions for improvement.

4. Frequency and severity of mail ballot irregularities

There were no mail ballot irregularities reported or noted with either election.

5. Voter satisfaction with the election process

Voter feedback was very positive and voters seemed satisfied with the process. The majority of positive comments referred to the convenience of voting by mail.

6. Number of nondeliverable ballots

The County's Election Services Department mailed 4,524 ballots for the March 11, 2008 Primary. The County does not keep a tally of returned ballots, but they estimate that no more than 25 to 30 ballots were returned as undeliverable. The County mailed 4,647 ballots for the May 20, 2008 General. Again, the County estimates that perhaps 25 to 30 ballots were returned. The County credits cleaning up its voter registration rolls for the low percentage of nondeliverable ballots.

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

Sincerely,


Ann Kurasaki, CMC
City Clerk