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**Analysis of “Cost per Voter” by Voting Method
 November 2, 2010 General Election
 Arapahoe County, Colorado**

February 7, 2011

Overview

Arapahoe County, with approximately 273,400 Active registered voters for the November 2, 2010 General Election, provided three options for Arapahoe County voters:
 Mail-in Ballots, Early Voting at multiple sites and Election Day voting at polling places.

Arapahoe County has been aggressive in offering the Mail-in ballot option over the past several years and for the 2010 General Election, nearly 70% of the Active registered voters had signed up to be “permanent” Mail-in voters. The County initially mailed out approximately 198,000 mail ballots to these voters. For voters who preferred to deliver their ballots rather than mail them, or who voted them too late for mail delivery, the County provided 15 Ballot Drop Off sites strategically located throughout the County from October 14 through November 2, 2010 when the polls closed. Ballot Drop Off sites were generally open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays, and until 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Early Voting is an option provided in Arapahoe County at eight geographically dispersed sites around the County. Voters could go to the Early Voting site and vote their ballot on one of approximately 60 electronic voting machine beginning on October 18 and ending on October 29, 2010. Early Vote sites were open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. most weekdays; 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday and 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday.

On Election Day, Arapahoe County staffed 372 precincts in 197 polling locations throughout the County. Voters could go to their assigned precinct/polling place and vote their ballot on one of over 1,030 electronic voting machines. Mail-in voters could also drop their Mail-in ballots in a ballot box located at each polling place. Polling places were staffed with four Election Judges for each precinct plus a Ballot Box Election Judge at polling sites with three or more precincts in a single location. This totaled nearly 1,500 Election Judges. Each Election Judge was required to attend one of approximately 55 three hour training sessions which were conducted by the county over a period extending from September 27 through November 1, 2010.

Voter turnout at the 2010 General Election was:

<u>Voting Method</u>	<u>Voters Voting</u>	<u>Percentage of Voters Voting (rounded)</u>
Election Day Polling Place *	36,008	17.9%
Early Vote	5,212	2.6%
Mail-in	<u>159,757</u>	<u>79.5%</u>
Total	200,977	100%

**includes provisional ballots issued in polling places*

Methodology

This analysis took into consideration all of the external and internal costs associated with conducting the General Election of 2010. Some of those costs were specific to a particular voting method and others were costs that were shared across voting methods.

Our calculations are summarized as follows:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Specific vote method cost per voter} \\ + \text{Shared cost per voter} \\ \hline \text{Total cost per voter for vote method} \end{array}$$

The “specific vote method cost per voter” accounts for all costs unique to a particular voting method. For example, envelopes and postage costs were unique to mail-in voting. There were technology costs specific to early voting. Polling place voting had unique costs such as training and compensating Election Day judges and delivering voting machines.

The “shared cost per voter” accounts for elections expenses incurred by Arapahoe County regardless of vote method. Examples of shared expenses include statutory publications, auditing services, and overtime pay for regular full time employees.

Cost per Voter by Voting Method Calculations

Shared Costs

The shared costs across all methods of voting amounted to \$95,753. The shared cost (\$95,753 divided by 200,977 total voters voting) equals \$0.48 per voter voting

Polling Place Voting

The total cost of the elections attributable to Election Day Polling Place voting is \$517,616. The total number of voters voting on Election Day at polling places totaled 36,008. The polling place specific cost per voter voting (\$517,616 divided by 36,008 voters) is \$14.38. Adding the shared cost per voter of \$0.48 generates a total cost per polling place voter voting of \$14.86.

Early Voting

The total cost of the elections attributable to Early Voting is \$102,153. The total number of voters voting during Early Voting totaled 5,212. The Early Voting specific cost per voter voting (\$102,153 divided by 5,212 voters) is \$19.60. Adding the shared cost per voter of \$0.48 generates a total cost per Early Vote voter voting of \$20.08.

Mail-in Voting

The total cost of the elections attributable to Mail-in Voting is \$343,843. The total number of voters voting by mail totaled 159,757. The Mail-in voting specific cost per voter voting (\$343,843 divided by 159,757 voters) is \$2.15. Adding the shared cost per voter of \$0.48 generates a total cost per Mail-in Ballot voter of \$2.63.

These calculations indicate that an Election Day polling place voter, at \$14.86, costs the county more than 5.5 times as much as a mail ballot voter at \$2.63; and an Early Vote voter, at \$20.08 costs the county more than 7.5 times as much as a mail ballot voter and 1.3 times as much as a polling place voter.

Cost Impact if All Voters had Voted by Mail-in Ballot in 2010 General Election

If all voters had voted by Mail-in ballot, the cost of the Mail-in ballot portion of the election (\$343,843) would have increased by 20.5% (the total percentage of all voters not voting by mail) to \$432,466 plus all shared costs (\$95,753) would be absorbed into the Mail-in ballot category bringing the total cost for the election to \$528,219.

Compared to the actual cost of the 2010 General of \$1,059,365, this would represent a savings to the County of \$531,146 or over 50%.

If all voters had voted by mail ballot in the 2010 General Election the cost per each voter who voted would have been \$2.63 per voter in Arapahoe County.