Office of Indiana Secretary of State
Connie Lawson
2013 Vote Center Report

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Purpose

Members of the Indiana Clerks' Association expressed interest in hearing more from the State of Indiana on the vote center concept given that 2013 was a non-election year and a year when counties would begin building budgets. Secretary Lawson responded by setting up meetings around Indiana inviting all 92 county clerks, county commissioners and members of county councils, as well as members of the media and other interested parties. She collected feedback from current vote center clerks and those that attended the regional vote center meetings. Secretary Lawson's goal was to provide those interested in vote centers the information necessary to decide whether vote centers were a good idea for their county and also to collect feedback on vote center best practices and concerns from around the state. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the information we have gathered over the past few months for the benefit of counties that are still investigating, considering and deliberating about the vote center model.

Regional Meeting Overview

In the spring of 2013, Secretary Lawson signaled her commitment to keeping this a local control issue by travelling the state, taking the conversation directly to counties. Thirteen meetings were hosted by local clerks all around the state. Local clerks all around the state hosted thirteen meetings. Secretary Lawson traveled as far south as Evansville, as far north as Decatur and points in between. These meetings were designed to inform county elected officials on the benefits and the process of switching to the vote center model, but also to listen to concerns of local officials, media and the public.

Nearly 250 local officials from 63 Indiana counties attended these meetings. The county clerk and another staff member from Butler County in Ohio also joined the vote center meeting in Randolph County. Secretary Lawson presented information on a variety of topics including voter convenience, potential for cost savings and the necessary steps a county must take to become a vote center county. Several current vote center county clerks attended the meetings and shared their experience. Their insight was invaluable to those considering vote centers.

Secretary Lawson brought to each meeting a presentation on the history of the vote center model in Indiana, members of her staff and the Election Division staff, clerks from counties that deploy the vote center model and hundreds of post-it notes to collect audience questions. Attendees provided great dialogue covering a range of issues. The bulk of the conversation at each meeting centered on budgeting and upfront costs such as purchasing ePollBooks and computer equipment. The conversation sparked attendees to think about how vote centers

would truly work in their counties. For those already considering vote centers, it provided the opportunity to ask about issues they came across during planning.

As said throughout the vote center meetings, this is a local decision. Each county must decide whether or not vote centers are right for their county. The purpose of these meetings was to provide basic information on vote centers and for current vote center clerks to share their experience. While Secretary Lawson supports the use of vote centers, she encourages clerks to make the choice that best fits the voters of their county. The following map indicates which counties attended vote center meetings (blue) and which hosted vote center meetings (green).

Indiana Voter Center Meetings

Vote Center Status
State of Indiana
STATUS
- Attended Vote Center Meeting
- Hosted Vote Center Meeting
- No Action

Vote Center Legislation Update

The 2013 General Assembly legislative session brought many changes to election law. Below is a breakdown of the legislative changes and what they mean for vote centers.

Electronic Poll Books

Any county election board may adopt an order allowing the county to use an electronic poll book (or ePollBook) for their satellite and/or Election Day voting, even if they choose not to utilize the vote center model. These ePollBooks must meet all the new standards including the requirement of using an electronic signature by the voter to sign the poll list.

The General Assembly set standards (the first of their kind in the United States) that every ePollBook used in Indiana must meet. These standards include the following:

1) Encryption of information and security of connectivity between the location of the electronic poll list and a dedicated private server;
2) The storage of a local version of the voter database information on the electronic poll list;
3) The connection of the polling place or satellite absentee office with the county election board that permits immediate update of all other electronic poll lists indicating that a voter has voted;
4) The capability of displaying specific voter information regarding eligibility and including an electronic image (no longer limited to a "scanned" signature) of the voter's voter registration signature;
5) The inclusion of a signature-capturing device that functions even when there is a temporary interruption in connectivity to the Internet;
6) The generation of reports by the county election board for party watchers and political parties;
7) The production of audit records;
8) The provision of a bar code reader with capability of reading a BMV-issued driver's license or identification card bar code and locating the corresponding voter record; and
9) The capacity to accept the uploading of voter history into the statewide voter registration system.

In October of 2013, Secretary Lawson approved the ePollBook testing standards developed by the Voting System Oversight Program (VSTOP). VSTOP is currently administered by Ball State University's Bowen Center for Public Affairs. Testing for ePollBooks has begun and will continue on a first come, first serve basis. Certification will vary based on when the ePollBook vendor chooses to apply, what problems, if any, are identified as part of the certification process and how diligent the vendor is in fixing any problems, if necessary.

An ePollBook must be certified by the Secretary of State before it can be used in an Indiana Election. An ePollBook vendor must submit an application for approval to the Secretary of State on the approved form. Upon the filing of an application, the Secretary of State will refer it to VSTOP for review and issuance of a report concerning the ePollBook. An ePollBook certification issued by the Secretary of State expires December 31 of the second year after approval, unless revoked by the Secretary for good cause.

In counties utilizing ePollBooks, the county voter registration office is not subject to the state law, which requires that PollBook be printed at least 10 days before the election. Instead, the electronic poll list may be continually updated through election day.

The county voter registration office will download the information required to be available on an ePollBook and the county election board is to deliver and install the electronic poll lists at the vote center or precinct (rather than delivering this equipment to the inspector with other supplies).

Vote Center locations, poll workers and plans
The requirements that each precinct have one polling place and that a polling place be located within a precinct do not apply to a county using vote centers.

A county's vote center plan may use titles other than Inspector, Judge, Sheriff or Clerk for precinct election officers. However, the county vote center plan must specify which precinct election officers in their plan will have the statutory duties of Inspector, Judge, Sheriff or Clerk and each precinct election officer designated in the vote center plan must meet the qualifications imposed on any other precinct election officer.

A county planning to use vote centers must adopt a resolution to provide for the central counting of absentee ballots, unless the county election board has already adopted such a resolution. References to municipal or special elections, in which elections are not being held in each precinct of the county, are added to the law setting forth the required contents of vote center plan laws to clarify that not every voter in the county will vote in every election in the county.

If a county files a vote center plan with the Election Division during the final 60 days before an election, the vote center plan takes effect the day following the election.

Best Practices

Earlier this year, we asked county clerks that deploy the vote center model to provide us with some feedback on what they found went well in their counties during vote center planning and implementation. Below is what they shared with us. This section is intended to answer some questions and provide some ideas for how to tackle any issues you may be having with implementing vote centers.

Planning

Being a vote center county requires significant planning. Current vote center counties allotted several months (6 to 10) to prepare for full vote center implementation. This will allow ample time to inform the public, bring on stakeholders and choose proper locations.   Some clerks even had time to do a trial run prior to the election so the public, poll workers and media could experience it.

Most clerks found the key to successful planning was getting early buy-in from political and county leadership. Having key decision makers on board will make the process go more smoothly.   The vote center clerks also emphasized the importance of having the county information technology staff involved from the very beginning. Having IT involved in the planning stages will allow you to anticipate and solve technology issues before major decisions are made.

Once county and party officials are on board, it will be important to engage the media. Including concerned voters and media will help not only to make voters aware of the potential changes, but will allow you to receive feedback and ideas from those that will be affected most by the changes.

Stakeholders

In order to be a vote center county, the clerk's office must have buy-in from other county elected officials, the public and the media. Each of these stakeholders must be approached differently, but should all be included from the very beginning.

The county board of commissioners and the county council must first pass resolutions to begin the vote center process.   Vote center clerks recommended focusing on providing the commissioners and council members information about cost savings and convenience for voters. Clerks were able to demonstrate potential costs savings.   If possible, they suggest providing detailed information on the potential cost savings such as projected reductions in poll workers and savings from reducing the number of polling places. While the cost savings are not

guaranteed, it will give the council members and commissioners a good idea of what they can do to reduce the overall costs of elections.

Another key item is voter convenience. All vote center clerks indicated the voter should be the first and foremost on the list of things to consider. One county indicated their commissioners found they liked having all the ballots for all the precincts in the vote centers. The counties said to stress to councils and election boards that vote centers allow the voter the flexibility to choose the location that is most convenient for him or her.

Once the council members and commissioners are on board, county clerks should begin to bring in voters to provide input. When creating the study council, it is important to be as diverse as possible. All vote center clerks indicated study councils should include county elected officials, community leaders, political party leaders, concerned voters and even members of the media. Each of these individuals will bring a good perspective and will be useful advocates in garnering further support.

To inform the general public, vote center clerks used various types of earned media. In one county, the clerk appeared on local television to explain the process. They also worked with local media to cover the story of moving to vote centers, to publish locations and to make information available on their websites. One county worked in conjunction with a local TV station to create a DVD explaining the step. The media can be a powerful ally in providing information to the public.

Clerks also relied on other ways to reach out to voters. Flyers posted around the county, information provided to candidates to pass out and speaking to local civic groups were all ways vote center clerks disseminated information. Continual emphasis on the convenience for voters in all forms of communication was crucial to the success of vote centers in these counties.

Budgeting and Costs

One of the most enticing parts of switching to vote centers is the potential to save money. Counties currently spend an average of $100,000 per election. While there are some initial up-front costs (such as the ePollBook and computer equipment), many vote center counties have already realized cost savings.

The largest upfront costs are purchasing the ePollBook and other computer equipment. The costs of ePollBooks vary among vendors. With recent legislation, ePollBooks must have specific features to be compliant with state law. This will make the costs more consistent each year. Also, purchasing computer equipment was another initial cost.   Several reused computer

equipment set for auction, allowing them to save money on technology. However, eventually they needed to update that equipment.

Poll workers are an area where savings is possible. One clerk suggested getting information on what other vote center counties pay their poll worker. Because vote centers do not require as many poll workers, it is possible to realize some savings in poll worker pay. You might also be able to increase the pay or have them work shorter shifts.

All counties spent some money on educating the public on vote centers and mailing out postcards providing information on vote center locations and times. Most vote center counties used earned media like print, radio or television interviews or features whenever they could to get information out, but they also used that paid media opportunities like flyers or direct mail were also used to advertise.   Mailing the postcards helped vote center counties to both inform the public and with their voter list maintenance. However, they did indicate post card mailing comes with a cost.

Clerks advised that for the first few years of vote center implementation the annual budget was similar to the annual budget of the precinct-based model. After a couple election cycles, clerks were able to reduce their budgets and use the savings elsewhere.

Information Technology
As mentioned previously, involving your IT staff from the beginning is key to the success of vote centers. The use of ePollBooks is necessary for vote centers to function properly so ensuring a building has the proper internet service and the equipment used is capable of performing the proper tasks is vitally important. Clerks commented the ePollBooks worked well and helped streamline many election functions, such as posting vote history. The ePollBooks are also crucial for security by recording that someone has voted at one location so they cannot attempt to vote at another.

One clerk stated she wished she had known the full effect vote centers would have on county technology resources at the initial stage. Knowing the detailed and specific guidelines on technology requirements and implementation would have been extremely helpful. Counties considering vote centers should definitely take the time to determine this.

In some cases, counties may not have a full IT department available to help them with all the necessary technology preparation.   Many ePollBooks companies either currently provide technical support service or are looking to add this as part of their product. Working with current vote center counties can also be helpful in determining the necessary technology needs.

It is important to address the availability of technology staff to work closely with the implementation team prior to and during implementation. It is equally important to make sure that the locations selected provide sufficient internet access. A decision will need to be made regarding use of IP address/wireless connections. Also, you will need to work with both IT staff and owners of the vote center location in case of an emergency such as power outage.

Poll workers

As mentioned earlier, a vote center county does not need as many poll workers as precinct-based voting does. This is beneficial in that it saves money, but also allows for more in-depth training. Clerks are able to do more hands-on and individual training, resulting in better-trained poll workers. Training in vote center counties has become less lecture and more hands-on.

Vote center clerks indicated learning how to use the ePollBook was the most significant training effort. It took some time to teach the older poll workers who were less familiar with technology to use the computers and the ePollBooks. The ePollBooks are fairly user friendly and have easy search abilities, but it still is different than flipping through a poll list to find a name. Clerks recommended setting aside ample time for hands on training solved this issue.

While all clerks adjusted their training to incorporate the ePollBook training, they still covered the basics of the polling place. It was important to stress to poll workers the importance of their job in upholding the integrity of Indiana's elections, and that they should monitor any possible electioneering and continue to check photo identification. Some clerks allowed the voting equipment to be available for the workers to test vote, but they did not spend the normal amount of time training workers on how to use it.

Poll location

Determining poll locations is a main responsibility of the study council. In most counties, members of the study council suggested locations and then the council researched those locations to determine whether they were ideal for voting. In one county, each party chairman brought two representatives to help determine locations. In a county where a disagreement on a location occurred, the clerk deemed if it was a Democrat or Republican area according to past voting history and then voted with that chairman. If it was determined an independent area, a coin was flipped. This is just one example.

State law requires a vote center for every 10,000 active voters. However, many vote center clerks indicated they determined their number of vote centers based on convenience of the locations to the voting public. In some cases, vote centers were held in highly trafficked areas such as local restaurants and malls. It is recommended that the same locations be used for early voting and on Election Day, as well as adding additional locations for Election Day.

Each county varied the number of days and hours the vote centers were open for early voting, but all in compliance with legal standards. In one county, vote centers were open three days prior to the election, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, from 10am to 7pm each day. Other counties had vote center voting available for between 2 to 10 days prior to the election. Many early vote centers did not begin voting until later in the morning for convenience of both the voter and poll worker. One county used half the amount of vote centers for early voting than they did for Election Day. The clear lesson here is that the vote center model allows flexibility for county election administrators to strategize based on local trends and needs.

Vote center clerks recommend vote centers be geographically located around the county with coverage between satellite and vote center Election Day locations. One clerk suggested looking at a map of the county to determine the main roads in and out of the county. The vote centers should be close to public transportation routes for further convenience. Several clerks commented they made sure that most of the voting population was within a 5 or 10 mile radius of a vote center.

The most important features a vote center location must have are that they are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and that they have Internet connection. The locations must be spacious enough to hold computer equipment and voting equipment. Locations should have high speed and reliable Internet access along with both Internet and battery backup in case of emergency. Ample parking and accessibility for handicap voters is crucial.

Some vote center clerks have gone away from using churches and schools. For churches, it was because they would have to tear down election equipment for church on Sunday if they were using that church for early voting purposes. As for schools, many believed it was best to stay away from using schools because of security issues. After each election cycle, vote center clerks reevaluated each polling location to determine if it was appropriate to use it again.

General Implementation
During implementation of vote centers, clerks reported it was important to get voters and media involved. Clerks also highly recommended using community leaders who are active voters, but not necessarily election administration professionals, to participate in the study committee.

In most counties, voters were excited about the change. Voters appreciated the idea of being able to vote at whatever location was most convenient. It also helped reduce the number of "Where do I vote?" calls on Election Day. A survey done by the League of Women Voters

showed the voter response to be positive and most of the concerns they heard were not directly related to vote centers.

While vote centers make it more convenient for voters, not all counties found an increase in voter turnout. One county did report an increase in voter turnout. In some counties, voter turnout stayed about the same. However, almost all counties saw an increase in early voting turnout.

The ePollBook allows some of the reporting to be simplified. The ePollBook can be used to improve reporting by doing daily downloads of voter turnout for political parties and media. On Election Day, you can do hourly data exports of this information. This eliminates the need for challengers to be in each location. Post-election, the exported file of voters can be uploaded to SVRS in a matter of minutes instead of manually scanning every voter record.

Vote center clerks collected information from a variety of stakeholders after the election cycle to collect comments and suggestions in order to improve the vote center experience. One county had poll workers answer a survey to gather their input. Changes were made as needed. Regardless of the method, continually evaluating the process is key.

<u>Challenges</u>

The biggest challenge for most of the vote center counties was getting the public on board. Many had to do a significant level of voter education first to garner support for vote centers and then to inform people where to vote. Getting the public to understand the concept is not an easy task. However, the voting public in most vote center counties now really like vote centers after they have experienced them.

Another challenge was training the poll workers who were not familiar with computers or felt uncomfortable using them. Clerks responded by training with a more hands-on training. Clerks reported this type of training greatly helped and most poll workers eventually felt comfortable with the equipment by Election Day.

Vote Center Questions and Answers

The purpose of this section is to provide clerks and other supporters of vote centers answers to questions frequently asked by voters and other concerned citizens. By having the proper information, clerks can properly answer questions and hopefully settle the fears and concerns some people in the community may have.

Costs

You first said this was going to save the county money. Now you are saying it will actually be more expensive this year. Which is it?

- There are some upfront costs. These costs include the ePollBook, educating voters on the new concept and possibly buying new technology. In some counties, computers set for auction were used instead of purchasing new equipment to lower costs. This is one of the options we are looking into. However, we believe that after a couple of election cycles, it will actually be cheaper to run the elections with vote centers.

How did the vote center counties pay for computers to run the ePollBook?

- At the start, counties used "recycled" computers from other county agencies. However, after enjoying significant cost savings, vote center counties have begun to purchase laptops for vote centers.

How much does the ePollBook cost?

- Two counties paid a vendor $10,000 for the application. There are no annual fees. Our SVRS vendor also developed an application that was used in the third vote center county at a cost of $3,500 per election (their first ePollBook was developed at no cost in-house). But with the new legislation to allow for ePollBooks in all counties, more ePollBook vendors have applied for certification. This will give the market more options and increase competition. Counties may consider leasing as well as purchasing ePollBooks.

What, if any, "hidden" costs are associated with the start-up of vote centers?

- There are no hidden costs; however, a county must be willing to invest in new technology and will have to spend time educating voters on the switch. Radio, print, and direct mail (including the postcard) were used in the three pilot vote center counties to prepare the voting public.

How often will you have to repurchase computers and the ePollBook?

- Equipment may need to be replaced every three to four years, depending on the quality of equipment purchased. Depending on the software for the ePollBook, a license may have to be purchased to use it every year. That would depend on the vendor.

Where are the cost savings coming from?

- Vote center counties experience cost savings in several areas.
    - The most dramatic cost saving may come through changes in staffing needs. Vote centers may allow a county to dramatically reduce the number of polling locations and the number of poll workers to staff the locations. This saves the county rent for locations, and money used to pay for staffing and training.
    - After switching to vote centers, some counties have seen a reduced need for the amount of voting equipment they used when operating precinct-based voting. This reduced need has saved some vote center counties money as they are able to purchase less equipment when it comes time to replace current voting equipment. In turn, this has created a lesser demand for storage space of the equipment.
    - The use of ePollBooks has significantly reduced the money spent on printing paper poll lists.
    - With the use of the ePollBook, vote center counties have less of a need for couriers to provide updated lists of individuals who have already voted since they are already marked as voting in the ePollBook.

Locations

How do you expect older people to be able to vote if you move the polling place out of their town and make them drive 10-15 minutes? What do you say to the older voter who feels like their vote is being taken away because their polling place is now further from their home?

- The ability to vote is not being taken away. Alternative ways of voting (i.e. early in-person absentee ballots, mail-in absentee ballots, traveling boards) are still available and utilized. Other counties have been able to put vote centers within 10 miles of every voter in the county. We will work to find the most convenient locations in our county for all voters.

How does reducing the number of polling places actually make voting more convenient?

- While there are fewer locations, they are typically located in more high-traffic areas. Therefore, people can stop to vote while they are out and about as opposed to making a special trip somewhere. Also, sometimes voters go to the wrong precincts to vote and then have to make a mad dash to get to the proper place before the polls close. In

some of these cases, voters do not get to their precinct in time. Vote centers will decrease this problem for the voter as you can vote at any of the vote centers within your county.

Why are all the proposed vote centers in highly populated areas? What about the rural areas?

- One key to vote center success is putting them in high-traffic areas to make it more convenient for voters. We are including public comment in our decisions to place vote centers according to the needs of our county. By putting vote centers along highly traveled routes or at popular locations, it allows those commuters to vote closer to their work or on their way home.

Public input

Why didn't you follow the proper steps listed on the SOS website about gauging interest and forming a study committee?

- The steps on the Vote Center website are suggestions and not all are required. The step on gauging interest consists of working with the Commissioners and Council Members to pass resolutions providing the clerk the authority to look into vote centers. The Commissioners and Council Members resolutions do not automatically mean the county will use vote centers. This is the first step to starting the vote center process and researching how vote centers will work in the county. Some current vote center counties did not use a study committee and some did. Even though we chose not to do a study committee, we will still work with the public to gather input.

What will you do to collect public input?

- One way we may do this is by creating a study committee and inviting community leaders, county party leaders and voters like you to be a part of that. The elected leaders that you voted for will be primary participants in this process. After the draft plan is created, we are required to hold public comment periods so all will have an opportunity to review the plan and provide any suggestions to the plan. We will also use the local media to broadcast our plan and welcome input. We will continue to engage community leaders and the public even after the adoption of vote centers to see how we can continue to improve the voting process.

Why are we just now having public meetings if the plan is already created?

- Prior to the election board's final approval of the plan, we are required to hold a 30-day public comment period. While we will take comments prior to presenting the plan to the public, it is not required that we hold public meetings prior to the draft plan. The

plan that is presented and discussed during the public comment period is a draft and it is expected that changes may occur throughout the process.

- If necessary, we can extend the public comment period beyond thirty days to incorporate more concerns and changes you may have. Thirty days is the minimum amount of time we must allow.

Poll workers

How does this solve the problem of finding poll workers and ensuring they show up for Election Day?

- Vote centers allow a county to operate fewer voting locations on Election Day than with traditional precinct-based voting, therefore fewer poll workers are required.
- This allows counties to focus on finding good quality and reliable poll workers.
- Counties may also require fewer alternate poll workers.

Who will be in charge of finding the poll workers if we aren't using precinct voting?

- This aspect does not change. Poll workers will be chosen in the same manner as before. The job titles may change a bit. But there is still a poll worker in charge of each polling place job description. Poll workers are appointed by the political parties.

Will each party still have an equal amount of poll workers?

- Yes. The general rules and requirements of elections do not change. While there may be a reduction in the overall number of poll workers in each county, each party will still be properly represented at each vote center location

Why

What problem are vote centers the solution for?

- Our world is a mobile 24/7 world. It is not the same as it was when precinct-based voting was established shortly after the Civil War. This was not a problem in search of a solution or a solution in search of a problem. This was state and local election leaders wanting to give counties greater discretion in how we run our elections. We are trying to meet the current needs of voters — who are more mobile than before. Costs to run elections are increasing each year. We must be able to adjust the process and try new things to tackle the issues we currently have.

What is broken about our current system that vote centers would solve?

- Current issues that plague our voting process are increasing costs and lack of quality poll workers. While vote centers are not a silver bullet for any of these, it is a way to relieve the pain these problems bring. Vote centers have the potential to reduce election

administration costs and provide a more convenient way to vote.   Because the number of poll workers can be decreased, more dedicated and reliable volunteers can be sought out to work the polls.

How is this more convenient for the voter?
- Many of today's voters commute a distance far away from their precinct to work. Having the ability to vote anywhere in the county will allow these folks to have easier access to the polls.
- Voting becomes more convenient for more than just commuters. You can add voting to your list of daily errands. Imagine if you have to go across town to go to the mall and you can vote while you are there or while you are going to the library to check out a book.
- Finally, sometimes voters go to the wrong precincts to vote and then have to make a mad dash to get to the proper place to vote before the polls close. In some of these cases, voters do not get to their precinct in time to cast their vote.   Vote centers will decrease this problem as you can vote at any of the vote center locations in your county.

Is this just a way to make things easier on the clerk's office?
- No. The voters, county officials and county as a whole will all reap benefits from switching to vote centers.

Whose perspective are you looking at when making these decisions?
- We are looking at several perspectives when making these decisions. First and foremost, we are looking at the voter. Providing a more convenient way to exercise this right is at the top of our list of priorities.
- We also are thinking of the general public and taxpayers. As public servants, we are obligated to ensure we are running our government (and our elections) as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. If there is potential for vote centers to reduce our election administrative costs, then we need to look into it.
- Finally, we are looking at the perspective of the elected officials. Vote centers would cut back on some of the problems that occur on Election Day, like being overloaded with phone calls about where a particular person should go to vote.

Technology
Isn't using the Internet opening the election up to the possibilities of fraud?
- The only part of vote centers that is online is the ePollBook. The ePollBook is connected through a secure connection.

- All voting related systems have been certified to prevent fraud as best as possible.

Why are the voting machines connected to the Internet and will my vote be tallied and collected online?
- The voting machines are not connected to the Internet. Only the ePollBook is connected to the Internet so the clerk's office can collect real time data on who has voted. This also allows the other vote center locations to see who has voted and helps prevent fraudsters from voting twice.

What happens if a vote center loses its Internet connection?
- We will have a backup plan in place to make sure we can continue to have voting on Election Day.

Vote Center Implementation Steps

Step 1: Gauge interest

Begin by informing the major stakeholders in your county: clerk office staff, election board and county elected officials, party chairmen, community leaders and voters. Without the support of those key groups, vote centers are not likely to be a success in your county. However, to get the vote center ball rolling in your county, the county council and county commissioners must both pass resolutions approving the county's designation as a vote center county. This gives the clerk's office the authority to develop a study committee and look into switching to vote centers.

Step 2: Form a study committee

In some vote center counties, study committees were formed. These committees discussed a variety of topics as they prepared to make the transition to vote centers. It is important these committees be as diverse as possible, including county elected officials, representatives from county political parties, IT and other important staff members and members of the community. In some counties, committees helped choose voting locations and discussed ways to educate the voting public about the change. Your committee members can be an excellent resource for informing voters.

Topics discussed by this committee can include
- Infrastructure and technology
- ePollBooks
- Training for poll workers
- Preparing voters
- Early voting
- Locations
- Costs

Step 3: Draft your plan

A county's vote center plan should be detailed, thorough and meet all the statutory requirements laid out in Indiana Code 3-11-18.1. These requirements include the number of vote centers, location of each vote center, total number of voters (active and inactive) in county and several other pieces of information. (See Vote Center Plan Checklist on page 21 of this document)

Step 4: Seek Public Comment

Once your draft plan is completed, you will need to present it at a public meeting. Provide the opportunity for members of the public to comment on the plan. Indiana law requires a public

comment period to be open for at least 30 days after the public hearing. Public comments should be incorporated into the plan where appropriate. The collection of public comments can be done in a variety of ways: at public meetings, through an online survey, or via email and telephone calls directly to your offices. It is wise to determine how comments are going to be collected and incorporated into the plan before seeking public comment.

Step 5: Election Board approval

After the public comment period has ended and the final version of the vote center plan is available, the county's election board must hold a public meeting. At this meeting, the election board must vote unanimously to adopt the plan.

Step 6: File the plan

Your vote center plan, once approved by the election board, must be filed with the Indiana Election Division. The Indiana Election Division has no authority to approve or reject your plan. The law simply requires the plan to be on file at the Secretary of State's office.

Step 7: Learn from experience

Continue to evaluate vote centers in your county with every passing election. Amend your plan where necessary and file amendments with the Indiana Election Division.

Once you have completed the steps, you are allowed to hold your elections using the vote center model.

County Vote Center Plan Checklist

Submission Information

☐ Indiana Election Division Submission Letter

County Information Sheet

☐ Clerk's Name and Contact Information

☐ County Fiscal Body's Contact Information

☐ County Executive Body's Contact Information

☐ Date First Election Vote Centers will be used

☐ Total Number of Voters

☐ Total Number of Inactive Voters

☐ Total Number of Active Voters

☐ Total number of vote centers to be established

☐ Total number of vote centers to be established at satellite offices to allow voters to cast absentee ballots.[1]

Vote Center Information

☐ Location of each vote center

☐ List of precincts whose polls will be located at the vote center

☐ The number and title of the precinct election officers

☐ The number and name of each precinct the precinct election board will administer

☐ The number and type of ballot variation provided

☐ Whether the ballots are delivered to vote center prior to opening of polls or printed on demand for voter's use

☐ Certification the vote center complies with accessibility requirements under IC 3-11-8

☐ Sketch of planned layout of vote center including equipment and position of election officers

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Equipment and Electronic poll book

☐ Detailed description for any hardware, firmware or software used either:

☐ To create an electronic poll list for each precinct whose polls are located at vote center or

☐ To establish a secure electronic connection between county election board and the precinct election officials administering the vote center

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[1] Must provide at least one to be established as a satellite office on two Saturdays immediately preceding an election day.

☐ Description of equipment and procedures used to ensure voter information is accessible to county election board and electronic poll lists used by election officers at other vote center locations

☐ List the number of electronic poll lists to be provided for each vote center.

Security and Contingency plan

☐ To prevent disruption of vote center process

☐ To ensure election is properly conducted if a disruption occurs

☐ To prevent access to an electronic poll list without the coordinated action of two precinct election officers who are not members of the same political party

Resolutions

☐ County Fiscal Body

☐ County Executive Body

☐ County Election Board Resolution to make central counting of absentee ballots applicable to the county (if the county election board has not already done so)

Sample Commissioners' Resolution
Resolution 2013-_____

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE DESIGNATION OF [INSERT NAME] COUNTY AS A VOTE CENTER COUNTY

WHEREAS, Indiana Code 3-11-18.1 allows counties to adopt the vote center model and;

WHEREAS, the County Board of Commissioners of [Insert Name] County approves the designation of [INSERT NAME] County as vote center county and;

WHEREAS, the county election board has the responsibility for properly drafting a vote center plan for [INSERT NAME], which will take effect upon unanimous vote of the county election board and having the plan is properly filed with the Indiana Election Division;

BE IT SO RESOLVED BY THE [INSERT NAME] BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF [INSERT NAME] COUNTY that [Insert Name] County is approved to operate as a vote center county, upon the required approval and filing of the county vote center plan.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF [INSERT NAME] COUNTY

"AYES"	"NAYS"
_____	_____
NAME	NAME
_____	_____
NAME	NAME
_____	_____
NAME	NAME

Adopted this _____ of _____, _____

ATTEST:

_____
County Auditor

Sample Council Resolution

Resolution 201_-_____

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE DESIGNATION OF [INSERT NAME] COUNTY AS A VOTE CENTER COUNTY

WHEREAS, Indiana Code 3-11-18.1 allows counties to adopt the vote center model and,

WHEREAS, the County Council of [Insert Name] County approves the designation of [INSERT NAME] County as vote center county and,

WHEREAS, the county election board has the responsibility for properly drafting a vote center plan for [INSERT NAME], which will take effect upon unanimous vote of the county election board and having the plan is properly filed with the Indiana Election Division;

BE IT SO RESOLVED BY THE [INSERT NAME] COUNTY COUNCIL OF [INSERT NAME] COUNTY that [Insert Name] County is approved to operate as a vote center county, upon the required approval and filing of the county vote center plan.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF [INSERT NAME] COUNTY

"AYES"   "NAYS"

_____   _____
NAME   NAME

_____   _____
NAME   NAME

_____   _____
NAME   NAME

_____   _____
NAME   NAME

_____   _____
NAME   NAME

_____   _____
NAME   NAME

_____   _____
NAME   NAME

Adopted this _____ of _____ , _____

ATTEST:

_____
County Auditor

Sample Central Count Resolution

State of Indiana) Before the _____ County Election Board

County of _____)

Whereas, IC 3-11.5-1-1.1 (the state law permitting the central counting of absentee ballots) applies to a county whose county election board adopts a resolution by unanimous vote of the board's entire membership pursuant to IC 3-11.5.6-1;

Whereas, the _____ County Election Board has determined that absentee ballots in the county will cast on ballot cards (and not on paper ballots) and that, as a result, IC 3-11.5-6-1 would be the applicable statute for the adoption of a central count resolution by the board;

Whereas, the _____ County Election Board has determined that the adoption of a resolution for the central counting of absentee ballots would be beneficial in the administration of elections in the county;

Whereas, the approval of this resolution would take place at least sixty (60) days before the next election at which the central count procedures would be used; and

Whereas, this Resolution has received the unanimous vote of the entire membership of the Board;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE _____ COUNTY ELECTION BOARD:

Section 1. IC 3-11.5-6-1 applies to the counting of absentee ballots in the county, along with other pertinent provisions of IC 3-11.5.

Section 2. The Secretary of the County Election Board shall immediately file a signed copy of this Resolution with the Indiana Election Division, a division of the Office of the Indiana Secretary of State.

Section 3. In accordance with IC 3-11.5-6-1, this Resolution takes effect immediately and may only be rescinded by unanimous vote of the entire membership of the board.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 20___ by all of the members of the _____ County Election Board.

_____

Printed:

Member, _____ County Election Board

Election Board

_____

Printed:

Member, _____ County Election Board

Printed:

Member, _____ County

Sample Study Committee Letter

DATE

John Doe
123 Main St.
City/Town, IN 41234

Dear Mr. Doe:

[Insert Name] County is amidst the exciting process of transforming into a vote center county. Vote centers allow resident of the county the option to vote at any vote center location, unhindered by their specific home address and former polling place. We feel that this innovative new voting system will not only be easier but also more convenient for [Insert Name] County voters.

As we begin to form a plan regarding how to move forward in this process, we feel that it is important to garner the support of our voters and to compile valuable feedback from those who have some form of expertise in the voting process.

We believe that your experience as a poll volunteer will give you insight into some of the benefits but also the challenges that will face our county as we make the switch to vote centers. We would therefore like to invite you to participate in our county's vote center study committee.

The committee will ideally be made up of county residents whose specific experiences and talents will lend them valuable insight into implementing vote centers in [Insert Name] County. It will include, but not be limited to, experienced poll volunteers, technology specialists, county commissioners, etc.

Our first study committee meeting will take place on [DATE] at [Insert Location]. We look forward to your input.

Regards,

[Insert Name]
County Clerk

Sample Submission Letter to Indiana Election Division

December 17, 2013

Co-Directors
Indiana Election Division
Indiana Government Center South
302 West Washington Street
Room E204
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Directors:

Please accept the following vote center plan on behalf of the [Insert Name] County Board of Election. It means a great deal to the Board and to me to be involved in this innovative, progressive change for our county.

It is our intention to continuously modify this plan to fit current Indiana legislation and also to make revisions based on our experiences with vote centers and the needs of our voters.

Please let me know if you have questions or concerns regarding any of our documentation.

Regards,

[NAME]
County Clerk