

ELECTION REFLECTION

Johnson County Election Office

Winter 2009 - 2010

Issue No. 10



Serving the public by administering the election process and promoting voter participation.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

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Commissioner

Brian D. Newby

Deputy Commissioner

Debbie Tyrrel

Assistant Commissioners

Jeanie Nichols

Tom Ray

Election Office Staff

Jackie Boos
Alison Collins
Tom Freeman
Sarah Horn
Karen Jackson
Jennifer Landoll
Sheryl Roederer
Melanie Shelton
Gina Shortino
Kathy Spann

2010 Election Calendar

Election Dates

March 2, 2010 -
Spring Primary Election
(if needed)

April 6, 2010 -
Spring General Election
(Leawood, Mission, Prairie Village,
Shawnee, Westwood)

August 3, 2010 -
Fall Primary Election
(full county)

November 2, 2010 -
Fall General Election
(full county)

As we wind down the first decade of this century, it's hard to believe that more than a year has passed since 2008's historic presidential election.

Soon, we will be reuniting with you to prepare for large elections in August and November, marking the halfway point to the birth of another presidential election cycle in 2012.

"Birth" is an appropriate word because I believe tending over major elections is similar to welcoming a new baby into the world as parents.

After the late nights, parental concerns about being able to afford expenses, and the general apprehension that comes with caring for a baby, the child grows from newborn to toddler. Over that time, the parents' memories of their own red-eyed exhaustion over the previous year fades, often leaving only the good memories of that first year of their child's life.

Likewise, a year after the big election and our latest baby, our staff is re-energized and looking fondly ahead while holding onto warm memories of your terrific work in 2008.

It has taken this period to gain the perspective of what was accomplished, which was staggering.

Our JoCo-PoLo outreach effort helped encourage people to vote early; in fact, half of the votes were cast in advance before Election Day.

With polling locations changing, we were concerned that people would show up at the wrong polling place. We put tools in place to spread the word. Our supervising judges especially were committed on Election Day to helping voters reach their correct polling place.

Not only does showing up at the wrong polling place frustrate voters, but those provisional ballots have to be hand-processed and hand-counted during a crunch-mode week when our staff already is reviewing thousands of other provisional ballots.

But here's the staggering result, the "Holy Cow, My-Oh-My," part: we had record turnout in 2008, but dramatically fewer provisional ballots from "lost" voters than we had in 2004.

In 2004, we had more than 4,200 provisional ballots just from lost voters. In 2008...drum roll, please...we had 668!

That's a record turnout with lost-voter provisionals dropping more than 80 percent.

That's the output of great planning and great voter service. More visibly, that's a reflection of the country's best election workers.

Thanks to your efforts, the Election Office received a nationwide Best Practices Award from the National Association of Election Officials. We are the only office to receive a Best Practices Award from this organization twice in the past four years.

You would have been proud to hear the collective gasp in the ballroom when the provisional ballot numbers were announced during the award session.

Of course, success is best when it's repeatable and lasting. As a New Year's Resolution (or a New Decade Resolution), we will be committed to sustaining that excellent performance into 2010 and 2012. We will need your help.

So, with fond memories from the 2008 election, we now are preparing for another baby.

I can promise you we will again share exhaustion, but I couldn't be more thrilled with whom I will be sharing that time—undisputedly, the most effective election workers in the country.

Thank you for your devotion to our voters, your outstanding service, and the measurable results you produce.

With all my gratitude,



Election Commissioner
Brian D. Newby

★ Three Ways to Vote in Johnson County

Option 1 -

Advance Vote in Person

Option 2 -

Advance Vote by Mail

Option 3 -

Vote on Election Day at your Polling Place

Election Day Polling Places can change with every election.

Supervising Judge Buddy Mentor Program 2010

We are always appreciative of the individuals who take on the added responsibilities of Supervising Judge.

As we approach the elections of 2010, we will experience a decrease in existing Supervising Judges, a normal process that occurs after every presidential election. As we anticipate the retirement of approximately 50 long-term Supervising Judges, we plan to reinstate our "Supervising Judge Buddy" training program. We will assign a Supervising Judge Trainee to an experienced Supervising Judge in the April 2010 election. The Supervising Judge Trainees will then be assigned to supervise their own voting locations in the Fall Elections, as the need arises.

The successful future of the election process depends on quality individuals overseeing the operations at all Johnson County voting locations. We are blessed with many capable election workers who qualify to supervise a voting location; please seriously consider your ability and desire to step up and serve in this capacity.

If you wish to participate in this previously well-received training program, simply indicate your desire by circling **YES** on the 'Election Worker Availability Questionnaire' and become a member of the Supervising Judge category of dedicated election workers for Johnson County, Kansas.

From each of us, we send you a gracious and warm ... Thank you ...

★ You are appreciated. ★

Election Workers

Accurate and Effective Election Worker Training

Kansas Statute 25-2806 states:

The county election officer shall provide instruction for election board judges and clerks before each election.

Election Worker Training is required and more uniform across Kansas than ever before.

Election Workers today have more duties and more complexity in those duties. Many of these changes were brought about by the Help America Vote Act passed by Congress.

Supervising Judges are also required to attend a mandatory meeting on the weekend before every election.

★ Student Election Workers Democracy Posse

The Johnson County Election Office is very proud to have been involved in this program since 2000. To date, we have enlisted a total of 1,322 students participating throughout the county, the number varying with the size of every election. That is 21 of the county's high schools represented, plus home-schooled students taking part.

They get to experience the electoral process and help us fill positions at polling places.

Most Recent Staff Person

Gina Shortino joined our staff in August of 2008. Gina had been an excellent Supervising Judge for us. She stepped into working full time with all of her patriotism (she carries a copy of the Constitution with her) and pride showing.

She began working at the Election Office during one of the busiest election cycles of all time. She had many eye-opening behind the scenes experiences.

Gina has taken over supervising the mail room and the temporary employee services at the Election Office.



Training Dates – 2010

Spring 2010 Elections:

Election of City Officials: Leawood, Mission, Prairie Village, Shawnee, Westwood

Primary Election - March 2 (if needed)

Refresher Training:

- Election Office
- February 20: 9 a.m. - Noon
Mandatory Supervising Judge Meeting:
- Election Office
- February 27: 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

General Election - April 6

Refresher Training:

- Overland Park Church of Christ
 - March 20: 9 a.m. - Noon (only session)
- New Election Worker Training:
- Election Office
 - Times to be announced
- Mandatory Supervising Judge Meeting:
- Sunset Building
 - April 3: 9 - 11 a.m. (only session)

Fall 2010 Elections:

Election of National, State and County Officials: Countywide

Primary Election - August 3

Refresher Training:

- Overland Park Church of Christ
 - July 17: 9 a.m. - Noon
 - July 24: 9 a.m. - Noon
- New Election Worker Training:
- Election Office
 - Times to be announced
- Mandatory Supervising Judge Meeting:
- Sunset Building
 - July 31: 9 - 11 a.m. or 1 - 3 p.m.
 - August 1: 9 - 11 a.m. or 1 - 3 p.m.

General Election - November 2

Refresher Training:

- Overland Park Church of Christ
 - Oct 16: 9 a.m. - Noon
 - Oct 23: 9 a.m. - Noon
- New Election Worker Training:
- Election Office
 - Times to be announced
- Mandatory Supervising Judge Meeting:
- Sunset Building
 - Oct 30: 9 - 11 a.m. or 1 - 3 p.m.
 - Oct 31: 9 - 11 a.m. or 1 - 3 p.m.

All assigned Election Workers will be notified by mail or phone call.

Community Service Time

High school students in need of work for Community Service Time, please feel free to call at any time to see what might be available, 715-6836.

Make a difference...Volunteer
Johnson County Volunteer Center
 www.vcjc.org 913-341-1792

**Karen Browning - Retires
40 years of Service
Assistant Election
Commissioner**



After more than 40 years of service to Johnson County, the State of Kansas, and the election profession, Assistant Election Commissioner Karen Browning announced her retirement. Her last day in the office was Friday, May 22, 2009.

Karen started her career at the Election Office in 1968, the year Richard Nixon was elected president, and the same year Johnson County used mechanical voting machines for the first time. On Election Night a team of auditors took the results from each lever machine and tallied them by hand.

Election growth in Johnson County during Karen's tenure:

November 5, 1968 – Presidential –
Registered Voters: 100,610 – Voted: 88,314
November 4, 2008 – Presidential –
Registered Voters: 364,441 – Voted: 285,001

When Karen came to the election office, all voter registration cards and reports were typed by hand. She was instrumental in the evolution of the voter registration process, which she oversaw for many years. From a manual system the office progressed first to a mainframe application, then to a networked PC-based stand-alone system, and today to a state-wide voter registration system.

Karen became the office historian, with records of every election since she arrived. If anyone had a question, Karen was the person to ask. She has overseen Census and mapping operations, and knows Johnson County geography like the back of her hand, since any "visible ground feature" might someday be needed as a precinct boundary.

Over the years Karen has been involved in many church and community activities. She is a graduate of Leadership Olathe – Class of 1997.

In 2004 Karen was awarded the CERA credential by the National Association of Election Officials, recognizing her as a Certified Election / Registration Administrator upon completion of the nation's foremost professional education program specializing in voter registration and elections administration. Before retiring Karen was the only active election administrator in Kansas to hold the CERA designation.

Karen has worked in more than 200 elections, serving under six of Johnson County's eight election commissioners.

Within her own family, Karen has passed the election torch, recruiting her grandchildren as Election Night drivers who transport polling place results from collection sites to the Election Office and one as a Student Election Worker.

A native of Kansas, Karen has lived in Johnson County since 1965. She enjoys her family, including three sons; three grandchildren, Danielle, Dallas, and Carissa; and especially her two great-grandchildren, Cheyenne and Austin. An Olathe resident for many years, Karen and her son now live in Gardner.

A reception to honor Karen was held on Wednesday, June 17, 2009 at the Election Office. Kansas Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh, Johnson County Board of County Commissioners Chair Annabeth Surbaugh, Election Commissioner Brian Newby, and Diane Costello of Leadership Olathe all spoke with appreciation to Karen. Representatives were present from Congressman Moore's and Senator Brownback's offices.

**Debbie Tyrrel
New - Deputy
Election Commissioner**



A K-State graduate, Debbie is a former high school French teacher and studied at the University of Paris-Sorbonne. Debbie became a full time staff member here in January, 1996 after a stint as an in-office temporary. Her co-workers think of her as intelligent, quick-witted and a go-to person. Debbie and Karen Browning have been the unique team who proofed and verified anything that leaves this office.

She can recall the progress of the election machines and history of the voting systems during her years with the Election Office. This has proven very helpful more than once, as we try to improve our services to the voting public. She took over the job of supervising the voting machines and her special "field techs" in March, 1999. Debbie's guys, the Field Techs on Election Day, are the team that she directs in the diagnostics and implementing of the voting machines. They are our eyes and ears out in the field as they travel polling place to polling place on any Election Day.

Over her career with various roles, she has been responsible for every part of the election process. Her desk and files are the envy of her fellow workers and her writing skills are impeccable. She writes and updates the training manual for the election workers before each election and the on-line training script.

Her organizational skills have been used to include manually setting the delivery routes in the most effective route (considering the distance and all the requests of the delivery sites) for each election which is quite impressive. Multi-tasking was designed by our Debbie. She can organize this whole countywide process and do a myriad of other jobs at the same time.

The twinkle in her eye is always there and, coupled with her other talents, makes her an excellent choice for her new position. Commissioner Newby said, "Debbie is one of the most competent election officials in the country. She measures against the top people in the industry, nationwide, very well. We are lucky to have her here in Johnson County."

**Jeanie Nichols and Tom Ray
New Assistant Election Commissioners**



We have two new Assistant Election Commissioners who will be supervising their area specialties.

Jeanie Nichols oversees Voter Registration, Federal Service Voters, Mail Ballot Elections and Candidate filings. She has been



with the Election Office full time since 1986 after being a temporary employee in 1985.

Tom Ray is director of Voting Locations and Staffing. This includes finding locations for Advance Voting and Polling Places plus staffing the Polling Places on Election Day. Tom has been with the county since 1998 and with the Election Office since 2002.

Both are committed to their jobs and are enthusiastic team members. Neither of them will back down from a new project; both are ready to make the process work better for the voter.

**"There is no greater commitment than when people give of themselves.
Volunteer activity is the ultimate demonstration of caring." John W. Amerman**

Did you know...???

1) Over 2,300 "Availability Forms" for 2009 were sent out with the November 2008 Newsletter. **869** workers did not return their paperwork. These Election Workers chose to ignore the request for updated information for 2009. Please be mindful of our request to return the 2010 form (included in this mailing) by December 31, 2009. This information is VITAL to the success of our operation. Even if you are not planning to work any of the election dates in 2010 OR if you wish to be removed from the roster of election workers, please return the questionnaire to inform us of your intentions. A postage-paid return envelope is always included in our mailings for this purpose; **never** a cost to you.

2) Managing the proper staffing level at all voting locations is our top priority. We attempt to assign you to work at your location of choice **if it is available**, or at your home precinct voting location. Since this is not always possible, we ask that you be flexible in accepting an alternate assignment. Occasionally, we are required to make changes to assignments that have already been confirmed due to cancellations at other locations. We light-heartedly refer to this process as the "Election Worker Shuffle." Should you receive a call from our office asking you to participate in the "Shuffle," we are hopeful you will be accommodating of our request and accept our sincere gratitude for your cooperation and understanding.

3) An "Assignment Letter" is mailed to all ASSIGNED election workers several weeks prior to an election. Those individuals also receive information on Training Sessions in regard to dates, times and locations. It is NOT necessary for individuals to attend a Training Session if they have NOT been assigned to work at a voting location on Election Day.

4) We realize attending a training class is not your favorite pastime; however, it's the law! Kansas Statute 25-2806 states:

The county election officer shall provide instruction for election board judges and clerks before each election.

We always ask that you block off 3 hours to attend one of the training classes, even though we sometimes complete the course in less time. Please always plan to remain for the **entire** session. Many times individuals
.....Continued.....

walk out on us early, perhaps missing very important last minute information that could "make you" or "break you" on Election Day. You don't want to be the one dropping the ball at your assigned voting location...stay for the entire session; respect your fellow coworkers and the Election Office Staff...and Be Prepared on Election Day!

5) Always remember to make everyone feel welcome by greeting your voters with a genuine smile on your face, especially the first-time voter. Be helpful by answering questions politely. Remember to keep your personal political opinions to yourself and should you find yourself in a situation of uncertainty or discomfort, request the assistance of your Supervising Judge who, in turn, will determine the necessity to contact the Election Office... You are **never** alone.

6) Please feel free to give our phone number to an upset voter. We are here to help you and the voter have a good Election Day and voting experience.



Group Need Funds? Adopt a Polling Place

Are you a member of an organization that is looking for a great way to raise funds?

Our Adopt-A-Polling Place Program or **Share a Day's Pay** is an excellent solution! Members of the organization sign up to work the polls on Election Day. They then donate their earnings directly to their favorite charity or fund-raising campaign.

This is a win-win situation as it brings us new Election Workers and makes good money for "the cause." This program can benefit any organization or group that wishes to strengthen its financial status for future events or wishes to raise funds to pay off existing debts:

Bridge Clubs, Scouts, School Groups, Church Groups, Sodalities, Fraternities/Sororities, Sports Clubs, Music Groups/Choirs, PTA's, and many more.

We will be happy to send you all the information you need to answer your questions and get your group started. Call today!! Our office phone number is 913-782-3441.

Reminders...

- Inform Election Office of changes in availability
- Inform Election Office of address or phone number changes
- Training is required of everyone before every election
- Be prompt and on time to your Polling Place
- Be available for the entire Election Day
- Work together to set up and tear down the Polling Place
- Ensure outside signage is posted properly
- Assist the Supervising Judge as directed
- Happily greet and assist voters
- Be non-partisan; do not share your opinion
- Park away from the entrance to allow voters easy access
- Election Workers do not use the Disabled Parking
- No political bumper stickers on your car at the Polling Place
 - or park 250 feet away
- Bring food, drink and medications
- Business casual attire is appropriate, with comfortable shoes
- Smoking is NOT allowed at any Polling Place
 - no smoke breaks
- Cell phone usage:
 - calls to Election Office
 - calls from Election Office
 - 9 1 1 - Emergency

Do you want to refer someone who would be an excellent Election Worker?
Give us a call - 913-782-3441

Please Note: the back of the Availability Form has
Part-Time Staffing Opportunities

**Please Return
Your 2010
Election Worker
Availability Form
By December 31, 2009**

Johnson County Election Office

Serving the public by administering the election process and promoting voter participation.

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