

Report Title: “Your Vote Does Count: Mendocino County Elections”

Report Date: May 15, 2008

Response By: Susan M. Ranochak

Date Due: August 15, 2008*

Findings

I agree with the Findings numbered: 1 through 11, 13 through 19, 21 through 35, 37 through 41, 43 through 46 and 49

I disagree partially with the Findings numbered: 12, 20, 36 42, 47 and 48.

Recommendations

Recommendation regarding space issue for use by the Registrar’s Office during Elections seasons requires meetings with Tom Mitchell, Mendocino County’s Chief Executive Officer or his staff.

Date: August 15, 2008

Signed: Susan M. Ranochak, Assessor/County Clerk-Recorder

(Signed document on file)

Response Page

Finding 12. The last sentence in finding should read: *For example, a candidate for County Supervisor must reside in his or her district for 30 days prior to filing the application for candidacy.* Not precinct.

Finding 20. The finding should read. To vote by mail, the county elections office must receive your application for a vote by mail ballot through the mail at least seven days before the election. You can use the form on the Sample Ballot booklet you receive in the mail or send your request in writing to your county elections office. You may apply in person at the county elections office to receive your vote by mail ballot up to and including election day. However the ballot will only be counted as long as the ballot is returned to a polling place or the county elections office prior to the close of the polls. Which in California is 8:00 pm. If you reside in a designated Vote-By-Mail precinct you automatically receive your ballot by mail.

Findings 36: I understand the point the Grand Jury is making in Finding 36. I disagree that the process areas for the vote by mail ballots is cramped. We conduct this process in the front of the Assessors’ division. We have three ten foot tables for processing. We have three teams of two opening the VBM envelopes and preparing the ballots to be

examined for remakes, each team having their own table to work at. The remaking of the damaged ballots takes place outside my office and next to the Assistant Registrar of Voters work area. We have two ten foot tables available for two teams of two to conduct this process. Keeping these functions of the election process in these areas allows easy access to both the Assistant Registrar of Voters and myself in case questions arise. The issue about secure storage is something I will address with the Chief Executive Office.

Findings 42. The finding should read. After the polls close on Election Day, the Registrar's Office sends out teams to pick up ballots and voting machines from the outlying areas of the county. These include all coastal polling places, Laytonville, Willits and Boonville. The Ukiah, Potter Valley and Redwood Valley ballots and voting machines are delivered by two poll workers, from these polling places, to the county elections office after the polls close on Election Day. Upon arrival at the Registrar's Office the ballots and electronic machines are checked in and the polling place ballots are grouped by precinct and scanned. The scanning process creates a paper tape record and electronic record. Any unscannable ballots are set aside for review and process by two elections officials. The entire counting process takes place in a secure room with large plate glass windows through which members of the press and the general public may observe. The counting room is crowded with machines, election workers and stacks of ballot boxes.

The last statement refers to the crowding of our tabulation room on election night. There is a whorl of activity that begins once the polls close on election day. In our attempts to count the polling place ballots, make our results available to the public and do our required reporting to the state we do accumulate approximately 35 boxes that are 12 ½ by 9 1/2 inches before we have completed our election night tabulating. There are usually only three people processing ballots in our secure tabulation room at one time, myself, the Assistant Registrar of Voters and the Assistant County Clerk-Recorder. Only three machines are in use at any one time. It may look like it's crowded but it's only for a short time that evening. In the interest of security, I feel that it is imperative that we have a locked room within our main office that has viewing access for the public and the press that does not require access to the non-public areas of my department without supervision. I believe this is achieved with our current secure tabulation room.

Finding 47. I understand the point the Grand Jury is trying to make. The space that we use for storage of past elections is in our alarmed warehouse. We also store our voting machines in this warehouse. I agree we need more warehouse space. Does this situation impede our normal everyday work; no. The office space that is available within the Assessor County Clerk-Recorders office for the elections division both on a daily basis and during election time is sufficient.

Finding 48. The finding should read. When registering to vote or when filing to be a candidate for office, the party declares under penalty of perjury that the information on the application is true. The Registrar's office will turn suspected cases of fraud to the District Attorney's office. The Registrar is not the enforcing authority.

Recommendation

The recommendation by the Grand Jury requires further analysis. In an effort to acquire more space for the Elections Division of the Assessor County Clerk-Recorders office I will meet with the Chief Executive Officer and or his staff to implement the recommendation of more space for the Elections Division at election time. However I feel that the process that we have set up for the public to view the vote by mail ballot process, tabulation process, canvass process is adequate and provides the security we need to maintain control over election observers. I do agree that we need more secure storage and will provide my suggestions to the CEO's office for implementation.