SURVEY OF POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND EVALUATION PRACTICES BY LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIALS

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We report the results of two comprehensive surveys of local and state election officials in the United States. The surveys, conducted December 2008 through September 2009, focused on questions about how poll workers were recruited, trained, evaluated, and compensated in the 2008 presidential election. In addition, this memo identifies promising practices in four particular jurisdictions and evaluates them through in-depth case studies. This research has been supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the JEHT Foundation. Cassie Gross and Laura Wiedlocher provided research assistance. We alone are responsible for the analyses and interpretations made in this study.

KEY FINDINGS

With a highly decentralized system of election administration in the United States, there are dramatic differences in the number of voters served by different local jurisdictions. As a result, there are large differences in the number of poll workers needed in different local jurisdictions.

We find that highly populated jurisdictions face acute needs for poll workers while small jurisdictions have very little demand for poll workers. Consequently, large jurisdictions tend to take a more critical view of their poll worker operations. In addition, large jurisdictions engage in more extensive efforts to recruit, train and evaluate poll workers. At the same time, our research shows that most of the innovation in these three areas comes from large jurisdictions, as they have the needs and to some extent have access to more resources.

By a substantial margin, local election officials rank training as their most important poll worker activity, ahead of retention, performance evaluation, recruiting, and compensation. They ranked compensation as the least important aspect of poll worker operations.

Relatively few local election officials rated any aspects of recruiting poll workers as "very difficult." Local officials report that the most difficult recruiting challenges they face are finding poll workers of a certain political party and finding enough poll workers to adequately staff all polling places. Roughly three-fourths of the local officials noted legal requirements of a partisan balance among poll workers at each polling place.

While local officials list training as the most important aspect of poll worker operations, they generally report that they are satisfied with their training methods and the performance of their poll workers. In addition, efforts to measure poll worker performance tend to be limited. Very few local election officials reported gathering systematic evidence to make formal assessments of poll workers (such as graded report cards for poll workers). Election officials in large jurisdictions are more supportive of reforms that might reduce the demand for poll workers or make it easier to hire more poll workers.

The case studies demonstrate that some local jurisdictions have unique programs for recruiting, training, and evaluating poll workers. These programs may be most effective in jurisdictions with the strongest demand for poll workers – and these tend to be the larger jurisdictions.

I.   INTRODUCTION

In the United States, election administration is highly decentralized with over 10,000 separate jurisdictions serving as the key interface between the voters and the government. This decentralization creates tradeoffs as there is much variation in the administration of elections. On the one hand, this variation leads to a complicated system with significant differences across the jurisdictions. This may lead to inequalities of services and in challenges of identifying and fixing problems as they emerge. At the same time, these differences provide room for innovation and the diffusion of best practices. If one jurisdiction creates a program that works well, others can imitate it. Like states, election jurisdictions can serve as "laboratories of democracy" and try new – and conceivably better – ways of conducting elections.

In this study we focus on understanding a key function of local election administration – poll worker recruitment, training, and performance. Even with the rapid growth in early and absentee voting, most voters in the United States still cast their ballots at a polling place on Election Day. Thus, the interactions between voters and poll workers remain a critical part of ensuring free and fair elections. However, we do not know enough about those interactions. There are many unanswered questions about how poll workers are hired, trained and evaluated across the United States. Perhaps more important, we know very little about those jurisdictions that are implementing successful poll worker practices. The surveys and case studies described in this report provide some of the information needed to fill those gaps.

Our investigation consisted of three parts. We first conducted a random sample survey of the universe of local election jurisdictions in the United States. Second, we surveyed state election officials using a similar but shorter instrument. The surveys focused on questions about how poll workers were recruited, trained, evaluated and compensated in the 2008 presidential election. The data confirm the dramatic differences across local jurisdictions, finding that these differences are most distinct when one factors in the number of voters served.   We find that large jurisdictions face acute needs for poll workers while small jurisdictions have very little demand for poll workers. Consequently, large jurisdictions tend to take a more critical view of their poll worker operations. In addition, large jurisdictions engage in more extensive efforts to recruit, train and evaluate poll workers.

In the third part of the research we conducted four case studies of innovative poll worker practices in four separate jurisdictions. These observations were selected based upon results from the above-described survey and previous analyses done by this study's authors. Each of the four counties is an innovator in one or more poll worker practices, and each has formal practices in place to make the innovations permanent. The cases suggest that innovation is alive and well in local election jurisdictions, and that having professional and proactive personnel in place is an important component in ensuring that innovative practices stay in place. They also confirm the finding of the random sample survey: Jurisdictions with more voters encounter more challenges, but at the same time, are capable of responding to them. Finally, our findings suggest that many of the challenges that arise in the random sample survey data could be ameliorated if jurisdictions take some or all of the steps that these innovative jurisdictions have taken.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Election administration in the United States has received greater attention from scholars, journalists, advocates, and policy makers in the wake of the 2000 presidential election and the passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-252). As the study of election administration moves forward, attention is shifting to election officials and poll workers who are at the front lines of elections in the United States. Even with the rapid growth in early and absentee voting, most voters in the United States still cast their ballots at a polling place on Election Day. Thus, the interactions between voters and poll workers remain a critical part of ensuring free and fair elections. However, we do not know enough about those interactions. More fundamentally, there are many unanswered questions about how poll workers are hired, trained and evaluated.

Michael Lipsky (1980) uses the seamless phrase "street level bureaucrats" to describe many types of government workers (such as police officers or social service case workers) who routinely make on-the-spot interpretations of the law in their interactions with the public. These officials enjoy a level of authority and discretion in enforcing public laws that is sometimes underappreciated.

Poll workers are the street level bureaucrats of elections in the United States. When voters go to a polling place on Election Day, they rarely are served by their local election official or regular election administration staff in their jurisdiction. Rather, they are served by citizen poll workers who are hired just for that day. Among their many duties, poll workers open and close polling places, sign in voters, hand out ballots, troubleshoot registration problems, and make sure the voting equipment works properly. On Election Day, poll workers have a great deal of discretion and make many judgments about who gets to vote and who does not (see Alvarez and Hall 2006; Baybeck and Kimball 2008). As a result, it is important to understand how poll workers are hired, trained and evaluated.

Recent studies point to the importance of poll worker recruitment and training. Effective poll worker training programs can influence the performance of poll workers and their job satisfaction (Hall, Monson and Patterson 2007). Voter confidence in elections is influenced by voter assessments of poll workers and local election officials who serve them on Election Day (Atkeson and Saunders 2007; Hall, Monson and Patterson 2009). Another study compares voting to a customer service encounter and finds that voter evaluations of poll worker performance are shaped by conditions at the polling place and interactions with the poll workers (Claassen et al. 2008). In the same study, poll workers who were more confident about their training were given higher performance ratings by voters (Claassen et al. 2008). Finally, a previous survey of local election officials noted some problems with poll worker performance and indicated a need to improve poll worker training (Fisher and Coleman 2008).

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) has also taken significant interest in poll worker issues, partly in response to HAVA requirements. In 2007 the EAC published a list of poll worker requirements for each state (2007a), a guide for recruiting college students as poll workers (2007b), and a successful practices volume on recruiting, training and managing poll

workers (2007c). The EAC reports are clearly aimed at encouraging local governments to improve poll worker operations.

These studies and reports indicate that poll workers are a crucial component of election administration. And yet we do not know much about the hiring, training and evaluation of poll workers in the United States. In addition, some reports tend to suggest that all local jurisdictions can improve poll worker operations by following the same guidelines. However, given the great diversity of local jurisdictions that administer elections in the United States, it is unlikely that a one-size-fits-all approach to poll workers will succeed everywhere.

III.   DATA COLLECTION

The data for this analysis come from three primary sources, a large-n random sample survey of local election officials, a survey of state election officials, and a set of four case studies. This section describes the procedures used to generate the data.

Random Sample Survey of Local Election Officials. The mixed-mode surveys of local election officials (Internet and mail) were conducted from December 2008 to March 2009. Election administration in the United States is highly decentralized. Most election functions, including hiring and training poll workers, are administered by local jurisdictions (counties, cities, towns, or boards of election). In some states election administration is shared by different officials or election boards. We identify 10,370 local jurisdictions in the United States with primary responsibility for hiring and training poll workers. We contacted state election offices to get a list of local jurisdictions in each state with main responsibility for hiring poll workers. The 10,370 jurisdictions we identified do not overlap, and they cover the entire country. These localities vary substantially in terms of the number of voters they serve and thus the number of poll workers they need to hire. The median jurisdiction served slightly more than 1,000 voters in the 2004 presidential election. Half of the local election jurisdictions in the United States are small towns or townships with very few election staff. At the same time, roughly 64% of the voters in the 2004 election were served by just 418 large jurisdictions (4% of the jurisdictions) with more than 50,000 voters apiece. These large jurisdictions have much larger staffs and need to hire large numbers of poll workers. We expect that the poll worker experiences in small jurisdictions are vastly different than in large jurisdictions.

We divided our sample for the survey of local election officials into small jurisdictions (serving less than 1,000 voters in the 2004 presidential election), medium jurisdictions (serving between 1,000 and 50,000 voters), and large jurisdictions (serving more than 50,000 voters). We chose 1,000 voters as one dividing line because jurisdictions with fewer than 1,000 voters are generally small towns that have no more than a couple of polling places and a handful of poll workers. We expect these jurisdictions to have a different election administration experience than larger jurisdictions. In addition, roughly half of the jurisdictions served less than 1,000 voters in the 2004 general election, so this serves as a natural break in the data. We chose 50,000 voters as the other dividing line because jurisdictions serving more than 50,000 voters tend to be in densely populated metropolitan areas with a large central city. Thus, the largest jurisdictions have different infrastructure and transportation networks than the medium-sized jurisdictions, which are mostly rural and exurban counties.

We surveyed in all states for the survey of local election officials. The smallest local jurisdictions are primarily in the upper Midwest and New England, with a smaller number in the Plains. Large jurisdictions are concentrated in the major metropolitan centers of the United States. We derived our sample from the universe of 10,370 elections offices. Most of these offices are quite small, so to ensure representation of the largest offices we drew a stratified sample. All 418 jurisdictions with over 50,000 voters in the 2004 general election were included in the sample. For those with between 1,000 and 50,000 voters in 2004, we randomly sampled 2,000 jurisdictions from the 4,931 meeting this population criterion. For those with less than

1,000 voters in 2004, of which there were 5,021, we randomly sampled 500 jurisdictions. All told, our sample frame was 2,919 jurisdictions.

For each jurisdiction in the sampling frame, we sent the survey to the top election official (usually an elected county or town clerk, or an appointed election director). The preferred mode was via a web survey. However, not all jurisdictions had an email address – some jurisdictions had only postal mail contacts. For those contacted by email they were given an opportunity to respond via an online survey instrument. For those contacted by mail, they were sent a paper survey. For various reasons, some of the surveys sent initially via email were eventually sent via postal mail instead. All told, 795 surveys (27%) were sent via postal mail, 2,104 (72%) via email, and for 20 we could not obtain any contact information and therefore no type of instrument was sent. The vast majority of paper surveys sent by mail went to small and medium-sized jurisdictions.

The email survey included two reminders to non-respondents. The mail survey included one follow-up mailing to non-respondents. We received 900 surveys from local election officials, a response rate of 30.8% (900 returned surveys / 2,919 jurisdictions in the sampling frame). The response rate for small jurisdictions (26%) is somewhat lower than the response rate for medium (31%) and large jurisdictions (37%). The response rate was the same (31%) for surveys completed by mail and those completed on the Internet.

There was also some item non-response in the survey of local officials. First, approximately 100 respondents answered the first three questions and then did not complete the rest of the survey. Second, a small number of questions had item non-response rates of 50% or more. These included questions about the age and salaries of poll workers (questions 16, 32 and 33) and a question about persuading government officials to give employees time off to work as poll workers (question 13i). High non-response on these questions is likely due to reluctance or difficulty in answering these questions (particularly the questions on salaries), problems with question wording (question 33), and problems with programming in the online survey (questions 13i and 16). We urge caution in interpreting the responses to those survey items with high item non-response, and we avoid making conclusions about those specific questions in this report.

More generally, survey non-response is a potential problem if the officials who respond to the survey are systematically different from the officials who do not respond (see Weisberg 2005 for a comprehensive discussion of non-response bias). While we cannot be certain that there are no biases in our sample of local election officials, we are able to make some comparisons to other data sources to assess our sample. When we compare our sample of local election officials to other studies in terms of their demographic characteristics (e.g., age, education, experience) our sample is very similar to other studies (see below). In addition, when we compare our sample to the population of local election officials in terms of their method of selection and party affiliation, we also find our sample to be quite similar to the population of local officials in the United States (see Kimball and Kropf 2006; Kimball and Baybeck 2010).

State Election Official Survey. In August of 2009, we sent surveys to all state election officials, again using the mixed mode. The survey was in the field through the end of September 2009, and it included two follow-up contacts with non-respondents. Because their roles in

election processes differ from local officials, the survey instrument for state officials was significantly shorter than the survey of local officials. We received responses from thirty-three of the fifty state officials, and most were submitted via the online survey. Both surveys, of the local officials and of the state officials, will be discussed in the following analyses. Descriptive tabulations of the responses to every question of the survey are available in the included appendices.

   Case Studies. To gather more detailed data on innovative practices in poll worker recruitment, training, and performance, four jurisdictions were chosen for in-depth case studies. These jurisdictions were:

- Allen County, Ohio;
- Boone County, Missouri;
- Butler County, Ohio; and
- Guilford County, North Carolina.

These counties were selected because in past election conferences they shared information regarding their innovative practices, they expressed willingness to share information about them, and they had implemented the innovative practices for at least 2 election cycles. All of the counties are doing innovative work in across all three areas of focus in this analysis – recruitment, training, and performance – and thus the data collection focused on all three areas, for each case. The case study data were collected through open-ended phone interviews and email conversations, conducted primarily by staff at the Pollworker Institute.

   In the next four sections, we focus primarily on the rich dataset provided by the survey of local election officials. Unless otherwise noted, when using the terms "the survey" or "the sample" we are referring to the random sample survey of local election officials.

IV. A PORTRAIT OF ELECTION JURISDICTIONS AND THEIR POLL WORKERS

We first examine some characteristics of the local election officials in our sample (see Table 1 below). Overall, the demographic profile of our sample of local election officials in the United States (in terms of age, education, gender, and experience) is very similar to previous studies (Fisher and Coleman 2008). Officials in large jurisdictions tend to be more educated – a larger percentage of them have completed some post-secondary education. Election officials in large jurisdictions also tend to be younger than officials in smaller jurisdictions. The mean age for officials in large jurisdictions is about five years younger than the mean age for officials in small jurisdictions. The vast majority of local election officials are women, for jurisdictions of all sizes.

Table 1
Characteristics of Election Officials by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

| | Jurisdiction Size | | |
	Small	**Medium**	**Large**
Age (mean years)	55.3*	52.4	50.8
Post-secondary education (percent)	11%*	11%*	26%
Female (percent)	79%	83%	74%
Experience in election administration (mean years)	13.4	13.4	14.7
Experience in current election jurisdiction (mean years)	12.6*	11.1*	8.8
Professional association memberships (mean)	0.3*	0.9*	1.4
N (min, max)	(64,117)	(471,507)	(117,146)

* Group value is statistically different from value for large jurisdictions, p<.05.

The differences in characteristics are not just limited to the summary statistics – the *distributions* on these measures are quite telling as well. Figure 1 presents a histogram of the age measure across jurisdiction size, showing that there is a significant skew to the left in the small jurisdictions. That is, many of the election officials in small jurisdictions are in the higher end of the age distribution.

**Figure 1. Age Distribution of Election Officials by Jurisdiction Size.
Mean ages are the bolded lines.**
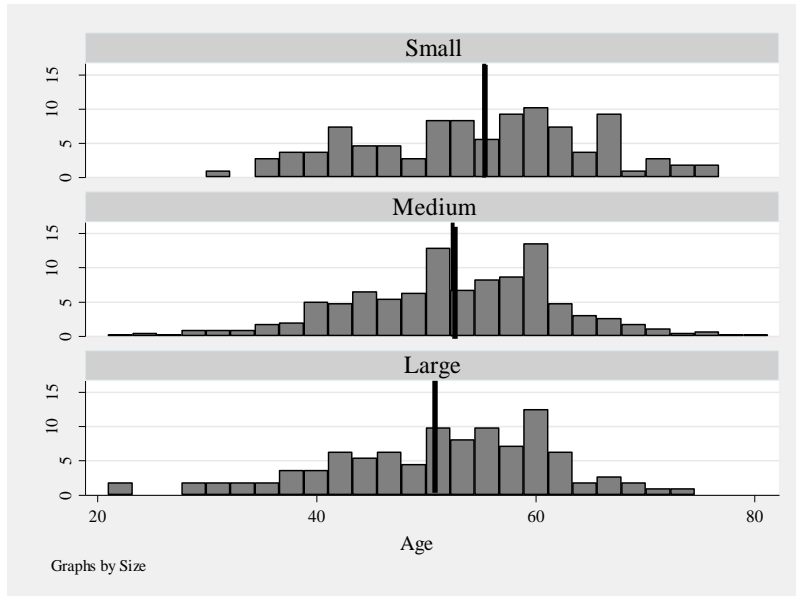
Furthermore, election officials in large jurisdictions are more likely to have worked in election administration in another jurisdiction before coming to their current constituency. Experience in election administration is similar, on average, for officials in all types of jurisdictions. However, officials in small jurisdictions have more experience, on average, in their own jurisdiction than officials in large jurisdictions. Almost all of the experience for officials in small jurisdictions has come within the place they currently serve. In contrast, almost half of the experience for officials in large jurisdictions came outside their current constituency. Finally, officials in large jurisdictions are members of more professional associations for election officials, on average, than officials working in small or medium-sized jurisdictions. This translates to poll worker operations, for we also find that officials in large jurisdictions are more likely to use professional associations (as well as the Election Assistance Commission and local universities) as resources for poll worker recruitment and training. All of these differences suggest that a more professionalized culture of election administration tends to exist in large jurisdictions.

Table 2
Median Poll Workers, Staff, Voters and Polling Places by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

	Jurisdiction Size		
	Small	**Medium**	**Large**
Poll Workers	5	40	753
Polling Places	1	5	94
Staff dedicated to poll workers	1	2	5
Election Day Voters	351	3,432	66,623
Budget for poll worker operations in 2008	$225	$1,000	$45,000
Poll workers per polling place	5	8	8
Voters per poll worker	70	86	88
Voters per polling place	351	686	709
N (min, max)	(109,125)	(540,608)	(138,148)

We also gathered information on poll worker operations in our sample jurisdictions (see Table 2). Not surprisingly, the scale of polling place operations is substantially higher for large jurisdictions. Even though large jurisdictions tend to hire more poll workers per polling place than small jurisdictions, there is an economy of scale with medium and large jurisdictions serving a somewhat higher ratio of voters per poll worker than small jurisdictions. In addition, large jurisdictions serve, on average, twice as many voters per polling place than small jurisdictions. However, the main effect of jurisdiction size is seen in the administrative burden indicated in the first four rows of Table 2. Polling place operations place much bigger demands on large jurisdictions in terms of the number of voters served, the number of polling locations and the number of poll workers needed. The professional background of election officials in large jurisdictions, and their greater need for poll workers, suggests that large jurisdictions may engage in more activities to recruit, train and evaluate poll workers.

Table 3a

**Average Number of Poll Workers for Specific Tasks in 2008 Election
by Size of Jurisdiction**

Poll Worker Job	Jurisdiction Size		
	Small	Medium	Large
Greeting voters, managing lines	1	8	123
Checking in voters	2	19	361
Issuing ballots	2	16	210
Assisting with provisional ballots	0.3	8	132
Supervising polling place	1	9	152
Assisting with voting equipment	1	13	212
Troubleshooting problems	0.5	5	61
Technicians or rovers	0.5	3	24
Opening or closing polling places	1	29	278
N (min, max)	(97,120)	(456,515)	(106,116)

Note: Cell entries are mean values.

The survey asked local election officials to report how many poll workers they hired for specific tasks (Table 3a). In addition to needing many more poll workers, large jurisdictions are more likely to hire poll workers for specifically-defined tasks, such as checking in voters. In addition, small jurisdictions are less likely to assign poll workers for certain positions, such as greeting voters, assisting with provisional ballots, troubleshooting problems, or openers and closer. Some respondents noted that all poll workers are cross-trained on all aspects of running the polling place so that poll workers could rotate for emergencies and for dinner breaks and to prevent potential boredom. Others noted that they are recruiting and providing focused poll worker training for specific duties.

Table 3b

Average Daily Wages for Poll Workers by Size of Jurisdiction

Poll Worker Job	Jurisdiction Size		
	Small	Medium	Large
Greeting voters, managing lines	$101*	$102*	$115
Checking in voters	$112*	$111*	$121
Issuing ballots	$113	$111	$119
Assisting with provisional ballots	$103*	$110*	$129
Supervising polling place	$115*	$125*	$157
Assisting with voting equipment	$107*	$113*	$124
Troubleshooting problems	$100*	$120*	$164
Opening or closing polling places	$105*	$114*	$130
N (min, max)	(64,96)	(294,393)	(81,139)

Note: Cell entries are mean wages for working on Election Day.
* Group value is statistically different from value for large jurisdictions, p<.05.

When it comes to compensation, most jurisdictions paid poll workers a bit more than $100 for working during the 2008 general election. Large jurisdictions tend to pay poll workers more for a day's work, regardless of the poll worker's specific responsibilities (see Table 3b). The survey also asked whether poll workers were paid extra for things such as additional language skills, exceptional performance, or mileage. Few officials reported additional pay, with two exceptions. Slightly more than half of the jurisdictions reported extra pay for poll workers who attend a training session, and this bonus was more common among small jurisdictions. In addition, roughly one-third of the local officials reported paying a bonus for poll workers in demanding positions, such as those who troubleshoot problems or supervise other workers at a polling place.

Table 4a
Ranking Poll Worker Priorities by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

	Jurisdiction Size		
	Small	**Medium**	**Large**
Retaining Poll Workers*	2.4*	2.5*	2.9
Recruiting*	3.5*	3.2*	2.7
Performance Evaluation	3.2*	3.3*	3.6
Training	1.7*	1.5	1.5
Compensation	3.7	3.8	3.8
N (min, max)	(112,117)	(514,530)	(132,139)

Note: Election officials ranked each activity on a scale from 1 ("most important") to 5 ("least important"). Cell entries are mean ratings.
* Group value is statistically different from value for large jurisdictions, $p<.05$.

We asked local officials to prioritize a list of objectives related to poll worker recruitment and training (see Table 4a). The results indicate that, by a wide margin, local officials rank poll worker training as the most important objective on the list, regardless of jurisdiction size. Similarly, poll worker pay was ranked as the least important objective among all three types of jurisdictions. Small jurisdictions rank recruiting as a lower priority than large jurisdictions. Small jurisdictions do not need to find nearly as many poll workers as large jurisdictions, and they spend fewer resources on recruiting than large jurisdictions. In addition, small jurisdictions rank poll worker retention as their second most important of the five objectives, while retention was ranked third by the large jurisdictions. This is likely related to the fact that small jurisdictions rely on a higher percentage of repeat poll workers than large jurisdictions, as we indicate below. State election officials report similar priorities, ranking training as the most important priority on the same list, followed by recruiting.

Table 4b
First-Time and Split-Shift Poll Workers by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

	Jurisdiction Size		
	Small	**Medium**	**Large**
First-time Poll Workers (Percent)	9%*	12%*	24%
Split Shift Poll Workers (Percent)	31%*	16%*	3%
N (min, max)	(113,120)	(530,554)	(125,130)

Note: Cell entries are mean values for each size category.
* Group value is statistically different from value for large jurisdictions, p<.05.

The large jurisdictions have much more turnover in poll workers from one election to the next. On average, large jurisdictions had a higher share of first-time poll workers in the 2008 election. In the median small jurisdiction, none of the poll workers on November 4, 2008 were working their first election. By comparison, the share of first-time poll workers is higher in the median mid-sized jurisdiction (ten percent) and the median large jurisdiction (twenty-three percent). However, split shifts (where a poll worker serves for part of the day until relieved by another worker) are more common in smaller jurisdictions than in large jurisdictions. It appears that large jurisdictions with many polling places are reluctant to offer split shifts because of the logistical difficulties of managing the transitions between so many half-day workers.

V. POLL WORKER RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

We next turn to an examination of recruiting efforts for poll workers. The survey included questions about organizations and methods of recruiting poll workers. Jurisdiction size is strongly related to the degree to which election officials seek assistance from other groups and organizations in recruiting poll workers (see Table 5).

Table 5
Seeking Assistance in Recruiting Poll Workers by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

	Jurisdiction Size		
Sought help from:	**Small**	**Medium**	**Large**
Local colleges*	20%	28%	66%
Local high schools*	22%	45%	77%
Local news media*	29%	47%	83%
Political parties*	34%	67%	86%
State employees*	28%	33%	65%
County employees*	31%	49%	77%
Municipal employees	63%	57%	67%
Local Businesses*	23%	34%	60%
Nonprofit groups*	24%	35%	66%
N (min, max)	(117,119)	(540,556)	(127,130)

Note: Cell entries indicate the percentage of jurisdictions reporting the activity.
* Group differences statistically significant, $p<.05$.

Aside from municipal employees, most small jurisdictions did not report seeking help from other organizations in recruiting poll workers. By comparison, strong majorities of the large jurisdictions report assistance from each organization listed in Table 5. Political parties are one of the most frequently used organizations for recruiting poll workers, for all sizes of jurisdictions. Many state election laws specifically designate a role for political parties to recruit poll workers (EAC 2007a). In addition, the surveys of state officials and local officials both confirmed that most states have laws requiring partisan balance among poll workers assigned to the same polling place.

Among the jurisdictions that reported recruiting assistance from a group or organization, we also asked them to rate how helpful the organization was. Small and medium-sized jurisdictions rated municipal governments as most helpful in recruiting poll workers, with county

government and political parties well behind in a tie for second place. This is not a surprise since most small jurisdictions are municipalities. Large jurisdictions rated county government and the local news media as most helpful in assisting recruiting efforts, with political parties and local high schools following closely behind. With the exception of municipal governments, each of the organizations in Table 5 was rated as more helpful by medium and large jurisdictions than by small jurisdictions. The biggest differences between jurisdictions are that large jurisdictions rated nonprofit groups and local high schools and colleges as much more helpful, on average, than small jurisdictions. Overall, large jurisdictions are more enthusiastic about efforts to cultivate outside organizations when recruiting poll workers.

State officials report that poll worker recruitment is primarily the responsibility of local jurisdictions, although approximately half of the states provide informal guidance on recruitment to local officials. Roughly one-third of the states participate in public service announcements for poll worker recruitment drives. In addition, roughly one-third of state officials report working with local colleges, high schools, and the news media to help recruit poll workers.

Table 6
Poll Worker Recruiting Methods by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

	Jurisdiction Size		
Recruiting method:	**Small**	**Medium**	**Large**
Asking previous poll workers	90%	95%	99%
Cold calling voter lists*	42%	40%	51%
Internet advertising*	13%	24%	67%
Newspaper advertising*	17%	37%	58%
Radio advertising*	11%	16%	48%
Check-off on registration cards*	42%	45%	71%
Asking poll workers to recruit*	65%	87%	95%
Recruit at community events*	27%	38%	72%
Ask polling place chiefs to recruit their own personnel*	35%	37%	59%
Increase poll worker pay*	63%	68%	79%
Non-cash incentives*	9%	12%	30%
N (min, max)	(116,119)	(540,560)	(126,130)

Note: Cell entries indicate the percentage of jurisdictions reporting the activity.
* Group differences statistically significant, p<.05.

The survey also asked election officials about their use of specific recruiting methods (see Table 6). Once again, large jurisdictions are much more likely to use the recruiting methods listed in Table 6 than small jurisdictions. The differences are quite large. In particular, large jurisdictions rely more heavily on media advertising (Internet, newspapers, and radio) to recruit poll workers. Large jurisdictions are also more likely to use other broad-based efforts to cast a wider net for poll workers (such as community events, and voter registration cards). In addition, necessity is the mother of invention when it comes to poll worker recruitment. Jurisdictions that ranked recruiting as a very important priority in Table 4 engaged in more of the recruiting activities listed above.

We also asked election officials to rate the effectiveness of each of the recruiting methods in Table 6. All types of jurisdictions tend to rate recruiting methods involving current and former poll workers as the most effective. In addition, large jurisdictions are notably more enthusiastic than small jurisdictions about advertising to find more poll workers.

These differences in recruiting suggest very different poll worker cultures in small versus large jurisdictions. For small jurisdictions, where the need for poll workers is small, a friends-and-parties recruitment strategy is probably common, since there is little evidence that officials in small jurisdictions cast a wide net into the community when searching for poll workers. As a result, poll workers in small jurisdictions are more likely to be political insiders (such as local government officials and political party activists) who have previously served as poll workers, already know the election officials, or are recruited by other poll workers. As a result, poll workers in small jurisdictions are likely to be older local political elites. In large jurisdictions, election officials rely on a broader set of organizations and methods to recruit poll workers. In particular, large jurisdictions recruit a higher percentage of first-time poll workers for major elections. Thus, in large jurisdictions we suspect that poll workers are likely younger, on average, and more similar to the socio-economic profile of the voters they serve.

Table 7
Methods for Screening Potential Poll Workers by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

	Jurisdiction Size		
Screening activity:	**Small**	**Medium**	**Large**
Telephone interview*	18%	39%	62%
Review prior performance*	75%	82%	88%
Questionnaire before training*	11%	21%	46%
Must pass a test after training*	13%	19%	35%
Interaction during training*	62%	82%	94%
N (min, max)	(114,115)	(545,549)	(127,130)

Note: Cell entries indicate the percentage of jurisdictions reporting the activity.
* Group differences statistically significant, $p<.05$.

The final stage of the recruitment process may involve a screening process before poll workers are hired. We asked election officials about methods to screen potential poll workers. Again, the picture we see is a more extensive and formal process for hiring poll workers in large jurisdictions and a more informal process in small jurisdictions. This is not surprising given that large jurisdictions have more staff and other resources to conduct screening activities. In addition, election officials in large jurisdictions are less likely to know recruited poll workers, thus increasing the importance of screening. Large jurisdictions go to greater lengths to screen poll workers. Each of the screening activities listed in Table 7 is more commonly used in large jurisdictions. Since small jurisdictions typically retain poll workers from previous elections, their screening tends to boil down to a review of past performance and the contemporary training session.

Table 8
Challenges in Recruiting Poll Workers by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

	Jurisdiction Size		
Type of recruitment challenge	**Small**	**Medium**	**Large**
Finding poll workers of a certain party*	2.3	2.7	2.8
Finding poll workers for a certain area*	1.5	2.1	2.8
Finding poll workers for the entire day*	1.9	2.0	2.1
Finding skilled poll workers*	1.8	2.2	2.5
Finding poll workers to operate voting equipment*	1.9	2.1	2.4
Finding enough poll workers for all polling places*	2.0	2.3	2.7
Finding poll workers who can manage a team*	1.8	2.2	2.7
Poll workers who are no-shows*	1.3	1.5	2.4
Having enough staff for recruitment*	1.8	2.1	2.4
Index (average) of recruiting difficulties*	1.8	2.1	2.5
N (min, max)	(102,112)	(525,548)	(124,129)

Note: Election officials rated each recruitment challenge on a scale from 1 ("not at all difficult") to 4 ("very difficult"). Cell entries are mean ratings.
Group differences statistically significant, $p<.05$.

We also included questions in the survey to examine the attitudes of election officials toward the recruitment process. The survey included a set of questions about the level of difficulty posed by a variety of recruiting challenges. Large jurisdictions rate each of the challenges in Table 8 as more serious than do small and medium-sized jurisdictions. Finding poll workers of a certain political party and recruiting workers to serve in certain areas of their community are rated as the most difficult of the recruiting challenges listed in Table 8. The challenge in recruiting from political parties is likely a function of state laws. Seventy-eight percent of the survey respondents reported that they are legally required to assign poll worker teams that are politically balanced in terms of partisanship. Not surprisingly, officials in those states are more active in using political parties to recruit poll workers. We also find that large jurisdictions more frequently note a difficulty in finding poll workers to serve in certain areas of their community. Finally, officials in large jurisdictions report more difficulty in recruiting skilled poll workers and those who can supervise a polling place.

The bottom of Table 8 provides the mean evaluation across all nine recruitment challenges. While most jurisdictions do not report serious difficulties, almost tne percent of local

officials report an average rating of 3 or higher, indicating serious difficulties in finding the poll workers they need. Recruitment challenges seem to be a key factor for many local election officials. Officials who report more difficulty with the recruitment challenges in Table 8 engage in more of the recruiting methods listed in Tables 5 and 6, and they use a wider array of training methods discussed below.

We posed a similar set of questions about recruiting challenges to state election officials. Most state officials tend to rate each of the items in Table 8 as somewhat or very difficult challenges. As with the local jurisdictions, state officials reporting that finding skilled poll workers, finding poll workers who can supervise a polling place, and recruiting enough poll workers for all polling places are the most difficult aspects of recruitment.

Table 9
Support for Proposed Changes to Aid Poll Worker Recruiting by Size of Jurisdiction

	Jurisdiction Size		
Proposed change:	**Small**	**Medium**	**Large**
Hold elections on weekend or holiday*	9%	21%	54%
More election staff for recruiting*	22%	45%	72%
More resources for year-round recruiting*	24%	48%	79%
N (min, max)	(108,111)	(529,538)	(123,126)

Note: Cell entries indicate the percentage who rated the proposed change as "somewhat helpful" or "very helpful."
* Group differences statistically significant, p<.05.

The final assessment of recruiting is three questions about proposed election reforms that might assist in recruiting poll workers (see Table 9). Small and medium-sized jurisdictions tend to be satisfied with the status quo and thus are not supportive of changes that might aid in recruiting more poll workers. In contrast, large jurisdictions tend to support changes that might help recruit more poll workers. A majority of election officials from large jurisdictions even support moving Election Day to a weekend or making it a holiday. In contrast, moving Election Day is heavily opposed by election officials in small and medium-sized jurisdictions.

The survey of local officials included questions about other changes that might reduce the demand for poll workers. On those items we observe a similar pattern of greater opposition from small jurisdictions. For example, conducting all elections by mail was supported by 45 percent of officials in large jurisdictions, 34 percent of officials in medium-sized jurisdictions, and only 25 percent of officials in small jurisdictions. Switching to vote centers (thus reducing the number of polling places) was supported by 79 percent of large jurisdictions, 42 percent of medium-sized jurisdictions, and 28 percent of small jurisdictions. Increasing the use of early voting was

supported by 77 percent of officials in large jurisdictions, 48 percent of officials in mid-sized jurisdictions, and 32 percent of small jurisdictions. Officials in small jurisdictions are more supportive of the status quo. In addition, officials who report more recruiting difficulties in Table 8 are more supportive of election reforms that would aid recruitment efforts or reduce the need for poll workers.

State officials provided similar overall responses to the same questions about potential election reforms. State officials are not very enthusiastic about moving Election Day to a weekend or holiday, but they responded more favorably to more staff and resources for poll worker recruitment. State officials were most supportive of reforms that would make it easier for county, state or federal employees to serve as poll workers.

VI.   POLL WORKER TRAINING PRACTICES

We next turn to an examination of poll worker training. The survey included a number of questions about poll worker training methods and requirements. Table 10 provides some basic information about poll worker training in the United States.

Table 10
General Poll Worker Training Characteristics by Size of Jurisdiction

Poll worker training:	Jurisdiction Size		
	Small	**Medium**	**Large**
Required before every election*	36%	60%	80%
At least 2 hours required for first-time poll workers in 2008*	81%	76%	89%
Done by local election staff*	23%	31%	62%
Done by local official	56%	57%	48%
Done by state election staff*	44%	16%	3%
N (min, max)	(65,111)	(479,505)	(115,146)

Note: Cell entries indicate the percent that meet the criteria in the first column.
* Group differences statistically significant, $p < .05$.

The vast majority of local election officials note that some type of poll worker training is required. Only four percent of the officials report that training is not required. In smaller jurisdictions, poll worker training is often required just once a year or once every two years (often before a big general election). In contrast, large jurisdictions tend to require training before every election. The number of hours of training required in 2008 for first-time poll workers and for polling place supervisors was fairly similar for all types of jurisdictions. In the survey of state officials, slightly more than half reported that their laws required poll worker training before each election.

Table 10 also indicates important differences in who conducts the training. Election officials in small jurisdictions are more likely to teach poll worker training sessions themselves. In addition, small jurisdictions tend to rely more heavily on state election staff to conduct poll worker training sessions for them. Large jurisdictions tend to rely more on their own staff to conduct training sessions. Since small jurisdictions have very little staff, the election official does a lot of the work in finding and training poll workers. In contrast, large jurisdictions have more staff, allowing the election official to assume more of a managerial role in overseeing election operations.

In the survey of state officials, most noted that they serve in more of an advisory role on training. Over half of the state officials reported that their state provides a training manual to local jurisdictions. Slightly more than one-third of the states reported that they establish a curriculum for training sessions or provide some poll worker training sessions.

Table 11

Mandatory Topics in Poll Worker Training Sessions by Size of Jurisdiction

	Jurisdiction Size		
Topic:	**Small**	**Medium**	**Large**
Polling place procedures*	74%	84%	93%
Voting equipment operation*	56%	68%	70%
Provisional ballots*	38%	54%	67%
Serving voters with disabilities*	64%	72%	84%
Off-year briefings or training	10%	11%	14%
Registration databases	17%	11%	17%
N (min, max)	(109,112)	(496,510)	(117,122)

Note: Cell entries indicate the percent of jurisdictions that require the topic in all poll worker training sessions.
* Group differences statistically significant, $p<.05$.

The survey also included specific questions about poll worker training for the 2008 general election. Most jurisdictions report that all of their poll workers in 2008 attended a training class. Only ten percent of the local officials reported that less than 70% of their poll workers attended a training session before the 2008 election. Once again, these tended to be small jurisdictions. We also asked election officials about the topics covered in poll worker training sessions (Table 11). Larger jurisdictions seem to cover more election topics in their training sessions. Large jurisdictions are more likely than small jurisdictions to have mandatory training sessions on polling place procedures, voting equipment, provisional ballots, and voters with disabilities. Furthermore, registration databases are not frequently covered in any mandatory poll worker training, regardless of jurisdiction size. Many states have yet to reach the final stages of developing a computerized registration database, so it is probably not a surprise that many jurisdictions do not offer training on those databases. In addition, election officials may prefer that they and their staff, rather than poll workers, deal with any questions related to registration lists.

Table 12
Materials and Methods in Poll Worker Training Sessions by Size of Jurisdiction

Material or method:	Jurisdiction Size		
	Small	**Medium**	**Large**
Classroom presentation*	85%	94%	100%
Hands-on use of voting equipment	90%	94%	99%
Online training materials*	26%	19%	42%
Quiz or test*	26%	33%	51%
Role-playing*	34%	51%	63%
Printed handouts	92%	97%	99%
Videos	59%	58%	52%
Comprehensive training manual*	84%	86%	98%
Evaluation of training session*	10%	19%	43%
N (min, max)	(106,114)	(495,508)	(119,123)

Note: Cell entries indicate the percent of jurisdictions using the material or method for training poll workers.
* Group differences statistically significant, p<.05.

To continue a familiar pattern, we also see evidence of greater innovation from large jurisdictions when it comes to materials and methods used in poll worker training sessions (Table 12). All jurisdictions, regardless of size, rely heavily on traditional methods such as classroom presentations and hands-on use of the voting equipment. Experience with the voting equipment is important since many jurisdictions have adopted new voting equipment in the last few years. However, large jurisdictions are more likely to use newer training methods such as online materials and role-playing exercises. In addition, large jurisdictions are more likely to use a quiz as part of their poll worker training sessions. Finally, in terms of assessing training effectiveness, large jurisdictions are more likely to ask poll workers to fill out an evaluation of their training sessions. All of the methods in Table 12 were rated as at least somewhat effective, on average, by local officials.

Of the training methods listed in Table 12, online training materials were used the least. Our survey included some additional questions about online training. Three things stand out. First, some local officials may not be aware that online training is possible: 36% of the election officials noted that they had never considered online training. Second, 32% of local officials reported that they do not think their poll workers would be interested in online training. Third, 20% noted that they are interested in online training but do not have the resources to do it.

VII.   POLL WORKER EVALUATION PRACTICES

Finally, we examine evaluations of poll worker performance. The survey included several questions about the methods officials used to evaluate poll worker performance (Table 13). Efforts to measure poll worker performance tend to be limited. For example, over three-fourths of the officials reported that they do not ask poll workers to complete an evaluation of their training session. The survey included a list of ways to evaluate poll worker performance. Most officials reported doing less than half of the evaluation activities on the list. The most common evaluation activities reported tend to be informal (such as staff discussions and feedback from voters). On an open-ended question about poll worker evaluation, very few local election officials reported gathering systematic evidence to make formal assessments of poll workers (such as graded report cards for poll workers).

Table 13
Methods of Evaluating Poll Workers by Size of Jurisdiction

	Jurisdiction Size		
Evaluation method:	**Small**	**Medium**	**Large**
Surveys of poll workers*	4%	12%	29%
Feedback from voters	49%	59%	62%
Analysis of polling place performance*	46%	37%	51%
Feedback from election observers*	23%	31%	46%
Evaluations from polling place leaders*	29%	36%	53%
Written feedback from poll workers*	7%	35%	60%
Poll worker training quizzes	2%	6%	15%
In-house staff discussions	48%	48%	53%
N (min, max)	(61,71)	(491,515)	(143,146)

Note: Cell entries indicate the percent of jurisdictions using the material or method for training poll workers.
* Group differences statistically significant, p<.05.

Nevertheless, large jurisdictions use more extensive methods to measure poll worker performance. Aside from in-house staff discussions, each method listed in Table 13 is more likely to be used to evaluate poll workers in large jurisdictions than in small jurisdictions. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that large jurisdictions tend to seek out more information than small jurisdictions in order to measure how their poll workers are doing. We also find that professional development and internal challenges are predictors of the number of methods used to evaluate poll workers. Local officials who are members of more professional associations

(Table 1) or who report more difficulties in recruiting poll workers (Table 8) use more of the methods listed above to evaluate their poll workers.

It is also worth noting that state election officials tend to take a hands-off approach to poll worker evaluations. Most state officials report that they do not require local jurisdictions to submit reports on poll worker recruitment, training, or performance evaluations. Only one state reported that it has benchmarks for poll worker performance, and only seven state officials noted that they maintain a statewide database of poll workers.

Table 14
Ratings of Poll Worker Performance by Size of Jurisdiction
2008 General Election

| | Jurisdiction Size | | |
Type of service:	Small	Medium	Large
Polling place procedures*	6.4	6.2	5.8
Voting equipment operation*	6.2	6.2	5.8
Provisional ballots*	5.5	5.3	5.0
Serving voters with disabilities*	6.3	6.2	5.8
Registration databases*	5.8	5.6	5.2
Managing lines of voters*	6.3	6.3	6.0
Composite Index*	6.1	6.0	5.6
N (min, max)	(94,113)	(425,506)	(93,120)

Note: Election officials rated each area of poll worker performance on a scale from 1 ("very poor") to 7 ("excellent"). Cell entries are mean ratings.
Mean difference between small and large jurisdictions statistically significant, $p<.05$.

Election officials were also asked to rate the performance of their poll workers in the 2008 presidential election (see Table 14). In general, election officials thought their poll workers did a very good job in the 2008 election. Two newer areas of election administration, provisional ballots and registration databases, generated significantly lower average poll worker evaluations than the other areas. This is understandable given that both election features are new and the law is still rather vague about how provisional ballots and registration disputes are supposed to be handled in many states. As a result, there have been several election lawsuits involving provisional voting and registration databases in recent years (Hasen 2005; Tokaji 2005; Foley 2008). The composite index in Table 14 is the average score across the answers to the evaluation responses.

Another pattern in Table 14 is that poll workers are rated more favorably, on average, in small jurisdictions. This is despite the fact that large jurisdictions cast a wider net to recruit and screen poll workers, cover more topics in their training sessions, and use more extensive methods to evaluate their poll workers. Even though Table 10 indicates that smaller jurisdictions are less likely to require mandatory training on many of the topics listed above, smaller jurisdictions nevertheless rate poll worker performance in those same areas more positively than larger jurisdictions. Election officials in small jurisdictions are quite happy with their poll workers and generally do not see the need to critically examine or modify their poll worker programs.

The differences in poll worker evaluations across size of jurisdiction show up quite crisply in a histogram of the composite scale in Figure 2. A near majority of election officials in the smaller jurisdictions uniformly gave the highest marks to their poll workers across all of the specific measurements; the large jurisdiction election officials, on the other hand, have a much more even distribution from low to high.

Figure 2. Distribution of Composite Poll Worker Evaluations by Jurisdiction Size.
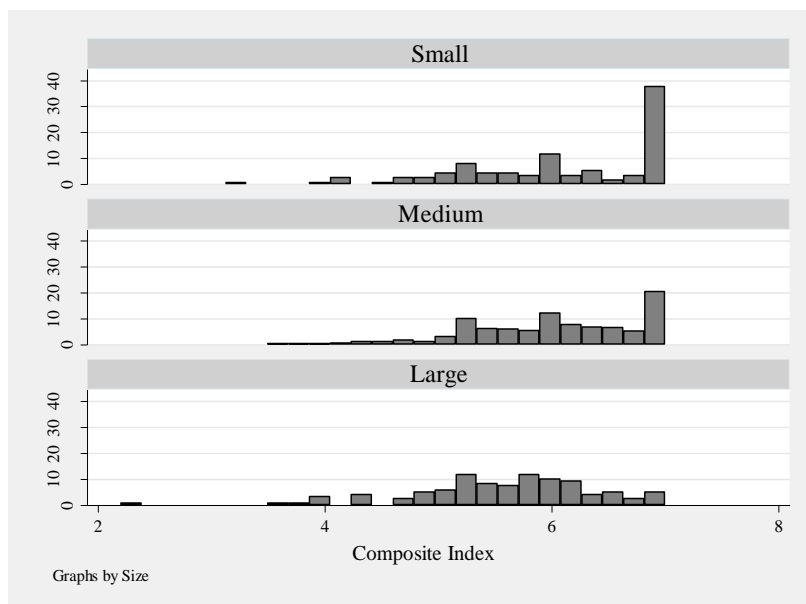
Evaluations of poll worker performance, of course, depend upon a number of factors besides the size of the jurisdiction, and isolating the reasons why election officials rated their poll workers the way they did requires a multiple regression. Table 15 presents the results of an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis with the composite measure of performance as the response factor and four categories of explanatory factors: Size of jurisdiction, individual election official demographics, voter demand, and official resources. Size of jurisdiction is measured as the number of ballots cast in the 2008 election, provided by the election officials. Individual election official demographics are measured in two ways: The education level of the official, measured on a 6 point scale, and age, measured in years. Voter demand is measured by

the number of Election Day voters per polling place. Finally, resources of the office are measured by the number of poll workers per polling place.[1]

<div align="center">

Table 15
Factors in Explaining Poll Worker Performance Ratings
2008 General Election

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Explanatory Factors	Coefficients
Jurisdiction size	
Number of ballots cast at polling places (natural log)	-0.10** (0.02)
Characteristics of local official	
Education level of election official	0.03 (0.03)
Age of election official	0.01** (0.003)
Voter demand	
Election Day voters per polling place (natural log)	0.09** (0.04)
Official resources	
Poll workers per polling place	0.00 (0.00)
Constant	5.46** (0.30)
Number of Observations	626
R^2	0.07

The results indicate that three factors contribute to how election officials evaluate the performance of their poll workers. First, the importance of the size of the jurisdiction is confirmed – for every 10% in additional ballots cast, the average performance rating drops by 0.1, a not insignificant drop. Second, the age of the elected official has a positive impact upon

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[1] Because of the skewed nature of their distributions, we transformed two of the explanatory variables, number of ballots cast and election day voters per polling place. This changes the interpretation of the effects but not the underlying test of the hypotheses. We examined other resource measures, including poll worker wages, budget and staff size, which were unrelated to the performance measures. We also estimated the model with a control for survey mode (Internet or postal mail), but that did not change the results either.

poll worker evaluation – for a ten- year increase in an election official's age, satisfaction increases by 0.1 points on the composite index. While this may not seem like much, it does mean that a 60 year old election official, all else equal, evaluates poll workers 0.3 points higher than a 30 year old election official. Third, and curiously, the voter demand measure has a positive impact – the higher the number of voters per polling place, the higher the performance ratings of the poll workers. Finally, there is little evidence that performance ratings are associated with the number of poll workers per polling place or the local official's level of education.

The bottom line is that election officials in larger jurisdictions are less satisfied with their poll worker performance than their colleagues in smaller jurisdictions. However, these differences across size of jurisdiction should not obscure the fact that most election officials hold satisfactory opinions about their poll workers – very few officials gave their poll workers "poor" grades. At the same time, very few jurisdictions implement consistent, systematic performance measurement systems. Their assessments, then, might change if they were to implement performance measurement in a less ad hoc fashion.

VII. FOLLOW-UP CASE STUDIES:
INNOVATIONS IN POLL WORKER MANAGEMENT

The poll worker survey presents much quantitative data about what local election officials and jurisdictions are doing to recruit, train, and evaluate their poll workers. Case studies allow one to drill down further and obtain a more nuanced picture. Based upon the survey results, four were identified – Boone County, Missouri; Butler County, Ohio; Guilford County, North Carolina; and Allen County, Ohio. These jurisdictions are implementing innovative programs in one or more of the recruitment, training, and evaluation areas. Jennifer Collins-Foley and Connie Schmidt of the Pollworker Institute selected and implemented the case studies, contacting and conducting phone interviews with the appropriate election officials in each jurisdiction. The highlights of those interviews are presented below. Supporting documentation is available upon request from the authors.

Case Study #1: Managing Poll Worker Recruiting and Performance in Boone County, MO.

Boone County is a mid-sized county in north-central Missouri; in the 2008 election, citizens of the county cast approximately 80,000 ballots. It is best known as the home of the University of Missouri – Columbia. In Boone County, the County Clerk's office manages all election responsibilities, in addition to the normal and routine County Clerk duties, which is similar to many county clerk offices around the country.

Motivation/Incentives/College Poll Worker Program. The challenge of recruiting and training poll workers was the motivation behind their efforts to reach out to college students to supplement their Election Day poll worker teams. With the added bonus of a grant from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, a partnership was formed with the University of Missouri at Columbia. The response rate was outstanding, with over 200 college students receiving training. This increased to over 40% of the entire poll worker pool in the November 2008 election. The students were very easy to train and were trained to manage the laptop computers for voter check in as well as the processing all voter changes on Election Day.

On the downside, many of the students only worked one election, and they often like to work just the Presidential election. There was a huge training expense for possibly working only one election. Staff estimated that cost to be approximately $50-70,000. The staff soon discovered that communication with college students is a "different world". The students rarely respond to paper mail pieces. Their world is their cell phones and the Internet. Cost savings were realized by utilizing this different form of communication, i.e. text messaging, Facebook postings, email, etc. In fact, a simple post on the University's Facebook account resulted in a huge response to a request for poll workers. The post had to be removed after just a few hours on the site.

The college students were assigned to training classes through email. They were assigned to a time and an alternate time for each of their three training classes. The office is

currently developing an automated scheduling program that will be implemented on the office web site. Many ideas for improvements to the entire process come from the college students.

Training Program / Linkage to Poll Assignments. During training classes the students are observed and staff is able to identify which ones could quality to serve as Supervisors and/or Trouble Shooters on Election Day. Specialized training is provided for poll workers who are assigned to a specific task. The office also utilizes an activity referred to as "Practice Makes Perfect", where poll workers are encouraged to revisit the office at any time to practice opening and closing the voting equipment, and reviewing other tasks that must be performed on Election Day.

Polling Place Checklists. Post election staff reviews the checklist from every polling place. Everything is evaluated and entered into a data base which generates a report by precinct polling place. This evaluation is provided to the poll workers at their next training session. Everyone is motivated to do their best to get a perfect score on the checklist.

Feedback to and from Poll Workers. Reacting to feedback from the poll workers, staff identified some problems with how the checklist was written and revisions were made to the form. They had many "perfect" polling places. Poll workers are paid $135 plus $25 per training session. Supervisors receive an additional $15 for picking up supplies. The college students, who managed the laptop check in computers, were paid $225.

Resources. Staff noted that the poll worker program is still maintained on the county mainframe computer. Staff manages a separate Access data base to track the performance rating for each polling place.

Tracking Voter Satisfaction. Every four years the office conducts a voter survey. Approximately 3,500 voters are randomly selected and asked to complete a return postage-paid checklist when they go to vote. They receive an amazing response from the voters, including wonderful feedback and great ideas.

Case Study #2: Managing Poll Worker Training, Performance, and Provisional Ballot Errors in Butler County, OH.

Butler County is located in southwestern Ohio, and with approximately 170,000 ballots cast in the 2008 election, is relatively large. Elections are administered by appointed staff who are directed by a county board of elections.

Motivation / Environment. Butler County poll worker manager Jane Barnett started in elections only 4 years ago. She has a background in market research and so really enjoys analyzing what works, what doesn't, etc. There was also a new elections director brought in around the same time and she brought new staff to set up quality controls across the department. This pattern follows a trend found by researchers from the EAC Successful Practices project, i.e, those jurisdictions that do better than standard program management seem to have a leader/visionary teamed with at least one manager and/or worker-bee who makes it all happen, together with line

staff who are ready to make a change. This director also re-organized the department toward a better reporting structure. They are a DRE/Diebold county with 3,000 poll workers in major/presidential elections, with 1,300 for off-year elections.

A. Measuring Poll Workers in Training and in the Field / Findings / Corrective Actions.

(1) **Measuring New Poll Workers**. (a) Individual Observation of Poll Workers in Training Sessions. 35 poll workers / 5-6 trainers per class. Poll workers conduct administrative/legal scenarios in class (looking up voters in the poll book, etc.) and the trainers give them a rating of "1" to "5" (best). A 5 rating is rare because the poll worker's performance has not yet been tested in the field. (b) Test in Training Class. Fifty percent of the test is based on being able to read the street index correctly and put the voter where they are supposed to be. Butler County election officials found that many of the poll workers who rated high in the Observation process, did not do well on the test - they had test anxiety. The rating is entered in to the poll worker's history in their DIMS system. If there is a substantially negative rating from the training class, the Butler County staff call the poll worker to counsel and/or ask them to come back for another class.

(2) **Measuring the Training.** Butler County has been soliciting feedback from poll workers on the effectiveness of the training efforts. For instance, feedback via poll worker surveys revealed that pollworkers wanted more training on setting up and tearing down the voting units (this is now a moot point as the polls are now set up prior to the poll workers arrival at the voting locations) and poll workers wanted more focus on how to run the "End Voting Reports."

(3) **Measuring Experienced Poll Workers.** Individual ratings in the poll worker tracking system can be modified depending on performance, including feedback and recommendations from field rovers.

(4) **Measuring Poll Worker Teams.** Butler County election officials track team performance. They have handouts at training showing a list of all precinct teams from previous election and pointing to its percentage of errors so the team knows how they did. Butler also solicits feedback from Presiding Judges, Judges and Rovers. In the next series of training classes the trainers tell the poll workers what the department has done to improve things based on poll worker feedback. They are building trust. "You tell us what needs to be fixed and we'll fix it."

B. Measuring Provisional Ballot Errors / Findings / Corrective Actions.

Butler County election officials formally track provisional ballot statistics - including reasons why provisionals are not counted. Provisional ballots are not counted if cast out of precinct so they want to minimize unnecessary provisional ballots. They found that the majority of provisional ballots that were not counted were because the voter was in the wrong precinct. Lesser reasons were because they provisional ballot was not signed, the voter was not asked for ID and sometimes even that the voter was not registered. They took 3 approaches to fixing provisional ballots that were given to voters when they should not have been: (1) Amend teaching techniques so that the provisional processing training is more clear - and then they strengthened the end-of-class tests to see if the poll worker trainees were "getting it." (2) They identified the precincts with the largest number of uncountable provisional ballots - and

they counseled the poll worker teams from those precincts. (3) They looked to see where in the county these "at-risk" precincts were and noticed that they were actually in clusters - so they are now examining the make-up of the teams and trying to re-order where necessary and/or bring in some new/young blood in some cases.

C. Student Poll Workers. In a Fall 2009 election 13% of Butler County poll workers are high school seniors; in November 2008 24% were high school students.

D. Measuring Poll Worker Recruiting Efforts. Jane Barnett noticed that their poll worker retention rates had gone down since they started weeding through the poor performers - and so the department launched an aggressive mailing campaign (to potential poll workers in "at-risk" areas of the County where there were large numbers of provisional ballot errors.) Jane has tracked many aspects of this project including the costs of this method of recruiting and found it to be cost-effective. She tracked how many yes and no's they received back, how many of the "yes's" actually came to training and how many of those actually have served and performed well in subsequent elections. Provisional ballots errors have already diminished dramatically thanks to this effort and other related initiatives.

*Possible Role for States in Measuring Poll Worker Performance***.** States can support the sharing of successful practices; ways that counties have tracked performance. It would be helpful if states could provide templates for "easy" tracking methods.

Case Study #3: Managing Poll Worker Training, Certification, and Retention in Guilford County, North Carolina

Located in central North Carolina, Guilford County, North Carolina is a relatively large county, with 200,000+ ballots cast in the 2008 election. Elections are administered by an appointed staff who are directed by a board of elections.

The county hires approximately 1,800 poll workers to staff 165 precinct locations for federal elections. Chief election judges are routinely paid $135, and assistants are paid $110. Poll workers who complete a certification course and become certified are paid an additional $35.

In 2000, the Guilford County, North Carolina election office began the initiative to develop a comprehensive poll worker training program. The concept was to take the regular poll worker training program, and supplement it by offering poll workers the opportunity to become "certified". In the beginning the certification training was offered as an extra incentive to poll workers who were interested in supplementing their required training.

The certification training program was the brain child of a former Chief Election Judge, who also was a retired school teacher. Through her efforts, combined with the efforts of another Chief Judge, who worked at an area community college, a partnership was formed between the community college and the local election office. This is a unique partnership, and is a model that could be replicated in jurisdictions across the country.

The purpose of the course, as listed in the syllabus is:

"....to better foster democracy in Guilford County through enhanced training of our precinct officials. This course will better prepare you to implement the procedures set forth by the State Board of Elections by giving you the knowledge and the confidence needed to conduct each election to the highest standard."

The poll worker certification course is offered through the local community college's continuing education program. It is a six-week course that is advertised in the community college's continuing education brochure. Anyone can sign up to take the course – in fact the election office reports that they have had people sign up, complete the course, and then they become poll workers for the first time. The course itself is not a big recruitment tool for the office, but they do report that the graduates of the course do recommend it to family, friends, and neighbors. An added bonus relating to this community education course is that the local County Commissioners have taken the curriculum, along with election office staff members. Again, the course is open to anyone – observers, party officials, candidates, elected officials, media, etc. The Election Office reports that the course work has been very successful in educating individuals about elections and the federal and state laws that govern the process.

The course is offered by the community college, which hires the instructor, as a paid community college instructor. In Guilford County, the instructor is a staff member of the Election Office, who teaches the course after hours. This has been a real bonus for the program. It was noted that there are two poll workers who also are professors at the community college; however, the professors don't know the nuts and bolts of the internal operations of the election office. Having an election office staff member serving as the instructor has been a win-win for Guilford County.

The course is offered at three different community college campuses within the county, in the evening from 6-9 p.m. The cost to attend the course is $72, paid to the community college. Individuals over the age of 65 can attend free of charge through a program where the state refunds the college. Again, once the poll workers become certified, they earn an additional $35 each time they work, so they can easily recoup the cost of the course. It is important to note, that the instructor fee and cost of materials is paid by the course fee through the community college. This innovative partnership also provides the use of the community meeting rooms and facility space, including parking for students – a win-win for the office and the community college.

Course attendees are allowed to miss one class and still get certified. Every student must pass a test at the end of the course. The test is developed to make sure that everyone comprehends the basics of the course, with a portion of the test being "open book" to ensure that the students know where to find information within the manual. If a student fails the test, they are still allowed to work as a poll worker, but they are not "certified".

The curriculum is developed to provide students with a class on elections, i.e. electoral college, primary elections and caucuses, voting rights, Help America Vote Act, National Voter

Registration Act, etc.   One to two classes are devoted to the actual procedures that poll workers must follow on Election Day.

After completion of the certification curriculum, the student receives a letter acknowledging that they are now officially "certified" with a Certificate of Completion. The office does not send out the results of the test, although they do have students who call and request their score, which is provided to them.

RESULTS: Approximately 600 of the 1,800 precinct officials are certified. The Guilford County election office staff has found that the certified officials are more committed to the office, not only on Election Day, but also are serving as part time workers in the weeks leading up to Election Day. The office recruits part time pre-election day workers from the pool of certified officials. Recently the office has begun asking the certified officials to provide names of up to five people that could be contacted to possibly work on Election Day. This has been a very successful recruitment tool.

For the past seven years, their poll worker teams have become very stable.   Many poll workers teams sign up to take the course together. This benefits all class attendees because it allows for sharing of experiences and best practices by poll workers who have already worked in the precinct. The bell curve for age of their poll workers is between 50-60 years old. Early voting poll workers have been recruited from the college campuses. The college students have more freedom to work hourly shifts in the early voting environment, which has proven successful for the office.

Certified poll workers are tracked internally through an Excel spreadsheet – which ones have attended the course and become certified. A precinct checklist is audited and reviewed after each election. The checklist provides information on what went right and what went wrong. Field coordinators also provide candid feedback regarding any precinct locations that are experiencing difficulty. These locations are targeted for additional help. This review/checklist also provides staff with information on what key issues that should be focused on during the next training sessions.

It was noted that in 2004 the office was involved in a election court case, and the certification training of precinct officials for a total of 18 hours of election instruction, was valuable supporting evidence for the case.

Recently, the Guilford County election office has worked with other counties in North Carolina to develop a similar certification course. This partnership is the beginning effort to bring precinct uniformity across county lines. The counties use different types of voting systems, i.e. optical scan or DRE. Through this partnership, the staff reports that they have developed a standardized countywide "authorization to vote" form, and a statewide form for provisional ballots. Another benefit is simply the sharing of best practices between counties, enabling everyone to "think outside of the box".

Case Study #4: Managing Poll Worker Performance in Allen County, OH.

Located in northwestern Ohio, Allen County is a midsized county, with approximately 50,000 ballots cast in the 2008 election. Elections are administered by an appointed staff who are directed by an independent board.

Motivation / Environment. Director Keith Cunningham has been in elections for 26-27 years and has a background in the private sector. They believe that measuring leads to consistency in process. The Allen County team believes in establishing plans, teaching to the plan and then measuring performance against the plan. Allen County has 70,000 voters, 6 full-time staff and 2 part-time staff.

Allen County has been measuring poll worker performance for a number of years. The Allen County team believes that poll workers like to know they are performing and after some initial grumbling, the poll workers now want the feedback. Each poll worker team is held accountable through the Presiding Judge (i.e., lead poll worker) and through a variety of feedback loops. Tracking is accomplished via ESS Power Profile, in the poll worker Module. If a performance problem seems to be systemic, then the trainers evaluate and implement a better focus on that particular issue. Other broad-base correction methods include discussion of the problem and correction in the Winter and Summer poll worker newsletter. More "surgical" feedback loops include "poll worker report cards" where the poll workers receive a customized letter detailing errors made in a recent election. Changing job assignments is another management tool to manage repeated performance issues, i.e., a presiding judge who failed to sign the oath for 3 elections will no longer be allowed to serve as presiding judge.

Measuring Key Points of Performance. They consider the poll book (i.e, roster/voter list) to be the "foundation" of proper voter processing and so have placed a high priority on having it used correctly. Allen County also focuses on several areas of returning election supplies; poll book, provisional ballots, the overall deprocessing, and voter ID issues. They also evaluate the condition of the summary sheet (i.e, ballot reconciliation sheet) to see if it balances. Allen County has also changed the packaging of supplies over time to cut down on poll worker error. For example, the return of key supplies is now almost perfect now that it must be returned in a large envelope with a checklist on the cover, and the envelope must be initialed by the Presiding Judge and the Assistant Presiding Judge.

Beginning in 2008 Allen County began tracking the condition of the equipment as it was returned, both to track damage and to track the integrity of the return process.

Nine points of poll worker performance are evaluated at several points in the pre and post-election process: (1) How the voter was processed, whether the voter signed the oath, etc., is evaluated when staff data enter the voter's voting credits..

"Summer School." 150-160 poll workers are trained for 5 hour sessions. While the poll workers believe it is a totally voluntary program there are some poll workers present who are required to attend because of some prior performance concerns.

Another way that Allen County has institutionalized better management of its polling places is that it reduced the number of precincts and assigned a "poll supervisor" who can manage 4-6 precincts in a polling location.

Possible Role of States in Measuring Performance. While tracking poll worker successes and problems does lead to better elections, it also leaves a paper trail of "warts" that could be exploited by losing candidates/campaigns but the Allen County team has decided the benefits outweigh the risk. States can not force but should encourage counties to develop these programs. Allen County developed these measurement techniques internally, not based on outside pressure or outside models. Cunningham suggested that states could provide monetary incentives for counties that report evaluation/correction efforts.

General Feedback.

Allen, Boone, Butler and Guilford counties were selected because they had each shared information regarding their analytical programs at election conferences, they expressed willingness to share information about their programs, and had conducted the analysis for at least 2 election cycles. Discussions with each jurisdiction revealed that all were motivated by internal desires to understand and shape their election processes and outcomes for more accurate, efficient and cost-effective elections and increased voter service and satisfaction. None had been required or motivated to begin analyzing and managing by a recent "melt-down", by additional resources or by outside entity. In other words, each was proactive rather than reactive.

Each of the processes were home-grown and were enabled by the skills and curiosity possessed by managers and staff. Each of the jurisdictions interviewed offered their opinions that although jurisdictions can be enabled to improve their analytic and management processes through software and shared templates/models, this does not mean that election jurisdictions would be likely to establish such programs or that they would be successful if required to do so.

VIII. CONCLUSION

When it comes to recruiting, training, and evaluating poll workers, there are two very different types of election jurisdictions in the United States. On the one hand, largely populated jurisdictions need many poll workers and face many challenges in hiring and training them. Large jurisdictions also have much more extensive recruitment and training programs that tend to involve the broader community. Election officials in large jurisdictions tend to apply more critical lenses when assessing their poll worker operations, and they use wider arrays of methods to evaluate poll workers. Officials in large jurisdictions also report higher levels of difficulty in managing poll worker functions. Finally, large jurisdictions are more likely to support reforms that would reduce the burden on poll workers or assist them in finding more poll workers to serve on Election Day.

On the other hand, smaller jurisdictions tend to be satisfied with the status quo. They have little demand for poll workers, their poll workers tend to return to work in election after election, and they generally do not need to look far and wide to fulfill their limited poll worker needs. Yet small jurisdictions tend to avoid innovative methods of training and evaluating poll workers.

In terms of state officials, most report that they have more of an advisory role on poll worker issues. The recruitment, training, and evaluation of poll workers are primarily the responsibility of local election officials. Most states provide some assistance in terms of training manuals or other curriculum materials, guidance on poll worker procedures, and even direct training session. Most local jurisdictions reported favorably on these types of assistance. Almost sixty percent of local officials rated the resources provided by the state election office as very effective. Once again, however, small jurisdictions evaluated the state election office more positively than large jurisdictions.

One may view these differences merely as a function of local context. Large jurisdictions have to serve many more voters, so it makes sense that they have to do a lot more when it comes to recruiting and managing poll workers. In addition, large jurisdictions receive a disproportionate share of scrutiny from partisans, journalists, and reform advocates since administrative features may affect a lot more voters (and thus influence election outcomes) in large jurisdictions. Large jurisdictions also report more challenges in recruiting and training poll workers. Finally, another study indicates that voters in large jurisdictions are more likely to report certain voting problems, such as long lines (Stewart 2009). These factors indicate that there are many reasons for large jurisdictions to constantly look for ways to improve poll worker operations. And with a staff available to carry out most election administration tasks, officials in large jurisdictions may have more time to collect data and assess the performance of their poll workers and staff.

There may be a cultural difference between large and small jurisdictions as well. We see some evidence of this when comparing the background of election officials in Table 1. Officials in large jurisdictions tend be younger, more educated, involved in more professional associations, and have more election administration experience outside their current jurisdiction. Our impression is that officials in large jurisdictions have grown accustomed to scrutiny and data

requests from journalists, academics, advocates, and policymakers. As a result, they tend to be more comfortable with these interactions. It gives them a chance to help others understand the challenges they face, and they might learn something. Our case studies suggest that this environment is a distinct cultural advantage for larger jurisdictions. An environment with more staff – and more professional staff – encourages creativity and may lead to the organic growth of innovative practices in poll worker recruitment, training, and evaluation. Size and its advantages are of course not a sufficient condition for innovation, of course, and future research should focus on those factors that encourage a positive environment.

In contrast, our impression is that election officials in small jurisdictions tend to feel like they are under siege from those same constituencies. Among smaller jurisdictions there is hostility to federal regulation of elections. Many election officials from small jurisdictions have expressed frustration with the new requirements in HAVA (Moynihan and Silva 2008). As a result, while there are frequent collaborations with outside constituencies to improve election administration in large jurisdictions, these collaborations are rare in small jurisdictions.

This may be a growing problem. There is evidence that election administration is more professional and more effective in large jurisdictions. For example, voting errors occur more frequently in smaller jurisdictions (Kimball and Kropf 2005; Stewart 2006; Ansolabehere and Stewart 2005). Small to medium-sized jurisdictions dominate the community of local election officials in the United States, but they serve roughly one-third of the nation's voters. Large jurisdictions are small in number but they serve a majority of voters in the United States. In election reform debates, the views expressed by local election officials may be dominated by small jurisdictions. At the same time, large jurisdictions tend to face several challenges in recruiting poll workers that do not trouble officials in small jurisdictions. Difficulties in recruiting poll workers are associated with additional efforts to train and evaluate poll workers. In addition, in the survey of local election officials we find a significant correlation between reports of recruitment challenges and lower performance evaluations of poll workers ($r = -.41$, $p<.001$).

Finally, the vast difference in the size of local election jurisdictions means that a one-size-fits-all approach to election reform is not likely to succeed. For example, the cases of innovative poll worker programs highlighted in our case studies are from relatively large jurisdictions. . It is hard to imagine that small jurisdictions will adopt many of those poll worker practices. Future research clearly needs to put at least some of the focus on smaller jurisdictions, to identify innovative practices that are occurring in that subset. Perhaps there should be separate associations of election officials to address the different needs of small versus large election jurisdictions.

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