

League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund

Voting Procedures to Increase Voting Participation

Election Day Centralized Voting

Also known as: Vote Centers, super precincts, mega-precincts

What it is: Polling place at which any registered voter in the political subdivision holding the election may vote, regardless of the precinct in which the voter lives

What Texas does now: Uses Vote Centers for early voting and is testing them on election day via countywide pilot projects. Otherwise, voting is by precinct. Lubbock and Erath Counties have had successful pilots; e.g. in November 2008, Lubbock County reduced regular voting locations from 69 to 50. The 81st Texas Legislature recently extended the pilot project to five counties, three with populations of 100,000 or more and two with less.

How Election Day Centralized Voting would work:

- Within jurisdiction of authority holding election, multiple Vote Centers are set up as centralized polling places. For example, if county holds election, voters may cast ballots in any Vote Center in the county.
- Voters use Direct Record Electronic (DRE) voting machines.
- Real-time electronic voter rolls immediately update a voter's record as having voted to prevent voting more than once.

Arguments in favor of Election Day Centralized Voting:

- Increases convenience for voters away from their precinct but close to any Vote Center.
- Eliminates need for provisional ballot for voters at wrong precinct, saving time at polls. This type of provisional ballot is not counted.
- Makes it easier to know and remember where to vote
- Reduces need for finding qualified poll workers.
- Requires fewer polling places. Accessibility needs may make them hard to find.
- Reduces logistics of delivering and servicing equipment for precincts
- Reduces cost (fewer poll workers, polling places, and equipment needs).

Arguments against Election Day Centralized Voting:

- Makes voting inconvenient for those who have to travel farther to a Vote Center.
- May disenfranchise poor, disabled, elderly or other voters with transportation needs.
- May result in long lines at the Vote Center.
- Creates dependency on electronic poll books and possible security risks.
- Requires real-time touch-screen Direct Record Electronic (DRE) voting machines.
- May increase traffic in highly urbanized areas when peak voting hours occur before and after traditional work hours.
- Increases chance of error because ballots are not the same for all voters at the Vote Center due to multiple or split districts within the jurisdiction holding election.

Discussion question: How well would Election Day Centralized Voting achieve goals of voter convenience and participation in the election process?

For more information: See LWV-TEF *Facts and Issues on Election Day Centralized Voting*.