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New Study: Large Counties in Swing States May Face Election Day Problems Lack of Preparation, Uniformity Could Cause Long Lines on Election Day

Takoma Park, MD—October 27, 2008—Voters in the largest counties in 10 key swing states may experience problems on Election Day because of insufficient preparation and inadequate poll booth and machine allocation plans, according to a report released today by FairVote, a nonpartisan advocacy group.

FairVote surveyed 26 election administrators in counties with over 500,000 residents in Colorado, Florida, Missouri, New Mexico, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin. Researchers found that many counties do not have a standardized method for allocating poll booths, which may cause long lines on Election Day. 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 report shows that 10 of the counties surveyed were not preparing a written allocation plan before Election Day.

Though some officials explained how they would allocate resources, including using metrics such as the number of registered voters and previous turnout, not a single administrator surveyed could cite a specific scientific formula that they use for calculating the number of booths or machines needed.

Students in many large counties in swing states may experience difficulty voting this Election Day. Of the 26 counties surveyed, 24 have post-secondary institutions in them. Only 15 of those counties reported that they plan to have a polling location on campus. Students in these jurisdictions may have trouble voting because of inadequate access, which has been problematic in previous election cycles.

“Many of the largest counties in key states are not prepared for Election Day,” said co-author of the report, FairVote’s Adam Fogel. “The across the board lack of uniformity we see in this report speaks to the patchwork election system we have in this country. Most local officials do the best they can with the limited resources they have available, but state and federal officials must do more to ensure transparent election administration and increased accountability after Election Day.”

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—National Edition* is part of a report series designed to shed light on practices of county election administrators, as well as their interpretation and compliance with state law. The *National Edition* follows state reports on election preparedness in Missouri, New Mexico, Colorado and Virginia.

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

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