



**THE LEAGUE  
OF WOMEN VOTERS**  
OF GREATER PITTSBURGH

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**Comments from two League of Women Voters members of the election-day process:**

*One member:*

Since I'm inspector of election in my District, these comments come from being involved with the process all day long.

1) The machines functioned well in our District, although most of the voters had not used them before and we had to give a short "lesson" to each of hundreds of people. The downside of this was that some people wanted us to stay with them while they voted. We, of course, didn't want to see their votes or to be perceived as influencing them.

2) We (the poll workers and many voters) all agreed that a paper trail would be reassuring.

3) There was little attention to the machines vs. the physicality of the polling place. Our outlets, for example, were only two in number and placed on a short wall in an otherwise big space. We brought surge bars and extension cords, but no matter how we configured the machines, we still couldn't put all of the eight that we got into action (only six), although we "opened" them all per our instructions. We had to tape cords to the floor (brought our own duct tape to do it), and wheel chair folk had quite an obstacle course to navigate in order to vote.

4) The disability machine needs rethinking. It takes eons to vote if you have to listen to the tape. Fortunately, we had no one who needed it.

5) If more than two machines are daisy-chained (one cord going to another), there is no way for a speedy voter to exit without passing by another person in the process of voting, so privacy is a problem.

6) Ironically, the lines were long--not because of the machine, but because of the card and book systems that precede them. This is the only state in which I have voted where voters are not told (by mail) where to vote. With eleven polling places in Moon, we had many people coming to District 7 who belonged someplace else. There ought to be speedy touch screen machine that lets them put in their address and find their true polling place.

7) Our roles have lots of dead people on them. Couldn't this be exploited by someone with less than good intentions? Do funeral homes make it a part of their services to help the family notify the County? Is there a better way to purge the rosters so that fraud is less possible?

8) No one seems to check the competence of the individuals working the polls, and they seem to be in office for life. Instead of voting for these "offices," some mechanism for appointment and some mechanism for certifying at least minimal ability to perform the job should be in

place. I find it telling that no one has been able to tell me how long my term of office is (elected in the last cycle; started with the spring primary).

9) Although the State Attorney General has said that elected officials no longer need to swear the peculiar oath that starts with someone declaring that he/she not a subversive person (whatever that means) and goes on to say that they are not in violation of some PA statute (the contents of which are unknown), we had to fill out no fewer than four copies. How does this protect voters or ensure election integrity?

10) The place where we turn in our post-election residue (Holy Family Institute in Emsworth) is in the Dixmont slide area, up a narrow road, through not-wide stone gates, up another hill, to a much-too-small parking lot. Nice of them to provide the space but a nightmare to deliver heavy objects and paperwork, In the primary, the rain was still another factor.

11) Lots of the poll workers are old and small; this job is getting more and more physical (i.e., setting up the machines; refolding them). The two of us able to do this job better not catch the flu.

Yes to a paper trail. Yes to more investigation of how the machines fit into a given polling place with the extension cords, etc. to make it work and to provide privacy. Yes to some system to check poll worker minimal competency.

Thanks for the opportunity to pass along comments.

*Another member (part of the group that helped to demonstrate machines):*

1) Workers Need Training: The machines may be new, but the paperwork is old, voluminous, and requires someone who will be serious about reading the procedures, learning them, and following them. Most of the workers I see (my four colleagues and the 8-10 others at the 2 wards that share our voting location) don't seem to know, and worse, don't seem to care, whether they do the right thing with the 'exception' cases during the day. The machine and election-day training that we've had has been heavy on handling the machines, and weak on all the rest. I think they all need to take following the rules more seriously, because...

2) Rules/Procedures for Exceptions aren't being followed: ESP: I think **Provisional Ballots are Not Being Used**: The judge at another ward in my location was practically contemptuous of the idea of following the instructions on the big green packet of provisional ballot materials; I don't believe he's ever used one. But nearly every election, at least one voter appears at our ward strongly asserting they registered, they have ID showing they live in our ward, yet aren't in the district register. If you can't get through to the central telephone number to verify them, you have to give them a provisional ballot. I bet most poll workers don't. Similarly, we are supposed to let people who moved away vote at their old ward one last time. I asserted that one woman should be allowed to do that, while the **judge** at her (old) ward told her to go away to the new location (she didn't know where it was). I told him there was an affidavit form she should be able to use to assert this is her last time voting here (and I found it for him), but he whispered to me he wanted to avoid bothering with that. I loudly told him she should be able to use it – and that he should make sure to turn it in at the end of the evening... If the judges are

acting this way, you can imagine how little their co-workers are willing to do to help out the exceptions. In that same vein...

3) The County has to publicize voting location determination information way ahead of Election Day, repeatedly. Why isn't there a database; a list at all the libraries, etc? Mt. Lebanon Township happens to post voting locations in its website, but you'd never know it. I stumbled across it several years ago, printed out copies for every worker at my ward, and extras for the other two wards (one of my colleagues even alphabetized them and put them in binders), and we have several copies with us at every election, now. It's not just a list of the locations; it lists voting locations **by street address**, so it had answers for everyone who lives in Mt. Lebanon. Many people come to the wrong place, and simply telling them that they're in the wrong place is **not sufficient**. We know it's hard to get through to the central telephone number on Election Day, so we owe it to voters to tell them where their correct location is. The ward with the careless judge doesn't seem to have his copy any more; I think those people are just told to go away and try to make a phone call to the County office. That's ridiculous in this information age. Everyone in the County should be able to easily find out where they vote, on the web, and the County should figure out how to advertise the information **and** make it available to poll workers on Election Day.

4) Poll Watchers Too Often Sit with the Poll Workers: It's great to have active poll watchers exercise their rights, but this time, there were so many of them, they ended up grabbing extra chairs and sitting with the poll workers at, even behind, our tables. They want to sit while they check one of our voter lists, but our location is so crowded that they were practically on top of us for long periods of time. Our ward is pretty good about keeping them out in front of the table and away from the machines, but the other two wards had them sitting with them for long periods of time. We received a copy of a court order during the day, issued by an election judge, in response to a complaint in the North Hills, we were told, about poll workers talking to the voters and poll workers too much – close to politicking – such that the order told us all to keep them away from our workplaces, and not to talk to them (too much). It really is an area that can be abused, although I didn't see any real abuse. I was glad to see the judge's order arrive, because most poll workers don't know the rules about keeping watchers away from the table and voters (see #1), and/or don't care about following rules very much (see #2)

5) Good news: A county "rover" checked on us in the morning, another County staffer checked with us in the afternoon, and another one late in the day. We had no problems with the machines (except their daisy-chain design prevents them from being positioned far enough apart to allow an aisle in between them; meaning they must be positioned in a row so voters walk behind each other to get to their machines, making it possible for them to see how others are voting.) But we had extra machines, good written instructions, and the staffers who checked with us in person gave us the chance to tell them about our overcrowding.

6) Best News: We had 70% turnout! Only long lines were 7-8 am, and extra machines kept them moving. (Also, if you have a "voting location by street" directory printed out, as we did, you can go down the line and see if anyone can leave the line, come inside, and go to their uncrowded location. (People at the end of the line outside don't realize there are three separate lines inside.)