

A large, stylized orange letter 'E' graphic that serves as a background element on the left side of the slide. It has a white, rounded cutout on its left side.

HJR 46

Election by Mail Ballot

A solid blue horizontal bar with rounded ends, positioned below the text 'Election by Mail Ballot'.

Majority of Electors expressed appreciation for being able to vote by mail

Electors concerns regarding Mail Ballot

1. Signing outside of envelope – identity theft
2. Having to provide postage to return ballot
3. Someone voting another than person's ballot was addressed to

Resolutions to problems I heard are:

- Purchase envelopes that hide the signature – some counties in Oregon use these envelopes
- Postage 41 cents – we had 5 drop sites that were strategically located so voters could drop off ballots without paying to mail back their ballot. I would note with the cost of gas, postage may be cheaper.
- Each signature is verified so it eliminates the possibility of someone voting another's ballot

Why do Election Administrators support mail ballots?

- Increase in voter turnout
- Reduced need for election judges
- More control over all aspects of the election
- Electors receive accurate information because staff has more time to answer phone calls
- Late Registration easier to administer because you do not have the poll worker telephone calls to answer

Ease of Voting – positive remarks

- I received many compliments on mail ballot process
- Our elderly liked being able to vote from home. They do not like to drive and find parking to go and vote.
- Parents expressed gratitude because it was so much easier to vote at home than bundling up the kids to go and vote.

Increased voter turnout

Missoula Municipal Elections

2007 General Election	46.1% (mail)
2005 General Election	32.99%
2003 General Election	27.29%
2001 General Election	26.65%

Voter turnout in other counties:

Billings	52%
Bozeman	44.7%
Helena	61.6%
Havre	54%

Recruiting Election Judges

- This is a major issue for most Election Administrators throughout the country.
- Mail Ballots allow us to hire a minimal number of judges to help stuff, sort and count ballots. I used less than 25 judges for the Municipal General Election. For a poll election I would need to hire approximately 300 judges.

More Control over all aspects of the Election

- Poll elections pull EA's and staff in several different directions
 - **Preparing supplies and ballots for polling places requires many hours doing warehouse work.**
 - **Absentee voting for 30 days**
 - **Staffing 300 election judges, finding replacements when a judge gets ill.**
 - **Late Registrations**
 - **Provisional Voting**
 - **Answering incoming calls from Electors and Judges who have problems at the polling place**

Late Registration

- Simply there is more time and staff to administer late registration
 - With poll elections we are spread pretty thin trying to answer phone calls from electors, handling problems and phone calls that occur at polling places, provisional voting, processing absentee ballots and getting absentee and other ballots counted!
 - Mail ballots – there are minimal phone calls; we have the time to devote to our customers that need to register or who are dropping off ballots.

Weather Emergencies

- Mail ballot elections eliminate the problem of weather emergencies. In 2004, Sheridan County was unable to open several rural polling places due to a heavy snow storm.

Mail Ballots allow electors time to study and vote their ballot

- With the passage of SB 96, our ballots will be very lengthy – with mail ballots electors will have the time to review their ballot and vote as time permits.
- If voting at the polls, I am worried electors will get frustrated waiting in line for voting booths to vote their ballot.
- Also, I believe we will see a higher number of issues not voted because the voter did not have the time to vote the full ballot.

Newspaper Articles

- Independent Record “Most liked voting by mail”
- Great Falls Tribune “Mailed in Ballots praised across State”

Absentee Voting & Permanent Absentee

- Electors like voting by mail – absentee voting increases with each election! I believe in 2008 we will have record # of absentee requests because electors did approve the mail ballot experience. I cannot tell you how many times I have been asked “are we doing mail ballot next year” when I reply no they are quite disappointed. I do explain they can receive an absentee ballot.

Polling Place Issues

- Election Administrators are consolidating polling places due to shortage of judges.
- Finding accessible polling places is a major issue
- Mail Ballots reduce the risk of an emergency occurring at our polling places (fire alarms, bomb threats, etc.)
- Staffing

Polling place issues continued..

- Yellowstone County voters were called telling them their names were not in the official register so they would have to vote provisionally and the wait to vote provisional was 4 hours. These were prank calls but they may have had an effect on the election!

Polling place issues continued...

- In May 2007 election, 4 schools in Yellowstone County had bomb threats called in
- Schools are becoming more and more concerned about security issues and

In closing...

- Mail ballots are not new, Montana has been running mail ballot elections for years. It is time to provide this **successful, well received, time proven** method of voting for federal elections.