



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

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Summary of Comments on Election-Day Experiences in November 2006

Beyond Voters Guides, Candidate Forums and voting, LWVGP members assisted voters three ways this fall: helped the County demonstrate machines, served as poll workers, and volunteered for the Election Protection project. League members and some non-member poll workers sent comments in response to an email request for their election-day experiences, both as poll workers and as voters. About half of those responding felt that all went well. Where it did not go as well, the most mentioned complaint was the lack of privacy. It took several forms:

- Most frequently, having to walk behind other machines, and having other people walk behind yours,
- A glass wall behind machines that people could see through and read the screens,
- One's motions could indicate doing a write-in, which would be revealing if there was a candidate running a write-in campaign,
- Poll workers "hovering" and "helping" where such assistance was not requested or desired.

Several people suggested longer cords so that machines could be placed in groups of two, accessed from opposite sides, so a voter would never have to walk behind another voter's machine. One person noted that Governor Rendell had the privilege of voting behind a curtain with his electronic voting machine, and opined that we should have the same benefit.

Responders also noted that:

- Turnout was high in many places which, along with instructing voters on the machines, made a very busy day for poll workers. Some were overwhelmed and required assistance from county workers.
- A few voting machine errors were observed: a "yes" vote on the ballot question that turned into a "no" vote on the review screen but was corrected by carefully clicking the check box instead of the larger rectangle (which should not be necessary); a missing confirm screen although pushing the "vote" button again apparently recorded the vote...
- There were difficulties with getting the printout at the end of the balloting.
- There was confusion over provisional and emergency ballots and ID requirements.
- Many voters, particularly the elderly, needed help with the machines, but some members reported fewer problems understanding the machines than in the primary.
- The ballot question and the straight party vote were more visible than on lever machines, a plus.
- Voters came to the wrong polling place. The County needs a well-advertised facility for checking one's polling place. (The new LWVUS web site vote411.org provides that service nation-wide.)
- There were lines in some places, but often the problem was not the machines but the process of checking in and verifying registration or a merged single line for multiple precincts.
- There were problems with facilities for those with disabilities including machine configurations in which it was difficult to maneuver a wheelchair, earphones that failed to work properly, and poll workers inadequately instructed in these facilities.
- Instructions would be easier to follow if they appeared on each screen for that screen only rather than on a single screen at the beginning of the process.
- In one instance, a woman who is being treated for cancer didn't vote because the application for absentee ballot requires specifying the diagnosis if the excuse is medical. The prospective voter, who is known to the public, didn't want her diagnosis made public. That (state) requirement would seem to violate medical privacy.