

Summary -- Estimating Hours and Costs for Hand Counters, New York

Calculating Contests per Ballot

- The number of contests per ballot varies widely from one election to the next.
- In NY November 2008, proposal to hand count only the two federal races per ballot, President and US House.

Assumptions

- A group of 4 new people, called Counters, (not Pollworkers who have worked all day) arrive to begin work at 8 PM.
- They are sworn in, receive approximately 20 minutes of training, and commence the counting process.
- Since NY state law limits election districts to serving 1,150 registered voters, and on average has 62.4% turnout, with 95.47% of those voters voting at the polls (as opposed to absentee), we assume 685 voters for this illustration, each voting in two contests per ballot = 1370 contests to be hand-counted per election district.
- Considering that experienced hand counters in New Hampshire average **six seconds** per contest (which includes the training time), forecasts created for this brief assume a very conservative **ten seconds** per contest, since this will presumably be the first experience for the NY counting teams.
- We use \$10/hour for a Counter's pay rate, since it falls within the range of Pollworker wages paid by NY counties.

Estimating Hours of Hand Counting Needed on Election Night

- 1370 contests x 10 seconds to count a contest = 13,700 seconds of counting time required on election night.
- 13,700 divided by 3,600 seconds = 3.8 hours total counting time (3 hours, 48 minutes).

Calculating Staff Needed on Election Night

- *NY's counting method will use 4-person teams. In this example, one team would need approximately 3 hours and 48 minutes to complete the hand count for 2 races in a district with the statute limit of 1150 registered voters.*

Calculating Pay to Counting Staff

- Each Counter: $3.8 \times 10 = \$38.00$
- Each team: $38.00 \times 4 = \$152$
- Postulating a county with 300 such election districts: $\$152 \times 300 = \$45,600$

Each election district will also require that the chief election Administrator remain and oversee the entire counting and reconciliation process.

By this estimate, of the 15 NY counties studied, 10 can be hand-counted by one team in 4 hours or less, with several requiring considerably less time. Hamilton County, with its small election districts, would be able to complete its counting in less than 1 hour 40 minutes. New York County, even with over 1 million registered voters, would be finished in less than 2 hours 30 minutes, because its election district sizes are well under 1150.

Dutchess, Westchester, Erie, Nassau and Suffolk Counties would require more than 4 hours of counting, if using only one counting team, with Suffolk needing appreciably more. Our Forecast Tool indicates that these counties have more than 1,150 voters per election district. If they were to conform to the NY statute limitation of 1,150 maximum voters, they would be able to complete the count in four hours or less with one counting team. If they remain large, the Administrators could choose to use two teams in order to complete the count in fewer hours.

Since NY may be required to change from the lever machines in the very near future for ALL counting, it is hoped that they will realize that the cost of other counting mechanisms, e.g., DREs and Optical Scanner equipment are, in the end, more costly than any hand count system. Not only is the initial cost substantial, but ongoing testing and certification, secure storage (often necessitating temperature controlled environments), maintenance, reprogramming, updates, service, batteries, upgrading to newer models to keep up with specification requirements, etc, add up to substantially more than any hand count. Furthermore, hand counting keeps the money in the local community -- and as a nice bonus, brings some of the community together in performing a high order civic duty.

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December 2008