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Pima County Recorder

Recording history one document at a time.

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MEMORANDUM

To: Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: F. Ann Rodriguez
          Pima County Recorder

Date: November 18, 2020

Re: Early Voting Activity for the 2020 General Election

Cc: C. H Huckelberry

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When my office started planning for the November 3, 2020 General Election we anticipated that we would have the busiest early voting cycle in the history of Pima County. Our expectations were exceeded. When COVID-19 impacted the world, we had to prepare for additional safety matters to keep both the employees and the public safe. This was not an easy task to accomplish and challenging for all of us. Here is my report of the activities of my department in the election.

The number of registered voters in Pima County jumped from 544,270 eligible voters for the 2016 General Election to 638,355 eligible voters for the 2020 General Election. There are currently 489,623 voters enrolled on the Permanent Early Voting list in Pima County (76.7% of all registered voters).

My office mailed ballots to 525,443 Pima County voters and issued 19,367 replacement ballots for various reasons. The voters of Pima County voted and returned 459,791 of those ballots, a return rate of 87.5%, the highest return rate we have ever seen. The Elections Department counted 459,777 of those ballots or 99.9%. A total of 526,319 Pima County voters cast ballots in this election. The early voting component of that was 87.36%, the highest percentage in any general election in Pima County since 2008. Overall turnout was 82.4%.

During the 2018 General Election cycle we operated 12 walk-in early voting sites. Two of those sites (Sells and Ajo) were limited use sites. During that election 7,781 voters cast ballots at the sites and 9,200 additional voters dropped off their mailed ballot at the early voting site locations. The most ballots we had ever issued at our walk-in early voting sites occurred

during the 2008 General Election and that total was 18,388. We have only issued more than 10,000 ballots at walk-in early sites during three elections in my career.

During the 2020 General Election, we operated 14 walk-in early voting sites. A total of 29,565 voters were issued ballots at the walk-in early voting sites during this election.

As you are aware, there was extensive national publicity concerning cutbacks at the postal service and delays in the delivery of mail. My staff worked extensively with postal officials here in Tucson. During the election cycle, we did not experience any postal delays that we could identify. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to reduce the number of voters entering the walk-in early voting facilities by offering curbside ballot drop off instead of requiring voters to come into the sites to drop off their mailed ballots. We believe that both of those issues significantly impacted voter activity in this election.

A total of 129,194 mailed ballots were dropped off in person at the walk-in early voting sites.

Here is the breakdown of early ballots issued at each early voting site and the total number of ballots dropped off at the curbside early voting sites:

Site	Issued	Dropped off
Ballot Processing Center site	2,240	6,793
Recorder's Main Office site	3,805	24,406
Recorder's Eastside office site	7,387	40,721
Kirk/Bear Canyon Library	1,393	5,550
Good Shepherd UC Church	1,781	5,946
Miller/Golf Links Library	1,440	3,419
Mission Library	1,743	5,323
Oro Valley Library	2,478	14,121
N.R. Parks and Rec	1,973	7,232
Salazar-Ajo Library	80	37
TOKA Community Building (Sells)	243	81
University of Arizona Student Union	671	698
Wheeler Taft Abbett Library	1,795	4,006
Woods Library	2,536	10,491

The jump in activity at the early voting sites was dramatic. For example:

Mission Library site:

2018	242 walk-in voters and 227 dropped off ballots
2020	1,743 walk in voters and 5,323 dropped off ballots

Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Office site:

2018	333 walk-in voters and 343 dropped off ballots
2020	1,973 walk-in voters and 7,232 dropped off ballots

Recorder's Eastside Office location:

2018	2,133 walk-in voters and 2,701 dropped off ballots
2020	7,387 walk-in voters and 40,721 dropped off ballots

During the 2018 General Election, we sent ballots to 2,304 military and overseas voters and 1,761 of those ballots were voted and returned. During the 2020 General Election, 5,039 military and overseas Pima County voters were sent ballots and 4,355 of those voters voted and returned them.

My office received 18,687 provisional and conditional provisional ballots from the Elections Department. A total of 16,194 of those ballots were verified and sent to be counted for a validity rate of 86.7%, the highest validity rate in any general election in Pima County.   We were able to complete processing those provisional ballots by 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, November 12, more than a full day prior to the statutory deadline.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a number of significant issues for my office in conducting early voting. Many temporary workers that normally work elections were not willing to work this cycle. I had dozens of unfilled positions during the August Primary Election. With the cooperation and use of multiple media sources, we were able hire 162 replacement workers to fill those spots by a public outreach program we called "Ballot Patrol."   We asked the community to help us in our early ballot processing, early voting locations and the curbside drop off locations sites. Plus they answered the need for poll workers. The community responded and I am personally thankful to all those citizens that came forward to help us conduct this election.

In addition, the County Administrator permitted us to reach out to several departments that were willing to "loan" county employees to my office to work the election. A total of 41 county employees were temporarily assigned from the following departments: Fleet Services, Kino Sports, Public Defender's Office, Medical Examiner's Office, Library, Flood Control, Wastewater Reclamation, Assessor, Human Resources, Procurement, Facilities Management, Finance, Behavioral Health, Office of Emergency Management, Clerk of the Board and Pima County Sheriff's Office. We could not have completed all of the work necessary if we did not have these additional county employees step up to help us conduct this election.

The space at the Ballot Processing Center had to be reconfigured in order to follow CDC social distancing guidelines. That reconfiguration led to less floor space being available for the tasks. For this election, we operated 2 shifts for the early ballot processing tasks starting at 6:30 a.m. and ending at 8:30 p.m. Social distancing guidelines also required that we use staggered start and ending times in order to avoid having too many workers arriving and departing at the same time.

The Libraries stepped up significantly in these elections. Seven of our walk-in sites were located in library meeting rooms. Twelve of the workers who were loaned to my department were library employees. At each library location, all manager librarians and their staff welcomed our employees. They accommodated the voting public as it is evident by the volume of how many voters went to the libraries for early voting or to use the curbside drop off of their early ballot.

A number of voters found themselves unable to go to their polls in the days just prior to Election Day. My office provides special election boards or what we call "Team Voting" services in that situation. We send two workers from the opposite political parties to the facility with the voter's ballot to assist them as needed in casting their ballots. Many of those team members were additional employees loaned to us from other departments. We provided this service to 92 voters in multiple different locations including 5 Pima County hospitals. We had as many as 5 teams working at the same time. Due to isolation restrictions, more than 15 of those voters were only able to cast their ballot while communicating with the team through Facetime while the team was outside the facility.

During all of our operations we had observers from the political parties present. Observers were present outside every walk-in early voting site and at the Ballot Processing Center. Not one observer reported any acts of misconduct or questionable activities by any voter or any member of my staff. The public who were either dropping off their ballots or came into vote early followed all the guidelines that we set forth, social distancing, wear face masks etc. etc. They were patient, courteous, gracious and thanked many of the staff for being there to provide these services to the public. I know this for a fact as I personally worked at some of these early voting locations and visited almost all of the other locations.

This was my final election to conduct as Pima County Recorder. It was the busiest election ever. Despite the challenges and the heavy workload, we were able to put together a team of workers from my staff, temporary workers (citizens) and with the help of the other departments to actually make this one of the busiest yet smoothest elections we have ever conducted. I am very proud of all the individuals that joined together as a team to conduct this election. I am grateful for their assistance in getting our election tasks completed, completed accurately and with full transparency and prior to all of our deadlines.