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Democracy Will Be”

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New Study: New Mexico Leads in On-Campus Polls, Equipment Uniformity Concerns Linger on Poll Booth Allocation Plans

Takoma Park, MD—September 8, 2008—New Mexico has uniform voting equipment and sufficient on-campus polling locations for students, but voters may experience problems on Election Day because of inconsistent poll booth allocation, according to a report released today by FairVote, a nonpartisan advocacy group.

FairVote surveyed 29 out of 33 New Mexico county clerks and found that the state does 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. Researchers found that only 5 clerks, out of the 29 clerks surveyed (17-percent), plan to create a written poll booth allocation plan for their county. Creating a written plan gives voters an opportunity to review election preparedness and outlines contingency plans in the event of unexpected turnout on Election Day. One of the primary reasons given by county clerks for not creating written plans is that such preparation is not required by state statute.

New Mexico’s government has made a concerted effort to ensure students living on large college campuses have access to the polls on Election Day. FairVote found that there are 28 community college, four-year college or university campuses among the 29 counties surveyed. Of the 28 schools, 16 campuses have on-campus polling locations. On-campus polling locations encourage student participation, particularly among 18 to 24-year-olds. This demographic has traditionally yielded the lowest level of voter participation.

“New Mexico does an excellent job of encouraging student participation,” said co-author of the report, FairVote’s Adam Fogel. “However, there is still work to be done to ensure the standardization of booth allocation across precincts. We need more funding for elections and better federal and state 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—New Mexico Edition* is the second in 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 *New Mexico Edition* will be followed by several other state reports, including Virginia and Colorado. The *Missouri Edition* was released in August. A national report surveying election officials in counties with at least 500,000 residents in ten “swing states” will be released in September.

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

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