

# Project Overview

Voter Center Task Force

El Paso County – Election Department

March 24, 2005

# Overview

- In 2004, the Colorado Legislature identified Vote Centers as an Election Day option- an alternative to traditional polling places or mail ballot elections
- The EPC Clerk & Recorder's office determined the need to study the concept and to create a diverse Task Force
- The EPC Vote Center Task Force met during the first three months of 2005
- Task Force consensus will be included in the Clerk & Recorder's recommendations to the BOCC regarding the 2005 Coordinated Election

## FOOTNOTE...

Larimer County (Ft. Collins) conducted Colorado's first Vote Center Elections in November 2003, August 2004, and November 2004.

# Project Goals

- **Create Vote Center Task Force (VCTF)**
- **Study the Vote Center concept**
- **Compare Vote Centers to Polling Place and Mail Ballot Elections**
- **Summarize VCTF findings**
- **Present options for November 2005 Coordinated Election to Board of County Commissioners**

# VCTF Schedule

- January 13, 2005 - Initial VCTF meeting
- By weekly meetings (6 total)- with daily and weekly Election Department and support staff research
- February 1, 2005 - Field trip to Larimer County
- March 24, 2005 - Final VCTF meeting
- April 25, 2005 - Present written Report on November 2005 election options to Board of County Commissioners
- May 2, 2005 - Discuss report at BOCC meeting and reach decision on type of election to conduct in November 2005 (Polling Place, Mail-Ballot, Vote Center)

# Team/Resources

- Twenty-five (25) registered voters representing demographics of El Paso County Voter Registration database (by party, unaffiliated, etc); representatives of both major political parties; representatives of Special Districts
- Chief Deputy- Terry Sholdt
- Election Department Manager- Marguerite Duncan
- Election Department Asst. Manager- Susan Russo
- Election Department Support Coordinator- Liz Olson (Project Co-Leader)
- Election Department Services Coordinator- Keri Ashley (Project Co-Leader)
- Information Systems Manager- John Gardner
- Distribution Center Manager- Rich Jones
- Clerk & Recorder office Mapping Department- Janice & Melissa
- Clerk & Recorder- Robert C. “Bob” Balink

# VCTF Conclusions (Primary Pros)

- Vote where it's convenient; no wrong place to vote
- Fewer\Election Judges needed (source of many errors)
- Full-time staff at all voting locations
- Will prepare for continued growth in County
- Best argument for obtaining DRE funding

# VCTF Conclusions (Primary Cons)

- Lack of results by precinct (still required by law in '06)
- Eliminates social aspect of precinct polling places
- All ballot styles (paper) required at all locations (w/o DREs)
- Potentially high cost – initial investment and on-going
- Potential for computer hacking (connectivity issues)

# VCTF Conclusions (Based on survey & comments)

- Fewer Election Judges are required for Vote Centers
- Election Judges need additional training in any election
- Primary Logistical Vote Center concerns (in order):
  - #1 Budget
  - #2 Locations
  - #3 Connectivity
  - #4 Reporting



# VCTF Conclusions (Based on survey & comments)

- There are long-term benefits to consider transitioning to Vote Centers at a future date
- There are adequate facilities throughout El Paso County to host Vote Centers
- Vote Centers provide a better way to manage and insure a fair and honest election
- Absentee & Early Voting participation would remain the same if we had Vote Centers
- Election Judges will make an easy transition to processing voters at Vote Centers
- El Paso County citizens would accept the Vote Center Concept, with proper education
- Vote Centers are the most expeditious manner to meet HAVA & State requirements
- Vote Centers would decrease number of Provisional Ballots cast
- Vote Centers would reduce the amount of voter fraud
- Vote Centers are a more convenient way for voters to cast their ballot
- Vote Centers with Touch Screens (DREs) would greatly enhance Vote Centers
- The biggest obstacle to conducting a Vote Center Elections may be the budget
- 2005 Election preferences (in order): Polling Place, Mail-Ballot, and Vote Centers
- Additional knowledge of the election process was gained through the VCTF
- The Vote Center Task Force Process was a positive learning experience (100%)

# VCTF Conclusions

- When should El Paso County try the Vote Center concept?
  - #1 November 2007 (tie broken with 1<sup>st</sup> place votes)
  - #2 November 2005
  - #3 Some year after 2007
  - #4 August & November 2006
  - #5 Never
- Vote Centers will allow political parties to “Get Out the Vote” easier

# Budget Analysis (Est. Costs 2005)

- Polling Place \$ 807,698
- Mail Ballot Election \$ 706,289
- Vote Centers \$ 1.24-1.7 million\*

\*Includes one-time initial costs \$ 461,000

## FOOTNOTE...

While a line item budget was prepared for all three election options, information as to actual costs for a Vote Center election was difficult to fully understand based on a lack of information available from Larimer County.

**FOR MORE INFO CONTACT...**

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