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Democracy Will Be"

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New Study: Missouri May Experience Long Lines on Election Day County-by-County Survey Reveals Flaws in Election Administration

Takoma Park, MD—August 27, 2008—Not all Missouri election officials may be prepared for the anticipated high voter turnout in November's presidential election, according to a report released today by nonpartisan advocacy group, FairVote.

FairVote surveyed 110 out of 117 Missouri county clerks and found the state does not have a standardized method for allocating poll booths, which may cause long lines on Election Day. Researchers found, "not a single county clerk surveyed could refer to a specific scientific formula that they used for calculating the number of booths needed." In addition, only 17 counties, or 15-percent of counties surveyed, were preparing a written booth allocation plan. Long lines are often caused by an inadequate number of poll booths and have plagued voters, particularly in lower-income neighborhoods, in the past several election cycles.

The lack of systematic preparation for this November's election is evident from some election administrators' survey responses. When asked how voting booths would be allocated, one clerk responded that there was "no rhyme or reason," while another conceded, "I don't know, we just put what we always put." The vast majority of county clerks also did not know when final ballots for the November election would be ready. FairVote found that only 9 out of the 110 counties surveyed knew when the ballot design would be made available to the public. Making the ballot available to the public before Election Day is another way to shorten lines because voters are more prepared to vote when entering the booth.

"This lack of uniformity in election administration undermines the public's faith in the electoral process," said co-author of the report, FairVote's Adam Fogel. "But the fault shouldn't lie with hardworking election officials doing the best they can with the means they have. We need more funding for elections and better federal and state level guidelines, including minimum standards for election preparedness."

FairVote is a non-partisan electoral reform organization founded on a belief that democracy depends on respect for every voice and every vote. Part of FairVote's Democracy SoS project, *Uniformity in Election Administration: A 2008 Survey of Swing State County Clerks—Missouri Edition* is one of a series of reports to be published by FairVote this fall, designed to shed light on practices of county election administrators, as well as their interpretation and compliance with state law. The *Missouri Edition* will be followed by several other state reports, including New Mexico and Colorado. A national report surveying election officials in counties with at least 500,000 residents in six other "swing states" will be released in September.

Full Report: <http://www.fairvote.org/sosresearch>

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