Long Lines at Polling Places

Presidential Commission on Election Administration
Philadelphia, PA
September 2013

Voter's Eye View of Election Day 2012

- Interviewed 10,200 registered voters
- 1/3 of voters reported **NO WAIT**
- Average wait time – 13 minutes
  - Florida – 44 minutes
  - D.C. – 34 minutes
  - Maryland – 32 minutes
  - Virginia – 27 minutes
  - South Carolina – 27 minutes

What is an acceptable wait time?

- SIMPLE Voting Act
  - No voter should be forced to wait in line to vote **more than one hour**

Where do we start?

- Following an election:
  - Survey poll workers
  - Talk to county election officials
  - Review data
    - Audit data from voting machines
    - Audit data from electronic poll books
  - Consider voter input received on election day

What causes long lines?

Check-in Process High Turnout
Voting Equipment Long Ballots
Poll Books Training Lack of Signage
Provisional Ballots Rush Hour Voting
Poll Workers Polling Place
Layout Administration Curbside
Voting Precinct Size Inefficiencies
Photo ID Lack of Resources
Election Day Registration Address Changes

SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTION COMMISSION

EVERY VOTE MATTERS.
EVERY VOTE COUNTS.

Voter Check-in

- Voter registration database problems
- Polling place not adequately staffed
- First-time voters showing ID
- Voters not on list/wrong precinct
- Voters without photo ID
- Same day registration

EVERY VOTE MATTERS. EVERY VOTE COUNTS.

Voting Process

- Long ballots
- Voters not familiar with ballot – candidates and questions
- Voters not familiar with voting machines or equipment
- Voters waiting on curbside or ADA machine

Polling Place Technologies

- Not enough voting machines/booths
- Voting machine(s) not working
- Electronic poll book issues at check-in
- Not enough electronic poll books
- Technology confusing to poll managers

Poll Workers

- Not enough poll workers
- Inadequate training of poll workers
- Lack of training documentation or reference manuals
- Late arrival or no shows
- Highly technical process performed infrequently

Polling Place/Precinct

- Changing polling place locations
- Fewer or consolidated polling places
- Problems getting access to precinct to set up
- Poor polling place layout/flow
- Lack of organization
- Insufficient signage
- Poor queue management
- High turnout
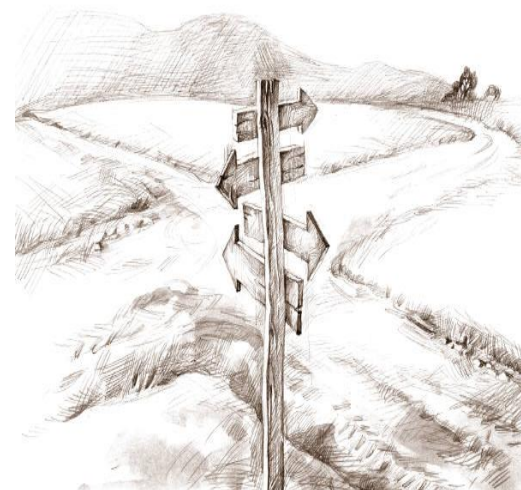
What can we do?

- Address precinct size, number of poll managers per precinct and number of voting machines/equipment
- Study audit data from voting systems and electronic poll books
- Conduct time and motion studies
- Queue management theories
- Voter education

What can we do?

- Leverage technology
  - Use of electronic poll book technology
    - Technology can instantly check whether someone has already voted and present the voter with the proper ballot
  - Use of polling place 'wait time' systems
- Utilize a problem resolution table at polling place
- Effective ballot design techniques

Recommendations

- Establish guidelines; allow for flexibility
- Provide for alternative voting methods:
  - Early voting
  - Vote centers
- Explore new voting technologies (personal electronic devices)
- Provide adequate resources