

Election

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pleased with the election. The county won't return to the old precincts, he said.

"With the voting centers, I voted at JoDean's restaurant," he said. "I roamed around (to gauge opinion), and people were very happy with how things went. There were no major glitches, and the mood about it was that it was good."

People like the ability to vote anywhere in the county, Jensen said. The flexibility fits people's busy and mobile lifestyles, he said.

"You might live in Gayville and work in Yankton, so you could vote in Yankton during the day and not have to worry about making it back to Gayville before the polls closed," he said.

However, that doesn't mean everyone liked the election changes, Jensen said.

"There were a couple of senior citizens who weren't happy about not being able to vote at their precinct anymore," he said.

Election Day also ran into an issue when a precinct opened late, Jensen said.

"We did have to extend the hours (at all sites) because of a miscommunication that delayed the opening of one precinct," he said. "This (election) was a new venture, and there were a few glitches. But those will be ironed out for the next election."

The South Dakota Secretary of State said the ballots cast after the 7 p.m. closing time mandated by state law should be counted and treated as provisional ballots, Jones said.

Three people met as a provisional board, she said. "All (of those ballots) were counted with no question," she said.

Yankton County voters cast 20 regular provisional ballots. Another 33 provisional ballots — 20 of them at the Yankton Middle School voting center — were cast after 7 p.m.

Two provisional ballots weren't accepted, Jones said. One ballot was cast by a felon, and another ballot was cast by a voter registered in another county.

On Election Day, the ePollbooks alerted election officials to replenish the number of ballots at a busy voting center, Jones said.

"The poll books kicked in an alarm if the number of ballots was low," she said. "We would bring them more ballots so they didn't run out."

AN EARLY START

While the new technology caught attention, another factor — early balloting — will dramatically affect future elections, Yankton County officials said.

Yankton County saw 10,110 of 13,954 registered voters cast ballots for 72.45 percent turnout. The county exceeded the statewide

turnout of 69.67 percent.

The percentage of early voters hit a record level this year, Jones said.

"Since we started with early voting in 2006, about one-third of the total vote was cast at the government center," she said. "This year, we had 4,000 voters here at the government center, which accounted for 39.4 percent of the total vote."

She doesn't look for those numbers to go anywhere but up.

"I think we'll be looking at 50 percent of the vote in future elections coming from early ballots," she said.

This year's early balloting rapidly gained momentum as Election Day approached, Jones said.

"We had 50 (voters) per day at first," she said. "Then, as it got closer to the election, it became 100 per day, 200 per day and on Monday (the day before the election), we had over 500 who voted (at the government center)."

Jones took the brisk voting as a good sign, even if it meant more work for her office ahead of time.

"I'm not complaining," the auditor said. "I would sooner have more people voting with the need to work more (at our office)."

However, Jensen sees the need to accommodate the growth of early balloting.

"We are going to need to make some changes," he said. "It's great to see that many people voting at the government center. But with so many people voting early, it's also tying up the other business in the (auditor's) office."

The ePollbooks can print out statements, showing the vote totals of people from each of the original precincts, Jensen said.

"I would want to know my showing in the precincts, so I know where I'm deficient (in support) and can reach out to those people," he said.

Jensen looks for Yankton city and school officials to follow suit in making election changes. "I assume they will also go with the new technology," he said.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Besides creating efficiency, the Yankton County election changes saved money, Jones said.

"In the past, we had a minimum of 75 poll workers. But this year, we had about 56," she said. "We also had fewer polling places, so it saved on rent."

During the last primary election, she said the cost per voter was as low as \$10 in one Yankton location and as high as \$170 at a rural polling station. The overall average cost was \$46.32.

With a voting center system, she projected the average cost could be reduced to \$2.79.

Besides the use of ePollbooks and fewer election workers, the average cost per vote was further reduced by the high voter turnout.

The following was the voter turnout at the respective voting centers:

- Yankton City Hall 1,488 voters
- Yankton Middle School 1,638 voters
- JoDean's Steakhouse & Lounge 1,323 voters
- Gayville Community Center 438 voters
- Broomtree Retreat & Conference Center 353 voters
- Lesterville Fire Hall 286 voters
- The Rock House 625 voters
- Absentee Precinct 3,966

Most of the mailed ballots were returned, Jones said.

"We have the fewest (number) of unreturned mail ballots that we ever had," she said, with about 40 unreturned by Election Day.

She continued receiving ballots after Election Day, but they couldn't be counted as they arrived after the polls closed.

"Some ballots that weren't returned are still out there somewhere," she said.

Other ballots couldn't be counted for other reasons, Jones said. "If you forget to sign a mailed ballot or your signatures don't match, it's a spoiled ballot," she said.

At the canvass, the county commissioners raised questions for future elections.

Commissioner Donna Freng asked about counting absentee votes first, rather than keeping them until the end.

Jones acknowledges the change could be made in future years. The auditor's office had planned to count early ballots first in this month's election, but the boxes from voting centers started arriving soon after the polls closed, she said.

The commissioners expressed concern about parking issues at the City Hall voting center. They also asked about opening another voting site.

"There has been some talk about adding the 4-H building for voting in the next election," Jensen told the Press & Dakotan. "It would be convenient with plenty of parking, and the senior citizens would like it because it's right across the street from their center."

Commissioner Garry Moore admitted he was persuaded by the election changes.

"I was one of the biggest skeptics, but I thought it went well," he said. "The system was relatively flawless."

The outcome of Yankton County's election process was watched far beyond the county borders, Jensen said.

"Secretary of State Jason Gant came to one of our meetings (last August) to talk about (the changes)," he said. "We were one of the larger counties to work with this, and people around the state were watching us to see how things turned out."

"This was a big election, a huge election. I thought it went exceptionally well."

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf

We repeat this poem every year because we never tire of expressing our thankfulness to all the special people who have crossed our path in this busy world and stressful business!

FOR YOU We Are Thankful

The Real Estate business is packed full of stuff,
Some pretty serious and some just fluff . . .

There are Houses to see and pictures to take,
There are signs to plant and reports to make . . .

Meetings To attend and lots of ads to plan,
Banks and inspectors to find if you can.

But what keeps us sane and makes our day,
Are buyers and sellers who pass our way !

That is Why Thanksgiving couldn't come and go
Without us stopping to let you all know . . .

Real estate would be a drudge if Not for you
'Cause you make Worthwhile the Things that we do.

Thank You for letting us be part of your Life,
Sharing The fun as well as the strife.

Our Prayer is that You'll be abundantly blessed,
All of Your needs and wants Addressed;

That You'll never run out of family & friends,
And have More in your Pocket than You can spend !



By

Sally & Terry

Broker Associates/Professional Stagers
Lewis & Clark Realty, Inc.

Thankful

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Hunter — I am thankful for Ashton and Tommy because they are nice.

Jadynn — I am thankful for my mom's dumpling soup because it is good.

Elliott — I am thankful for dogs and cats because I like dogs and cats.

SCOTLAND/SECOND GRADE

Tyrus — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for my family, pets and my mom and dad. I am thankful for all those things because my family loves me. My friends, because they like me. My pets, because they are funny. And my mom and dad, because they give me food.

Parker — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for my bow and arrow for my seventh birthday and cat named Jiffy.

Keegan — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for you. I love you. It is fun in computer class. If I did not have you, I do not know what to do. It is fun with you. I also love Allisyn and Nick. When I come home I love you.

Mataya — Dear Mom: I am thankful for you, family, subjects in school and friends. I am thankful for you because I do chores. I am thankful for family because I help them. I am thankful for subjects in school because I pay attention to class. I am thankful for friends because I play with them.

Kade — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for wrestling, family, toys, video games, and food. I am thankful for these because they are fun.

Jaymison — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for aunts and uncles because they are very fun. I am thankful for mom and dad because they give and buy me food.

Bailey — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for my family because you make me happy. I am thankful for my pets because they are funny.

Kaden — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for my cat because he is funny and annoying at night. I am thankful for my family because of everything they do.

Claire — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for my toys. And I am thankful for our family. The thing is, our family is meant to be together. And I am thankful for our pets, too.

Cole — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for food and family because if there was no food, our family's, we could not live.

Martina Jo — Dear Mommy and Daddy: I am thankful for family because you make it good and I don't want it to be lost.

Clara — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for all the stuff my mom gets me like petshops or lunchbags. My dad gets me stuff too and I like it very much. I love my family too, cause they love me.

Jenna — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for my family and cousins, because I love my family and my cousins. I like the food.

Trenten — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for being nice and I love you all. And I am nice. Good bye.

Nicole — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for my family and my friends and you! Why do you let me babysit? You are the best mom and dad. Babysitting is the best, and you. Babysitting is the best thing for me and maybe for you too!

Stephen — Dear Mom and Dad: I am thankful for playing the army game. And you are nice and I love you. And dad you are brave. I also love you and I like hunting with you and mom. And dad gets me lego sets and toys and my bow and arrow, but you never let me shoot it and that's just wrong.

Caden Simantel — This Thanksgiving Holiday, I am thankful for my mom, dad, sister and grandparents. Some other things that I am thankful for are friends, Kim, my babysitter, my teachers, and toys. I am glad that I have a family who loves me and who is always there for me.



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