



# DIANE TRAUTMAN

## COUNTY CLERK

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May 23, 2019

David Whitley  
Texas Secretary of State  
P.O. Box 12887  
Austin, Texas 78711-2887

Dear Secretary Whitley,

Harris County is pleased to report that the Countywide Polling Place Program was effectively implemented for the May 4, 2019 Joint Election.

This report gives more details regarding the steps Harris County took to diligently ensure that the Countywide Polling Place Program enriched the experience voters had at the polls during this election including working election equipment, support for required languages, and outreach prior to the election.

Harris County contracted with 23 entities to conduct their elections, the most partners ever for a May election. This included cities, schools and Municipal Utility Districts, which added to the complexity of coding ballots and providing services to each entity. In past May elections it was typical for the entities to hold their own elections with the county providing machines and coding the ballots. In light of the nuances of this election, Vote Centers made this process easier and more accessible to the voters of Harris County.

### **Technology Requirements and Security Assurance**

Harris County conducted its election using the e-Slate DRE voting system developed by Hart Inter-Civic. This election system has been in use in Harris County since 2001. It fully complies with the federal Help America Vote Act accessibility requirements and provides full access to all ballot styles required throughout the county. A total of 296 precinct and 44 ballot styles were required for the May 4, 2019 election.

To qualify voters, election workers used e-poll book workstations that contain the voter registration database. This technology enables poll workers to look up voter registration records and to record a voter's participation in the election in real time. Transmission was field-tested prior to the election and performed satisfactorily on Election Day.

Upon approval of the use of a Countywide Polling Place Program, Harris County undertook a comprehensive program to test connectivity of its e-poll book system in each of its polling locations. We created a system of remedial measures to both deal with previously identified connectivity issues, while also remaining responsive to issues that present themselves on Election Day. Through the use of mi-fi cards, the county was able to successfully remediate 3 previously identified polls with connectivity challenges, and addressed connectivity concerns at 15 of our Election Day polling locations.

While our testing showed sufficient connectivity at one location, on Election Day that location experienced intermittent connectivity issues that were not completely remediated by the use of a mi-fi hotspot. While this complication never, in any way, interfered with voting, as a precautionary measure we will not be using that polling location in the future.

### **Election Officials and Worker Training**

Standard procedures specified in the Texas Election Code were followed in appointing election judges and alternates. A meeting with Democratic and Republican party representatives was held on February 18, 2019, to review these procedures, and periodic updates were provided to the parties concerning deadlines and poll worker recruitment status as the election neared.

Election workers were trained on the computerized voter check-in equipment and were instructed on the changes involved in qualifying voters. Training included a 3.5 hour in-person, hands-on course for election judges and alternate judges and online training was available for election clerks. In Harris County, alternate judges typically serve as the e-poll book operators and, as such, were the workers responsible for voter qualification procedures.

### **Election Day Support**

During the election there were two fully staffed call centers available for voters and election judges who may have had questions regarding any aspect of election procedure, including the Countywide Polling Place Program, e-poll books, language assistance, and voting machines.

The Harris County Clerk's office has authorized procedures in place to answer questions and ensure any issues raised by election judges or clerks are swiftly remedied. Our call center received approximately 5 calls from judges with questions around the e-poll book functionality, and all were adequately resolved.

### **Minority Language Requirements**

As required by law, all ballots and elections related materials were provided in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese. Election Day language interpreters were placed at polling locations based on registered voter surnames, as well historical analysis of surname voting at each Election Day polling location.

The Harris County Clerk's office was fully staffed with translators at the downtown branch who could be available via phone in the event a voter needed assistance at a polling location. No calls were received requesting translation services for this election.

## **Turnout Results**

28,188 voters cast a ballot in this election, or a turnout rate of about 4%. This turnout is on par with past May elections. Of these voters, 36% chose to cast a ballot at a location different than what would be considered their home precinct.

It is hard to compare to past elections, as both the entities partnering with the county for the election as well as items on the ballot can vary. However, as a case study we look to three political jurisdictions (City of Pasadena, City of Humble and Humble ISD) that appeared on the ballot in both 2017 and 2019. The results show an uptick in the percentage of voters casting a ballot on Election Day. In the City of Pasadena, the percentage of voters casting a ballot on Election Day increased by a minimum of 4% in five of the eight single-member Council Districts. The City of Humble experienced a 3% increase of Election Day voters. Typically, we have seen a trend leaning towards more Early Voting, but this shows that in some cases Election Day voting was preferred for this election.