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Briefing

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Election 2008 in Review

Inside

A "meltdown scenario;"[1] "historic" turnout;[2] a system that "has never been taxed or burdened or used to [this] extent."[3]

The predictions of what might happen when polls opened November 4 often relied on superlatives. The results might take days, some guessed, either because of delays in processing mail-in ballots, the need to count absentee and provisional ballots or the possibility of recounts in one or more states that could tip the balance in either direction for the White House and for other offices. Voters could endure endless lines. Provisional ballots could trigger post-election lawsuits as millions might have registration problems or lack proper ID.

Yet when clocks on the East Coast struck 11 p.m. – the moment polls closed in a number of West Coast states, including California, Oregon and Washington, we had a new president-elect by a wide Electoral College margin. We also discovered that our myriad election systems functioned well enough to restore some of the confidence that had been shaken in previous years.

The people spoke, and it appears the voting machines, tabulators and results accurately reflected their choices for president.

Electionline's preview of the 2008 general election, released exactly two weeks before polls opened on November 4, was entitled "What If They Held An Election and Everyone Came?" Now, just over a month after, we have our first look at the results.

In this, the 23rd *electionline.org* briefing, the successes and challenges of the Nov. 4, 2008 election are examined. With predictions of huge turnout and chaos at the polls, why did the system in many parts of the country seem to manage so well? In cases where things did not go as well, why were voters left off the rolls? What challenges remain in election administration, nearly eight years after the 2000 vote that inspired wholesale change in the way

Americans cast ballots? And does the substantial margin of victory for president mask problems that would be under the microscope if that margin was slimmer like in 2000?

Turnout predictions, based on early voting numbers as well as voter registrations, fell short of the record-breaking numbers.

Many accounts from Election Day indicate turnout was extremely high in the morning as polls opened and steady, if not light, through the rest of the day. When poll closing times approached, observers found it difficult to find almost any voters.

Experts have credited convenience voting – both in-person early voting and no-excuse absentee voting – for a relatively smooth Election Day.

Others have noted that turnout was actually depressed among Republicans, some of whom upon hearing tracking polls and early voting turnout figures, might have decided not to bother fighting the crowds and casting a ballot.

"The intensity was one sided," said Curtis Gans, director of the Center for the Study of the American Electorate. "It was on the Democrats' side."[4]

Still, about 130 million Americans cast ballots leading up to and on November 4, the most in the history of the United States. Approximately 61 percent of the voting eligible population cast ballots, a modest increase over the 60 percent who cast ballots in 2004. It was the highest turnout since 1968.

More than 38 million ballots were cast before Election Day, either in person at early voting centers or through in-person or by-mail absentee voting.[5]

The numerous machines that make up the backbone of America's election system, while still evolving, mostly handled the challenge of a high turnout election.

Machines, by most accounts, performed adequately. Optical-scan systems, introduced for the first time in a presidential election in South Florida, operated largely without a hitch. Electronic voting machines, vilified in some quarters as insecure, not auditable and unverifiable, were used throughout Georgia, Maryland, most of Texas and Pennsylvania and many other states. While some prepared for the worst (Pennsylvania had emergency ballots on hand anticipating the possibility of machine breakdowns) contingency plans were rarely employed.

Photo: Dan Seligson, electionline.org

A Mt. Lebanon, Pa. voter shows her "receipt" after being the first to cast a ballot at her polling place on Election Day.

There were problems in some areas. A few polling places in Allegheny County, Pa. had to use paper ballots when more than half of the electronic voting machines did not work. Ballot-on-demand printers, used at some Florida early voting locations, could not keep up with the work load, causing long lines at a few locations. The residual vote rate – the number of ballots for which a vote for president could not be counted – increased in six out of 10 states that released turnout figures along with unofficial vote counts. Residual votes more than doubled in Michigan (from .7 percent in 2004 to 1.8 percent in 2008), increased in South Dakota (from 1.7 percent in 2004 to 2.5 percent in 2008) and rose by lesser amounts in Minnesota, North Dakota, Florida and New Hampshire.[6]

As the residual vote indicates, just like any human endeavor, Election Day is never perfect, and November 4 was no exception.

A national hotline established to collect, log and map voter complaints and concerns on Election Day received more than 200,000 calls, many of which focused on registration problems and machine concerns.

Campaigns were also on hand in battleground states, with armies of lawyers, canvassers, phone bank volunteers and polling-place locators.

The U.S. Department of Justice watched the polls as well, not only in states covered by the Voting Rights Act but Northeastern cities (Boston, New York City and Philadelphia) as well as parts of Ohio and Washington.

Executive Summary

Approximately 130 million Americans cast ballots on November 4, the most to do so in the history of the country. While that figure did not represent a record – at least as a percentage of the voting eligible population – it did mark a 40-year high.

Despite the strain on early voting sites before Election Day and at polling places around the country on it, the system functioned fairly well. Predictions of chaos and meltdowns never materialized. The day was not perfect, however. Electronic voting machines in some parts of the country started to "show their age," said one observer, with reliability problems reported in a few states. Registration problems were reported nationwide, though perhaps in smaller numbers than some expected.

Requirements mandating that voters present government-issued photo IDs in Georgia and Indiana did not appear to diminish turnout in either state, at least relative to 2004. Turnout increased by nearly 5 percent in both in 2008 compared to the 2004 general election, when voter ID laws were less stringent.

The third voting system in as many presidential elections did not seem to faze voters in parts of Florida, who cast optical-scan ballots this year after using direct-recording electronic (DRE) systems in 2004 and punch cards in 2000.

Generally, this first-blush look at the performance of the American election system in 2008 finds that the evolving and myriad election systems around the country performed well enough to at least begin to restore voter confidence. Much more research is needed – and indeed is already being undertaken – to offer a more detailed and data-driven analysis of the historic 2008 vote.

Election-Day Turnout/Early Voting
Record numbers of voters cast ballots, but turnout nonetheless fell short of pre-election projections.
- Large crowds of early voters did not carry momentum into Election Day, particularly among a depressed Republican electorate. According to experts, turnout fell among GOP-registered voters versus four years ago.
- Localities around the country made preparations to deal with large crowds, including hiring more poll workers, leasing additional voting machines and extended early voting hours. They appeared to have succeeded in easing the strain on Election Day, when most observers say long lines dissipated shortly after the morning rush.
- An estimated 38 million voters cast ballots early, either by mail or in person at voting centers. The nearly 30 percent of ballots cast prior to November 4 represents an all-time high and was credited with a smoother Election Day in Ohio and Florida.

Problems at the Polls
Voter complaints most frequently related to registration problems.
- Hotlines, Twitter reports and Web sites detailing voter complaints found that registration issues were the most dominant problem on Election Day, with thousands of would-be voters around the country noting that they came to polling places only to find that their names were not on the rolls.
- Some blamed third-party registration drives for failing to process forms. Others said departments of motor vehicles and other state agencies responsible for offering registration opportunities under the National Voter Registration Act failed to forward registration applications so they could be processed.

Observation/Monitoring at the Polls
- The "armies of lawyers" for Republicans and Democrats were deployed but rarely called upon on Election Day. Thousands of others were on hand to observe the polls, however.
- Monitoring groups fielded hotline calls, read Twitter reports and logged Web-filed complaints. The most prominent, Election Protection had more than 10,000 volunteers at the polls and logged more than 200,000 calls during the election cycle.
- Federal monitors from the U.S. Department of Justice numbered more than 800 and were deployed in large Northern cities, including Boston, Philadelphia and New York as well as states covered by the Voting Rights Act and other sites with past problems.
- Poll workers blogged about their experiences as well, offering a window into polling place operations to a public and press largely banned from close, first-person observation.

Election Reform Ballot Initiatives/Election Official Turnover
Maryland's legislature will begin debating rules allowing early voting in the state after voters agreed to amend the state constitution to do so by a large margin. Connecticut voters approved a measure that will allow 17-year-old residents to register and vote in primaries if they will be 18 on election day. Oregon voters rejected a measure to change the way the state conducts primaries. Three secretaries of state – in Vermont, Missouri and Washington – held on to their posts after defeating challengers, while in West Virginia, Oregon and Montana, new election officials will assume the posts after defeating incumbents or taking open seats.

Voter Turnout Falls Short of Predictions

Decrease in GOP registrants could have led to lag

Approximately 130 million voters cast ballots during the November 2008 election, the most ever in the United States. While the figure did not represent a record breaker in terms of percentage turnout, or reach the highs some predicted, the volume of voters stressed the polls and early voting centers, both on and before Election Day.

Nationwide, nearly 61 percent of the voting-eligible population (VEP) cast ballots, compared with just over 60 percent in 2004.[7] This was the highest turnout since 1968, when 62.5 percent of voters cast ballots.[8] Overall, slightly more states saw their turnout rates rise since 2004 than saw those rates decrease. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia saw an increase, while 21 states saw a decrease from 2004.

Research into turnout patterns in 2008 will be undertaken in the coming months and years. Election experts have their own first-blush explanations that could shed light on why so many expected turnout to exceed 140 million ballots cast – and why the reality fell so far short of that.[9]

Curtis Gans, of the Center for the Study of the American Electorate at American University, said that while Democratic turnout was up from 2004, Republican turnout was down from four years ago.[10]

Another factor may have been a slight over-estimation of the number of ballots that would be cast early. Oregon, an all vote-by-mail state, experienced a turnout decline.[11]

While early voting numbers may not have been cast in the numbers some expected, of the 130 million ballots cast still more than 38 million were cast before Election Day, either in person or by mail. (See page 7 for more details on early and absentee voting.)

And with nearly 100 million voters going to the polls on November 4, that was still a massive influx of voters that election officials and poll workers had to prepare for.

Officials in Maryland hired more poll workers along with leasing more voting machines and purchasing more electronic poll books.[12] Missouri officials made similar preparations.[13] In Kalamazoo, Mich., extra funds were used to hire more poll workers which helped avoid long lines at the polls on Election Day.[14]

Election officials in numerous jurisdictions also encouraged voters to cast ballots early as some saw it as a way to ease the pressure of Election Day itself by siphoning off some voters who might otherwise have showed up on November 4.

In Franklin County, Ohio, a jurisdiction criticized in 2004 for long lines due, in part, on the misallocation of voting machines, county election officials actively encouraged voters to cast ballots early to keep turnout on Election Day manageable.[15]

"We're hoping the ease and convenience of people voting from the kitchen table will mitigate long lines," said Ben Piscitelli, spokesman for the Franklin County Board of Elections. "We can

guarantee that if you cast a ballot early, you won't have to stand in line."[16]

In some states, though, the opposite was true. Those who cast ballots before Election Day stood in lines for hours, only to find few delays, if any, on the afternoon of November 4.
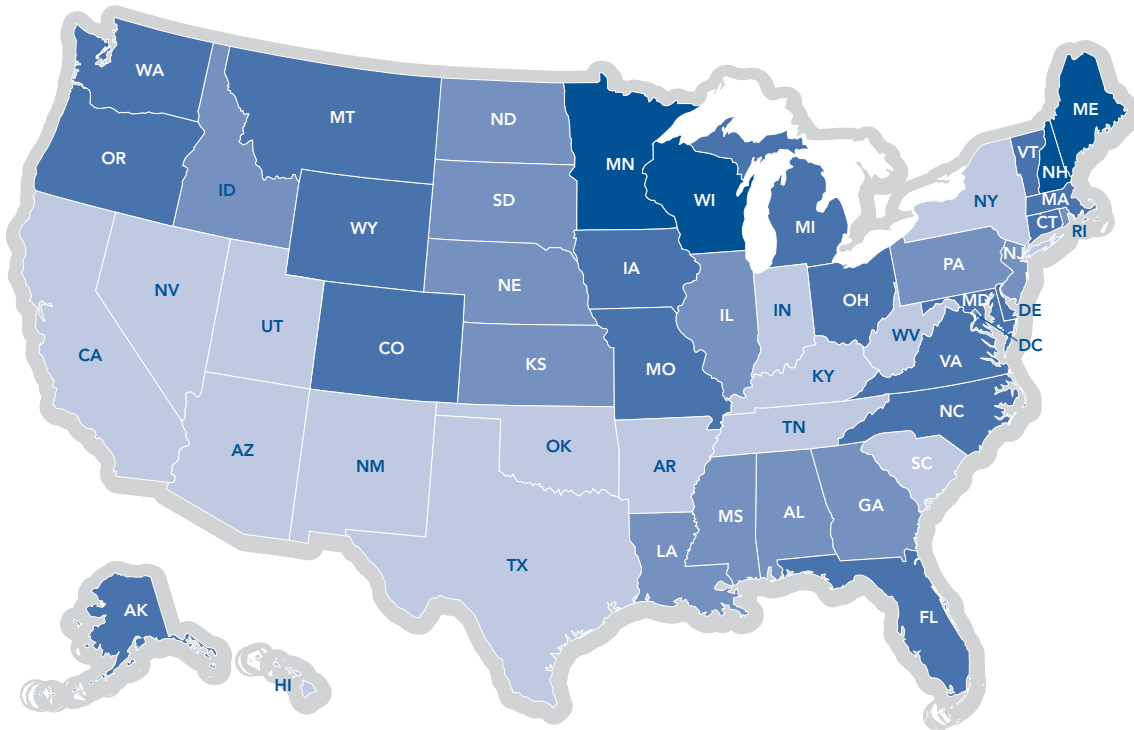
In Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina there were reports of very long lines at early voting sites. Responding to the delays, officials in Florida and North Carolina extended early voting hours to accommodate voters. In Georgia, there were reports of voters waiting eight hours to cast ballots.[17]

And of course, long lines (which are not only a factor of high turnout as ballot length and the election procedures at the polls play a role as well) emerged at polling places across the country on Election Day as well. In Lower Oxford Township, Pa., about one hour west of Philadelphia, some college students from Lincoln University waited in line for more than five hours.[18] Near Petersburg, Va., lines of up to a half-mile were reported and waits of five hours were reported in St. Louis.[19]

Yet *electionline* observers in numerous states across the country on Election Day including Ohio, Wisconsin and Florida, saw lines dwindle soon after a morning rush of voters. In Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Jane Platten, the county's election director, speculated the number of voters who cast ballots in person and by mail before Election Day may have helped avoid lines at the polls as Election Day wore on.[20]

2008 Turnout

The following map provides state-by-state information on the percentage of the voting eligible population (VEP) who cast ballots for president.

- ● **70 - 80 percent of the VEP** *(4 states)*
- ● **65 - 69.99 percent of the VEP** *(18 states)*
- ● **60 - 64.99 percent of the VEP** *(13 states and the District of Columbia)*
- ● **50 - 59.99 percent of the VEP** *(15 states)*

Note: The VEP is the estimated number of people 18 or older excluding non-citizens and ineligible voters. Minnesota had the highest turnout at nearly 78 percent. West Virginia had the lowest turnout at just over 50 percent.

All in all, election officials in many states breathed a sigh of relief at a mostly weathered storm.

"Our office has spent 22 months preparing for this day, in partnership with Ohio's bipartisan boards of elections. Thanks to that hard work and cooperation, Ohioans are seeing the success of our preparation today, voting in record numbers in an orderly and efficient system," Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner (D) said.[21]

2008 Turnout

The following chart provides data for ballots cast for president in the 2008 general election, 2008 voter registration data and turnout data for both 2008 and 2004.

State	Voting Eligible Population	Registration	Reg. as % of VEP	Ballots cast for Sen. Barack Obama (D)	Ballots cast for Sen. John McCain (R)	Ballots cast for other candidates	Total votes cast for president	2008 Turnout as percent of VEP	2004 Turnout (percent)	2008-2004 Change (percent)
Alabama	3,395,726	3,010,368	88.65%	813,479	1,266,546	19,794	2,099,819	61.84	57.20	4.64
Alaska	480,513	495,731	103.17	122,485	192,631	8,704	323,820	67.39	69.14	-1.75
Arizona	4,101,763	3,441,141	83.89	1,034,707	1,230,111	28,657	2,293,475	55.91	54.14	1.77
Arkansas	2,036,397	1,684,240	82.71	414,828	628,711	25,424	1,068,963	52.49	53.57	-1.08
California	22,099,354	17,304,091	78.30	8,063,473	4,902,278	248,081	13,213,832	59.79	58.78	1.01
Colorado	3,457,766	3,208,878	92.80	1,216,793	1,020,135	36,867	2,273,795	65.76	66.70	-0.95
Connecticut	2,459,219	2,021,749	82.21	1,000,994	628,873	19,532	1,649,399	67.07	64.98	2.09
Delaware	626,035	588,052	93.93	255,446	152,373	4,579	412,398	65.87	64.16	1.72
D.C.	436,259	426,761	97.82	245,800	17,367	2,686	265,853	60.94	54.30	6.64
Florida	12,504,810	11,247,634	89.95	4,282,074	4,045,624	63,046	8,390,744	67.10	64.42	2.68
Georgia	6,418,723	5,758,135	89.71	1,844,137	2,048,744	31,422	3,924,303	61.14	56.17	4.97
Hawaii	895,769	691,356	77.18	325,871	120,566	7,131	453,568	50.63	48.23	2.41
Idaho	1,043,770	861,869	82.57	236,440	403,012	15,580	655,032	62.76	63.24	-0.49
Illinois	8,807,459	7,700,252	87.43	3,419,673	2,031,527	71,851	5,523,051	62.71	61.50	1.21
Indiana	4,643,061	4,512,817	97.19	1,374,039	1,345,648	31,367	2,751,054	59.25	54.79	4.46
Iowa	2,203,564	2,143,665	97.28	828,940	682,379	25,984	1,537,303	69.76	69.88	-0.12
Kansas	1,973,350	1,659,561	84.10	499,869	685,441	20,857	1,206,167	61.12	61.58	-0.46
Kentucky	3,173,618	2,906,809	91.59	751,985	1,048,462	26,061	1,826,508	57.55	58.73	-1.18
Louisiana	3,091,474	2,901,588	93.86	782,989	1,148,275	29,497	1,960,761	63.42	61.05	2.37
Maine	1,027,729	1,027,585	99.99	421,923	295,273	13,967	731,163	71.14	73.80	-2.65
Maryland	3,879,558	3,511,165	90.50	1,628,995	959,694	42,256	2,630,945	67.82	62.85	4.96
Massachusetts	4,621,954	4,220,488	91.31	1,891,083	1,104,284	53,071	3,048,438	65.96	64.24	1.72
Michigan	7,285,960	7,470,764	102.54	2,872,579	2,048,639	80,548	5,001,766	68.65	66.63	2.02
Minnesota	3,741,514	3,199,981	85.53	1,573,354	1,275,409	61,613	2,910,376	77.79	78.37	-0.58
Mississippi	2,105,464	1,888,407	89.69	554,126	725,050	12,352	1,291,528	61.34	55.70	5.64
Missouri	4,302,302	4,205,774	97.76	1,441,911	1,445,814	37,480	2,925,205	67.99	65.33	2.66
Montana	743,893	672,961	90.46	231,667	242,763	15,679	490,109	65.88	64.43	1.45
Nebraska	1,281,226	1,157,034	90.31	316,189	439,665	13,953	769,807	60.08	62.93	-2.85
Nevada	1,682,325	1,446,538	85.98	533,736	412,827	21,285	967,848	57.53	55.25	2.28
New Hampshire	1,001,941	863,542	86.19	384,826	316,534	9,610	710,970	70.96	70.86	0.10
New Jersey	5,871,606	5,351,669	91.14	2,070,662	1,544,097	37,235	3,651,994	62.20	63.77	-1.58
New Mexico	1,391,968	1,183,081	84.99	472,422	346,832	10,904	830,158	59.64	58.96	0.68
New York	13,032,905	12,031,312	92.31	4,363,386	2,576,360	80,372	7,020,118	53.86	58.02	-4.16
North Carolina	6,553,452	6,262,566	95.56	2,142,651	2,128,474	39,664	4,310,789	65.78	57.81	7.97
North Dakota	488,761	No voter registration		141,278	168,601	6,742	316,621	64.78	64.81	-0.03
Ohio	8,522,809	8,291,877	97.29	2,784,344	2,582,174	86,709	5,721,730	67.13	66.78	0.36
Oklahoma	2,592,904	2,185,144	84.27	502,496	960,165	0	1,462,661	56.41	58.30	-1.89
Oregon	2,711,171	2,155,853	79.52	1,037,151	738,337	51,753	1,827,241	67.40	72.01	-4.61
Pennsylvania	9,376,750	8,758,031	93.40	3,234,949	2,634,115	62,423	5,931,487	63.26	62.56	0.69
Rhode Island	757,226	680,651	89.89	296,571	165,391	7,805	469,767	62.04	58.52	3.52
South Carolina	3,279,996	2,553,923	77.86	862,449	1,034,896	23,624	1,920,969	58.57	52.95	5.61
South Dakota	599,333	575,362	96.00	170,924	203,054	7,997	381,975	63.73	68.21	-4.47
Tennessee	4,561,286	3,977,586	87.20	1,085,720	1,477,405	33,438	2,596,563	56.93	56.31	0.62
Texas	14,830,142	13,575,062	91.54	3,528,633	4,479,328	69,834	8,077,795	54.47	53.72	0.75
Utah	1,771,753	1,432,525	80.85	327,670	596,030	28,641	952,341	53.75	58.93	-5.18
Vermont	488,171	454,466	93.10	219,262	98,974	6,810	325,046	66.58	66.34	0.24
Virginia	5,508,834	5,034,660	91.39	1,959,532	1,725,005	38,723	3,723,260	67.59	60.61	6.98
Washington	4,544,125	3,629,898	79.88	1,750,848	1,229,216	56,814	3,036,878	66.83	66.91	-0.08
West Virginia	1,410,817	1,212,117	85.92	302,273	394,922	11,992	709,187	50.27	54.13	-3.86
Wisconsin	4,115,502	3,473,834	84.41%	1,677,211	1,262,393	37,292	2,976,896	72.33	74.80	-2.46
Wyoming	390,516	244,818	62.69	82,868	164,958	6,832	254,658	65.21	65.65	-0.44
Totals	**213,005,467**	**185,293,371**	**86.99%**	**68,377,711**	**59,375,382**	**1,784,538**	**129,806,134**	**60.94**	**60.10**	**0.84**

Notes: At the state level, the voting eligible population (VEP) is the estimated number of people 18 or older excluding non-citizens and ineligible felons (which varies by state.) At the national level the VEP includes an additional estimate of overseas eligible voters. The estimates used here are from Michael McDonald at George Mason University's United States Election Project. Ballots cast for president are not certified nor final in most states. Ohio vote totals include 268,503 uncounted absentee and provisional ballots that are not listed. Since it is likely these ballots will not all be counted, this inflates the voter turnout slightly for the state. California data does not include a number of unprocessed ballots.

Early Voting Increases in 2008

Tai-Kora Banks, a Broward County, Fla. voter, emerged from the Lauderhill Mall early voting center in the early afternoon. Having moved from Tampa, she said she was surprised at how smoothly things went, "besides the four hour wait."[22]

Banks, like an estimated 4.3 million other Floridians, opted to cast a ballot before Election Day, either at super precincts spread throughout counties or through mail-in absentee ballots. Of those who chose to cast a ballot in person, some, particularly in South Florida, endured lines of four, six or even eight hours to use optical-scan machines.[23]

Early voting in 2008 (both no-excuse absentee voting and in-person early voting) was spurred in part by campaigns and election officials who urged the practice as well as a historically high number of states that offered opportunities to do so.

Experts predicted as many as a third of all ballots would be cast before Election Day, a rise from 20 percent in 2004, 15 percent in 2000, and a huge increase from only 7 percent in 1992.[24] And while those predictions might have been a bit high, the preliminary data suggests that nearly 30 percent of votes – an estimated 38 million – were cast before Election Day.[25] At press time, some ballots were still being counted.

"There are a lot more opportunities available now than there were in 2000, and that's why we've seen early voting has more than doubled in an eight-year period," said Paul Gronke, director of the Early Voting Information

Photo: Zachary Markovits

Miami-Dade and other counties in Florida experienced long lines and heavy turnout throughout the early voting period.

Center at Reed College.[26]

In 2008, 34 states allowed either no-excuse absentee voting, in-person early voting or both. That includes Oregon, where all voters cast ballots by mail and Washington, where all but two counties are vote-by-mail.[27]

While lines plagued a number of states, advocacy groups and election officials said the large turnout of early voters significantly eased the strain at polling places on November 4.

"We saw fewer problems in states with early voting," stated a release from Election Protection, a nonpartisan voter protection coalition that collected voter comments and complaints on Election Day. "Early voting takes pressure off the system by easing the crush on Election Day, and by providing a margin for error when testing new systems of election administration. Today's voters should not be constrained to a single day in

which to cast a ballot."[28]

Jane Platten, director of the Board of Elections in Cuyahoga County, said early voting in the jurisdiction – which includes Cleveland – was used by about 8 percent of all voters. More than 200,000 others mailed in ballots, compared to nearly 400,000 who voted on Election Day.

"Early voting was a huge advantage," Platten said.[29]

In fact, election officials throughout Ohio contemplated expanding early voting in the days that followed the election, opening voting locations in more places. The state currently limits early voting to one location per county.[30]

Gronke said that although the rise of early voting has been rapid in the past eight to 12 years, those increases should level off in the near future. Much depends whether early voting continues to expand nationwide.

Registration Troubles Were Most Common Problems at Polls

In a mostly smooth election, a high percentage of the problems reported on Election Day were related to voter registration; would-be voters arriving at polls believing they had done everything correctly and learning that, for whatever reason, they were not on the registration rolls.

The Election Protection Coalition, which operated a toll-free line as well as a Web site tracking voting problems on and before Election Day, received 7,421 calls about voter registration problems, more than any other problem category according to *OurVoteLive.org.* Additionally, they received 28,853 calls from voters inquiring about their voter registration status.[31]

"The most prevalent and alarming challenge to our electoral process today came in the form of voter registration problems. Voters across the country arrived at the polls to find that their registrations had never been processed, that their names had been purged from voter lists, or that they had missed the registration deadlines altogether," according to a post on the *OurVoteLive.org* blog. "Our first priority for improving this flawed system should be to make the registration process fair, accurate and efficient."[32]

In some cases, the problem appeared to be state agencies that handled registration applications under the National Voter Registration Act, but failed to forward the appropriate information in order to get voters on the rolls.

Some Connecticut voters said they registered at the Department of Motor Vehicles but their names weren't included on the voter registration rolls, including about 100 voters in Enfield, Carol Censki, the Democratic voter registrar said. Censki told the voters to go to the Town Clerk's Office to fill out special ballots that would be counted for President and Vice President only.[33]

Connecticut Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz (D) sent a letter in late October to the state Department of Motor Vehicles and social services commissioners reminding them they were required to forward voter registration forms to local registrars. Bill Seymour, spokesman for the motor vehicles department, said branch workers did their jobs properly and told registrants that they should consider turning the form in to the registrars themselves to ensure they met the deadline, though most voters believed they were automatically registered.

Bysiewicz said the situation reaffirmed her support for election-day registration, a modified albeit limited version of which is already available in the state.[34]

In addition to departments of motor vehicles, third-party voter registration organizations were blamed when voters' names didn't make it on to the rolls. New York voters who used Rock the Vote's Web site to print voter registration forms were told to mail their completed forms to the state elections board instead of their local elections office. The state elections board forwarded the forms to county elections offices but there is no way to be sure that all of the forms made it to their respective counties by the voter registration deadline. Voters in other states reported similar problems.[35]

Heather Smith, Rock the Vote executive director, said she found out about the problem when actress Anne Hathaway said that she registered using the Web site and couldn't find her record after recording a Rock the Vote public service announcement.

After tracking down Hathaway's registration, Smith found 40,000 registrations were still unprocessed. Smith e-mailed the 173,000 New Yorkers who had used the form since June and received 1,200 emails within 24 hours in response from voters who could not find their names on the voter registration rolls. Smith said she was told twice by the state board of elections that they could receive voter registration forms and she encouraged all voters to check their voter registration status online.[36]

Several Virginia voters reported that they registered through voter registration drives, yet arrived at their polling place and found that their names weren't on the voter rolls. Election officials asked voters whose names were left off the rolls to submit a copy of their official registration receipts to the state for further investigation.[37]

The impact of one third party voter registration group, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now

(ACORN) was not significant. There were reports in a number of states, which brought the organization national attention, that some of its employees submitted fraudulent voter registration forms and were being investigated by the FBI.[38]

However, little came of the controversy on or after Election Day. Republicans in Lake County, Ind. warned that poll workers would face high numbers of voters improperly registered by ACORN and county election officials separated about 2,000 voter registration forms to double check among the 7,900 submitted.[39]

Problems related to third-party voter registration groups and pre-election litigation over voter eligibility would be minimized with universal voter registration, Rosemary Rodriguez, U.S. Election Assistance Commission chair said. "The single most important thing that Congress can do right now is create universal voter registration, which would mean that all eligible voters are automatically registered," she said.[40]

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University said election officials in New York, Minnesota and Oregon are considering universal voter registration.[41]

"A system of automatic registration, in which the government bears more of the responsibility for assembling accurate and secure lists of eligible voters, is a necessary reform," said Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., shortly after the election. "All eligible Americans should be able to cast their ballot

Photo: Sean Greene, electionline.org

Voters stand in line to vote early in Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

without barriers, and the registration problems we saw on Tuesday and during the weeks that preceded Election Day make clear that the system needs improvement."[42]

Clinton and the Brennan Center support a plan for universal registration where states would maintain control of the voter registration lists.

R. Doug Lewis, National Association of Election Officials executive director said he is more skeptical of federal mandates. Registration, he said, is an issue for states to manage.

"We will need to think hard about this," Lewis said. "It's true that in most developed

democracies the government takes on this role and it's a top-down system. But ours has been a bottom-up system because our founders were suspicious of a centralized election authority."[43]

Watching the Vote: Observers and the 2008 Election

Perhaps at no time in history has the U.S. election system been under more scrutiny than it was on November 4. In addition to media hordes, nonpartisan observation teams, civil rights experts, party operatives and foreign poll watchers observed polling places on Election Day and at early voting sites during the weeks leading up to it.

Voters who experienced trouble at the polls had no shortage of outlets to which they could report their frustrations and concerns. Call-in lines staffed by volunteers posted polling-place complaints and incidents as they occurred, revealing detailed information about the problems voters experienced on Election Day.

Election Protection, Other Groups Take Thousands of Calls

Election Protection, the most visible and best-known of the nonpartisan observers, had more than 10,000 volunteers at polling sites and call centers.[44] Voters could use a phone number, report problems on the Web site or use social networking sites, including Twitter, to report problems or concerns at the polls.

While Election Protection organizers have not completed detailed data collection from Election Day, the site is a treasury of anecdotes from around the country.

According to the final tallies, Election Protection logged more than 80,000 calls on Election Day and more than 200,000 during the entire election cycle. The most commonly reported problems related to registration; more specifically, voters arriving at the polls believing they were registered only to find they were not on the rolls.[45]

Deceptive practices – intentionally disseminated misinformation about polling locations, rules, impending challenges, law enforcement, etc. – were reported in more than a dozen states, according to Election Protection.[46]

Election Protection also reported "fewer problems in states with early voting…Today's voters should not be constrained to a single day in which to cast a ballot."[47]

Campaigns, Department of Justice Keep Close Tabs on Polls

Just as in typical elections, candidates had their own poll observers as well. President-elect Barack Obama had thousands of supporters working at polling places, drawing on volunteers from an army of canvassers, phone bank volunteers and even through Internet postings.[48] Republicans were seeking volunteers as well, using Facebook and other sites to attract partisans willing to "step up and protect the integrity of this election."[49]

While it is difficult to get even rough estimates of the number of watchers on hand in polling places for both sides, their presence seemed to be far more significant than their actions on Election Day. The "army of lawyers" numbered in the thousands – an estimated 5,000 for Obama in Florida alone, *The New York Times* reported. Republicans did not offer any estimates, with an attorney for the Republican National Committee noting they had "enough to respond to any contingency…we will be engaged at every level."[50]

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) had monitors as well, deploying 800 federal observers in 23 states on November 4.[51] Prominent locations for monitors included Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Dallas, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, King County, Wash. and Orleans Parish, La.[52] DOJ also had a call-in number for complaints about voter access, though no statistical information about the nature of calls, from where they were received or whether action was taken was provided at press time.

They are a regular presence in some municipalities with a history of challenges in meeting the mandates of the Voting Rights Act.[53]

Information from the Inside

In most states, poll workers on Election Day are inaccessible to the media and observers outside of the polling place. An *electionline.org* survey of state rules undertaken in 2007 found that 25 states allowed media and other election observers inside of polling places. At least half of those states have strict rules against the media speaking to election workers or voters and keep reporters behind designated areas to keep them from interfering with the process.[54]

When poll workers themselves become the media, unparalleled public access is possible.

Increasingly, bloggers have become poll workers and vice-versa.

Hundreds of Election Day accounts can be found online, many banged out on laptops by physically and mentally exhausted poll workers as soon as polls closed.

Their insights, while limited to their specific job at just one polling place, help tell an important part of the story of the 2008 election.

Avi Rubin, a computer security expert at Johns Hopkins University, has been a poll worker for the previous six elections in Maryland. On November 4, he found that the Diebold DRE voting machines (which he has roundly criticized as vulnerable to hacking and fraud and lacking any independent audit capacity) were showing their age.

"These machines are showing the wear and tear of several election cycles," he wrote. "They will require some pretty serious maintenance and upkeep if they are to be used again. Thankfully, Maryland plans to switch to optically scanned paper ballots in 2010."[55]

Rick Carback, another Maryland poll worker, found that the longest lines occurred at the beginning of the day.[56]

"ABQORDIA," a "security and society" blogger, worked the polls in Fairfax County, Va. He found that despite urging from election officials to steer voters to optical-scan ballots rather than DREs (the county offers both) many older voters chose the paperless electronic option, to his frustration.

"We weren't allowed to tell voters why they should choose one or the other – we couldn't say 'the DREs are inaccurate and un-auditable' or 'it saves money' [or] anything like that," the blogger wrote. "In fact, during the training, the instructors didn't even know why the change was being made, other than the law told them to. One of the great things about optical scan is that when the line gets long, you get more pens – unlike DREs, where when the line gets long, you're out of luck. But I couldn't say that either."[57]

Santa Clara, Calif. blogger "Benlog" recounted an experience at his polling place – which used centrally counted optical scan ballots – in which a gaffe had him calling in reinforcements.

"I tried to shake the ballot box, which is just a cardboard box with a slit for dropping ballots in, so I could compress down the ballots," he wrote. "The ballot box tore, ripping the seal. [I] had to call the Field Inspector to reseal the ballot box. Oops."[58]

Almost all blogger accounts of Election Day indicated turnout was far heavier in the morning than in the evening. Many said there were few, if any, voters in the last 30 minutes that polls were open, while voters were often lined up 20-50 deep awaiting poll openings.

Photo: Dan Seligson, electionline.org

University of Pittsburgh students endured long lines and multi-hour waits at a downtown polling place.

Election Reform Ballot Initiatives Meet Mixed Fates on Election Day

Several election reform ballot measures went before voters on November 4 with varying degrees of success.

Early Voting in Maryland

Maryland voters agreed to amend the state constitution to allow the legislature to consider early voting by a margin of nearly two to one.[59] Lawmakers may now consider legislation that would allow voters to cast ballots up to two weeks before an election and at polling places outside their election district.

The constitutional amendment was proposed after the state's Court of Appeals struck down a law in 2006 that would have allowed voters to cast ballots up to five days before Election Day. Republican lawmakers have opposed the expanded voting period in a state that is predominantly Democratic.[60]

"We've seen this early voting is a legitimate way to expand the franchise," said Del. Samuel I. Rosenberg, a Baltimore Democrat. He predicted the legislature would pass an early-voting law next year that is fair to both parties.[61]

If approved by lawmakers, the state would become the 35th in the country to allow either no-excuse in-person early voting or no-excuse absentee voting by mail.[62]

Connecticut's Amendment Question Two

Connecticut joined a handful of other states that allow 17-year-olds to register and vote in the primary as long as they will be 18 on or before the date of the general election.

The amendment was approved 893,210 votes to 504,499 according to unofficial results.[63]

The amendment question had received strong support including from Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz (D).

"This measure will now open up the selection of our president to 10,000 new voters who are eager to become active participants in our political process," Bysiewicz said in a statement at the time state lawmakers agreed to place the measure on the ballot.[64]

Oregon's Measure 65

Despite confusion nationwide about closed primaries versus open primaries this election cycle, Oregon voters overwhelmingly rejected Measure 65 which would have changed the general election nomination process to become a single contest among all candidates regardless of party or independent status.[65]

The November election would have then become a run-off between the top-two finishers of the May election regardless of their party or independent status. Measure 65 would have affected races for U.S. Senator and Representative, governor, secretary of state, treasurer, attorney general, state Senator and Representative as well as other local races.

Even with heavy pre-election support, including being endorsed by several prominent newspapers, Measure 65 failed with an unofficial tally of 65 percent "No" votes and 34 percent "Yes" votes.[66]

King County, Wash. Charter Amendment One

While some localities (including the populous Palm Beach County, Florida[67]) are considering moving away from putting their elections officials on ballots, voters in King County, Wash. went another direction on November 4 and decided by a 56 percent to 43 percent to amend the county's charter to elect the county's election director.[68]

If approved by lawmakers, Maryland would become the 35th state in the country to allow either no-excuse in-person early voting or no-excuse absentee voting by mail.

Incumbents, a Few New Faces to Serve as Chief Election Officials

The position of top election official was up for grabs in six states on November 4 and the results ushered in some familiar as well as new faces.

In Missouri, Vermont and Washington, incumbent secretaries of state all prevailed in their bids for re-election.

Missouri incumbent Secretary of State Robin Carnahan (D), defeated Republican challenger Mitch Hubbard and Libertarian challenger Wes Upchurch by a 61 percent to 35 percent to 1 percent margin respectively.[69] Carnahan ran on a record that included efforts to increase poll-worker training in the state.

Vermont Secretary of State Deb Markowitz (D) received an overwhelming majority of the votes (70 percent), overcoming three challengers on the ballot. Republican Eugene Bifano received the second highest amount of votes at 23 percent.[70] Markowitz was first elected to office in 1998. Bifano ran on a platform that included a "voter fraud detection system" in the state, as well as a call for "21st century standards" at the Secretary of State's office.[71]

Markowitz touted the "nonpartisan job" her elections division has done in the state, and mentioned high turnout and 20 percent early or by-mail voters as accomplishments.[72]

Republican incumbent Sam Reed was re-elected to the top elections position in Washington by a 58 percent to 41 percent margin over his Democratic challenger, Jason Osgood.[73]

Reed was first elected to office in 2000 and says that moving forward one of his biggest priorities would be citizen engagement.

"I want to have the best informed electorate in the nation. We are moving forward with aggressive and extensive voter information programs via the Internet," Reed said. "We also are launching new programs for youth and for new citizens."[74]

Three newcomers will be making their debut on the election scene including Linda McCullogh who defeated incumbent Montana Secretary of State Brad Johnson by a little over 4,000 votes.[75]

McCulloch served three terms in the Montana House of Representatives and is currently the state superintendent of public instruction.

"Elections are the backbone of our democracy. As such they must function efficiently and effectively," McCulloch said. "I will form an Election Advisory Council utilizing the expertise of local election officials and others to make recommendations regarding more efficiency and effectiveness in the election process."[76]

In Oregon, Democratic newcomer Kate Brown defeated Rick Dancer by a margin of 50 percent to 45 percent.[77] Brown, who is currently a state senator, was elected as the first openly bisexual secretary of state in the country.[78]

After West Virginia incumbent Secretary of State Betty Ireland (R) chose not to seek re-election, Natalie Tennant (D) and Charles Minimah ran for the open seat. Tennant, the first female Mountaineer mascot in the history of West Virginia University and a former television anchor, defeated Minimah, a Charleston businessman, by a 65 percent to 35 percent margin.

Ireland, the first woman ever elected to executive office in West Virginia, started her term in 2004 after beating a 16-year incumbent.[79]

State Snapshots – Turnout in the Nov. 4, 2008 General Election

Voting eligible population (VEP) estimates are from the United States Election Project as are the 2004 general election turnout data. Voter registration data and ballot cast data for the 2008 general election are from state election Web sites unless otherwise noted. Early and absentee ballot data is from state election Web sites and the United States Election Project unless otherwise noted. Presidential ballot cast data and early/absentee vote data for most states have not yet been certified. Registered voters as percentage of the VEP for earlier registration data uses VEP estimates in place for the presidential primaries, which are different from the current VEP estimates for the 2008 general election listed below.

ALABAMA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	3,395,726
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	3,010,368; 88.65% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	2,756,919; 80.15% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,096,114
2008 general election turnout:	61.73%
2004 general election turnout:	57.20%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

ALASKA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	480,513
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	495,731; 103.17% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	479,336; 100.54% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	323,820
2008 general election turnout:	67.39%
2004 general election turnout:	69.14%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	70,457[80]

ARIZONA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	4,101,763
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	3,441,141; 83.89% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	3,136,868; 76.69% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,293,475
2008 general election turnout:	55.91%
2004 general election turnout:	54.14%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	566,656[81]

ARKANSAS

Voting eligible population, 2008:	2,036,397
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	1,684,240; 82.71% of VEP
Voter registration, February 2008:	1,570,961; 75.88% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,068,963
2008 general election turnout:	52.49%
2004 general election turnout:	53.57%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	406,139[82]

CALIFORNIA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	22,099,354
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	17,304,091; 78.30% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	15,712,753; 72.32% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	13,213,832
2008 general election turnout:	59.79%
2004 general election turnout:	58.78%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	4,021,791[83]

COLORADO

Voting eligible population, 2008:	3,457,766
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	3,208,878; 92.80% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	2,903,376; 85.34% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,273,795[84]
2008 general election turnout:	65.76%
2004 general election turnout:	66.70%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	1,704,280[85]

CONNECTICUT

Voting eligible population, 2008:	2,459,219
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	2,021,749; 82.21%
Voter registration, January 2008:	2,044,511; 83.56% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,649,399
2008 general election turnout:	67.07%
2004 general election turnout:	64.98%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

DELAWARE

Voting eligible population, 2008:	626,035
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	588,052; 93.93% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	567,363; 93.35% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	412,398
2008 general election turnout:	65.87%
2004 general election turnout:	64.16%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	21,440[86]

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	436,259
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	426,761; 97.82% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	377,007; 89.15% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	265,853
2008 general election turnout:	60.94%
2004 general election turnout:	54.30%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	26,160[87]

FLORIDA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	12,504,810
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	11,247,634; 89.95% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	10,203,112; 81.36% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	8,390,744
2008 general election turnout:	67.10%
2004 general election turnout:	64.42%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	4,377,774[88]

GEORGIA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	6,418,723
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	5,758,135; 89.71% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	5,237,481; 82.04% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	3,924,303
2008 general election turnout:	61.14%
2004 general election turnout:	56.17%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	2,020,839[89]

HAWAII

Voting eligible population, 2008:	895,769
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	691,356; 77.18% of VEP
Voter registration September 2008:	667,647; 72.90% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	453,568
2008 general election turnout:	50.63%
2004 general election turnout:	48.23%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	175,526[90]

IDAHO

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,043,770
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	861,869; 82.57% of VEP
Voter registration May 2008:	721,269; 67.37% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	655,032
2008 general election turnout:	62.76%
2004 general election turnout:	63.24%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

ILLINOIS

Voting eligible population, 2008:	8,807,459
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	7,700,252; 87.43% of VEP
Voter registration, February 2008:	7,304,563; 81.09% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	5,523,051
2008 general election turnout:	62.71%
2004 general election turnout:	61.50%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

INDIANA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	4,643,061
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	4,512,817; 97.19% of VEP
Voter registration May 2008:	4,318,557; 92.54% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,751,054
2008 general election turnout:	59.25%
2004 general election turnout:	54.79%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	668,868[91]

IOWA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	2,203,564
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	2,143,665; 97.28% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	2,059,867; 94.87% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,537,303
2008 general election turnout:	69.76%
2004 general election turnout:	69.88%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	481,179[92]

KANSAS

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,973,350
Voter registration September 2008:	1,659,561; 84.10%
Voter registration, January 2008:	1,633,039; 82.06% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,206,167
2008 general election turnout:	61.12%
2004 general election turnout:	61.58%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	435,579[93]

KENTUCKY

Voting eligible population, 2008:	3,173,618
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	2,906,809; 91.59% of VEP
Voter registration May 2008:	2,857,231; 90.49% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,826,508
2008 general election turnout:	57.55%
2004 general election turnout:	58.73%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	105,259[94]

LOUISIANA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	3,091,474
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	2,901,588; 93.86 of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	2,842,402; 100.31% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,960,761
2008 general election turnout:	63.42%
2004 general election turnout:	61.05%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	292,014[95]

MAINE

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,027,729
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	1,027,585; 99.99% of VEP
Voter registration September 2008:	1,003,901; 96.90% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	731,163
2008 general election turnout:	71.14%
2004 general election turnout:	73.80%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	226,012[96]

MARYLAND

Voting eligible population, 2008:	3,879,558
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	3,511,165; 90.50% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	3,135,773; 81.61% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,630,945
2008 general election turnout:	67.82%
2004 general election turnout:	62.85%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	226,894[97]

MASSACHUSETTS

Voting eligible population, 2008:	4,621,954
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	4,220,488; 91.31% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	4,011,551; 89.22% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	3,048,438[98]
2008 general election turnout:	65.96%
2004 general election turnout:	64.24%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

MICHIGAN

Voting eligible population, 2008:	7,285,960
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	7,470,764; 102.54% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	7,141,914; 97.19% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	5,001,766
2008 general election turnout:	68.65%
2004 general election turnout:	66.63%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	1,029,149[99]

MINNESOTA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	3,741,514
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	3,199,981; 85.53% of VEP
Voter registration March 2008:	3,091,748; 83.28% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,910,376
2008 general election turnout:	77.79%
2004 general election turnout:	78.37%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

MISSISSIPPI

Voting eligible population, 2008:	2,105,464
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	1,888,407; 89.69% of VEP
Voter registration March 2008:	1,777,683; 86.01% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,291,528
2008 general election turnout:	61.34%
2004 general election turnout:	55.70%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

MISSOURI

Voting eligible population, 2008:	4,302,302
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	4,205,774; 97.76% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	3,904,461; 89.98% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,925,205
2008 general election turnout:	67.99%
2004 general election turnout:	65.33%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

MONTANA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	743,893
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	672,961; 90.46% of VEP
Voter registration March 2008:	619,382; 84.30% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	490,109
2008 general election turnout:	65.88%
2004 general election turnout:	64.43%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	184,632[100]

NEBRASKA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,281,226
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	1,157,034; 90.31% of VEP
Voter registration May 2008:	1,117,495; 87.83% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	769,807
2008 general election turnout:	60.08%
2004 general election turnout:	62.93%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	155,004[101]

NEVADA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,682,325
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	1,446,538; 85.98% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	1,247,193; 73.20% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	967,848
2008 general election turnout:	57.53%
2004 general election turnout:	55.25%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	561,625[102]

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,001,941
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	863,542; 86.19% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	885,494; 85.17% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	710,970
2008 general election turnout:	70.96%
2004 general election turnout:	70.86%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	267,266[103]

NEW JERSEY

Voting eligible population, 2008:	5,871,606
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	5,351,669; 91.14% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	4,862,613; 88.09% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	3,651,994
2008 general election turnout:	62.20%
2004 general election turnout:	63.77%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

NEW MEXICO

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,391,968
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	1,183,081; 84.99% of VEP
Voter registration May 2008:	1,085,854; 79.13% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	830,158
2008 general election turnout:	59.64%
2004 general election turnout:	58.96%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	203,455[104]

NEW YORK

Voting eligible population, 2008:	13,032,905
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	12,031,312; 92.31% of VEP
Voter registration March 2008:	11,363,178; 88.07% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	7,020,118[105]
2008 general election turnout:	53.86%
2004 general election turnout:	58.02%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

NORTH CAROLINA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	6,553,452
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	6,262,566; 95.56% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	5,604,420; 87.54% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	4,310,789
2008 general election turnout:	65.78%
2004 general election turnout:	57.81%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	2,627,056[106]

NORTH DAKOTA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	488,761
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	No voter registration
Voter registration, January 2008:	No voter registration
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	316,621
2008 general election turnout:	64.78%
2004 general election turnout:	64.81%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

OHIO

Voting eligible population, 2008:	8,522,809
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	8,291,877; 97.29% of VEP
Voter registration March 2008:	7,826,480; 91.88% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	5,721,730
2008 general election turnout:	67.13%
2004 general election turnout:	66.78%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	1,456,364[107]

OKLAHOMA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	2,592,904
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	2,185,144; 84.27% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	2,022,537; 77.27% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,462,661
2008 general election turnout:	56.41%
2004 general election turnout:	58.30%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

OREGON

Voting eligible population, 2008:	2,711,171
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	2,155,853; 79.52% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	1,962,562; 71.49% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,827,241
2008 general election turnout:	67.40%
2004 general election turnout:	72.01%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	All vote-by-mail

PENNSYLVANIA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	9,376,750
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	8,758,031; 93.40% of VEP
Voter registration April 2008:	8,328,123; 88.30% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	5,931,487
2008 general election turnout:	63.26%
2004 general election turnout:	62.56%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	235,258[108]

RHODE ISLAND

Voting eligible population, 2008:	757,226
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	680,651; 89.89% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	665,091; 88.97% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	469,767
2008 general election turnout:	62.04%
2004 general election turnout:	58.52%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

SOUTH CAROLINA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	3,279,996
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	2,553,923; 77.86% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	2,246,242; 69.78% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	1,920,969
2008 general election turnout:	58.57%
2004 general election turnout:	52.95%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

SOUTH DAKOTA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	599,333
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	575,362; 96.00% of VEP
Voter registration May 2008:	554,425; 95.10% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	381,975
2008 general election turnout:	63.73%
2004 general election turnout:	68.21%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

TENNESSEE

Voting eligible population, 2008:	4,561,286
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	3,977,586; 87.20% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	3,666,824; 82.42% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,596,563
2008 general election turnout:	56.93%
2004 general election turnout:	56.31%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	1,550,939[109]

TEXAS

Voting eligible population, 2008:	14,830,142
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	13,575,062; 91.54% of VEP
Voter registration March 2008:	12,752,417; 84.95% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	8,077,795
2008 general election turnout:	54.47%
2004 general election turnout:	53.72%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	5,351,660[109]

UTAH

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,771,753
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	1,432,525; 80.85% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	1,319,650; 76.33% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	952,341
2008 general election turnout:	53.75%
2004 general election turnout:	58.93%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	337,577[110]

VERMONT

Voting eligible population, 2008:	488,171
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	454,466; 93.10% of VEP
Voter registration March 2008:	421,987; 87.84% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	325,046
2008 general election turnout:	66.58%
2004 general election turnout:	66.34%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	94,468[112]

VIRGINIA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	5,508,834
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	5,034,660; 91.39% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	4,585,828; 85.12% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	3,723,260
2008 general election turnout:	67.59%
2004 general election turnout:	60.61%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	465,962[113]

WASHINGTON

Voting eligible population, 2008:	4,544,125
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	3,629,898; 79.88% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	3,311,503; 71.77% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	3,036,878
2008 general election turnout:	66.83%
2004 general election turnout:	66.91%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	1,338,159[114]

WEST VIRGINIA

Voting eligible population, 2008:	1,410,817
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	1,212,117; 85.92% of VEP
Voter registration May 2008:	1,183,495; 83.14 of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	709,187
2008 general election turnout:	50.27%
2004 general election turnout:	54.13%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	166,353[115]

WISCONSIN

Voting eligible population, 2008:	4,115,502
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008:	3,473,834; 84.41% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	3,304,419; 80.30% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	2,965,653
2008 general election turnout:	72.06%
2004 general election turnout:	74.80%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	No data available at time of publication

WYOMING

Voting eligible population, 2008:	390,516
Voter registration, general election close of rolls 2008*:	244,818; 62.69% of VEP
Voter registration, January 2008:	216,708; 55.35% of VEP
Presidential ballots cast, 2008 general election:	254,658
2008 general election turnout:	65.21%
2004 general election turnout:	65.65%
Early/absentee ballots cast:	64,430[116]

*Does not include election-day registrants

Methodology

Election data for maps, charts and state-by-state data was collected using state election Web sites, the United State Election Project and election results from newspapers in states where unofficial results are not compiled by the state.

Secondary sources were also used in compiling information, including newspapers, wire service reports, radio and television transcripts and reports from non-governmental organizations with an interest in election administration issues.

All sources are listed in the endnotes section.

The opinions expressed by election officials, lawmakers, government officials or other interested parties in this document do not reflect the nonpartisan, non-advocacy electionline.org, the Pew Center on the States nor The Pew Charitable Trusts.

All questions concerning research should be directed to Sean Greene, project manager for research, at 202-552-2000.

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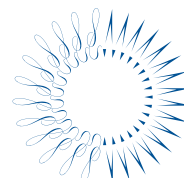
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