

Having been heavily involved in a political campaign in Miami-Dade County during the 2012 elections, I became personally aware of many problems with the elections process and our County Elections Department. I sent the following comments, outlining some of the more egregious issues, to our mayor, Carlos Gimenez, shortly after the election. I think they bear repeating to you as well:

- Increased funding and better staffing for the Elections Department is badly needed. Getting through to a live body at the Department prior to the election was practically impossible. When I did get through, I was often given incorrect advice (one young man told me there was no closing date for registration; another employee told me it was highly unusual for a registered voter to be on the State list and not on the County's, whereas I subsequently found that was not true, with no reasonable explanation for this being the case). The Department needs more and better trained, permanent personnel, and should not rely so heavily on seasonal employees;
- The Elections Outreach Department appears to have been gutted – down to one permanent employee. Especially in light of the new statutory restrictions on voter registration groups, this important department should be more, not less, active in the community;
- I understand from the Miami Herald that the Department was reluctant to change voters' precincts so close to the election, but in retrospect this was an entirely foreseeable train wreck waiting to happen. Assigning voters to precincts in huge and grossly disproportionate numbers, e.g., over 6,000 to 8,000 voters to some precincts and only 1200 to 1500 voters to others (and most likely not allocating equipment and resources proportionately to these precincts) had devastating consequences;
- Another major problem was the selection of polling places. Too many had woefully inadequate parking. At Precinct 569/995, e.g., which you personally visited on Election Day, parking was readily available to a few, i.e., the residents who lived there, and totally inadequate for everyone else;
- The Elections Department was totally unprepared to receive thousands of overseas and military ballots on Election Day by, incredibly, having only one available fax machine (I received a call from one frantic and totally frustrated father trying to fax his daughter's ballot who told me that the line had been busy all day long; when I contacted the Absentee Ballot Section, I was told that he had to "just keep trying – thousands of people are in the same boat");

- The Elections Department for years has had a problem fulfilling Absentee Ballot requests, particularly, for some reason, from out of town students (I know because my own son in 2000 failed to receive his ballot after numerous phone calls to and promises by the Department, and since then, in every election I've worked on, including this one, I have heard the same complaints). This year there was a new twist: the Department posted, inaccurately, that Absentee Ballots had been mailed, when in fact, the Department subsequently acknowledged, they had not; further inquiry revealed that at least some of this problem was attributable to the Department having run out of 15 different ballot styles which, for some unexplained reason, required another 10 days to reprint.

These are just some of the problems of which I personally became aware. I'm sure many others could add to this list. I really hope that you and the Commission are sincerely motivated to correct the problems at Elections and will commit the necessary resources to doing the same. Our citizens deserve nothing less.

Sincerely yours,

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