

# Study: Poll workers, not machines, build voter confidence

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AKRON — It's the people who work at the polls on Election Day, not the machines recording the votes, who give a voter confidence that the process will be fair, a researcher says.

"There is a consistent relationship in the rating of job performance and the confidence a vote will be counted accurately," Quin Monson, an assistant professor at Brigham Young University, told the Summit County Board of Elections on Tuesday. He headed a study

that surveyed voters and poll workers in Summit and Franklin counties during and after the November 2006 election.

The state plans to establish uniform standards for poll worker training, said Patrick Galaway, director of communications for Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner.

"We want to give every board of elections the same tools and are looking at possibly creating a manual and instructional videos," he said.

Such training might have headed off the problems in Cuya-

hoga County in the May 2006 primary — the first in which touch-screen voting was used countywide.

Polling locations opened late, workers couldn't get some machines running, and closing voting stations and transmitting the votes was cumbersome and late.

Cuyahoga County paid \$736,390 to Cuyahoga Community College to train poll workers for the November election. That election ran much more smoothly.

Monson led a survey of poll workers in Cuyahoga County

after the May 2006 primary. Fifty-three percent said their training had not prepared them to deal with touch-screen machines and only 42 percent were satisfied with how they performed.

Results were much more positive for poll workers and voters in Franklin and Summit counties in November.

The voting experiences using new technology were examined in the study paid for by a grant to the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at Brigham Young. Summit uses optical-scan machines. Franklin uses touch-

screen voting.

November's election also saw new identification requirements for voters at polling places, and if they encountered problems they could cast provisional ballots.

Local college students conducted exit surveys outside 50 randomly selected polling locations in each county. After the election at least 500 poll workers in each county were surveyed by telephone.

For the most part, voters in both counties were satisfied with their experience and got help if they needed it. But about 40 per-

cent in each county felt they did not have enough privacy when voting.

Summit County voters rated 64 percent of poll workers as excellent and 28 percent as good. Those who ranked workers as excellent were more confident their votes would be counted accurately than those who ranked them lower, Monson said.

"Improvements can be made," he said. "I think it has a lot to do with poll worker training."

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