

Election Policy Work Group

Meeting: **Tuesday, May 23, 2017** 9:00am at Atwood Building

Attendance: Josie Bahnke, Shelly Growden, Julie Husmann, Carol Thompson, Lauri Wilson, Indra Arriaga, Libby Bakalar, Claire Richardson, Laurie Sica, Lori Strickler, David Becker, John Lindback, Nanci Ashford-Bingham, Senator Gary Stevens, Marna Sanford, Barbara Jones, Joelle Hall, Joyce Anderson, Cindy Allred, Bruce Botelho, Roy Mitchell, Representative Kreiss-Tomkins, Natalie Landreth, Liz Medicine Crow

Members Not in Attendance: Lt. Governor Craig Campbell, Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer, Lt. Governor Mead Treadwell, Vicki Otte, John Shively, Johni Blankenship, Nicole Borromeo, and Kacie Paxton

Members of the Public in Attendance: Randy Ruedrich and Evan Anderson (Alaska Center)

Agenda and Notes

Chairwoman Liz Medicine Crow (First Alaskans Institute):

Gunalcheesh, Haw.aa – Welcome and thanks

Principles that Guide our Discussions 9:00-9:45am

David Becker:

Discuss principles that will guide our conversations

- Principles that the group thinks are important and will permeate the discussions. Make sure that our discussions today have the principles included. (Example of a principle would be cost effectiveness).
- Open this up to discussion for anyone in the group.

1.) Language Assistance

Indra Arriaga (Language Compliance Manager):

Discussion and Overview of DOE's Current Language Assistance Program

- 2016 was a challenging year and the DOE is proud about what was done.
- DOE was able to establish relationships with communities.
- Language requirements are very different from 2010 vs 2016.
- The DOE's language scope has expanded.

- Moving of people across Alaska = addition of languages in areas that used to just have one language.
- The DOE will translate Election Day phrases, ballot measures, and will make Public Service Announcements. That is the core and then from there, the DOE will translate additional materials as able.
- The Toyukak settlement is very specific about what the DOE has to translate. For example, the Official Election Pamphlet in Alaska Native languages.
- The DOE has been working on Alaska Native Language glossaries.
 - Expanded election terms in 6 dialects of Yup'ik and in Gwich'in.
 - Panels have put in 1000 hours of work.
- Still working on Yup'ik dialects and Northern Inupiaq. Hopefully by end of 2017 we will have three more glossaries done.
- The DOE is still looking for resources in the Aleutian chain for Aleut.

Questions and Discussion about Language Assistance

Senator Gary Stevens:

- Is language going to need to be considered in the future?

Indra Arriaga:

- Section 203 has been around since 1975.
- In the United States census, the form asks if someone speaks a language other than English at home.
 - It also asks the level of the person's English comprehension skill.
- If 5 percent of a census population area says that they speak another language other than English and that they speak it at a low skill, the DOE has to provide language assistance.
 - The census measures the number of people who are low English proficient.
- The challenge for the DOE is in the YK delta where there are so many different languages.

Libby Bakalar (Assistant Attorney General):

- From a legal perspective
 - Even if there is a gap between language assistance needs in the community versus the language assistance needs indicated in the census data, the DOE has to legally go by the census data.
- The DOE is not allowed to do a secondary census.
 - Even if the DOE goes to the community and asks if they need language assistance and they say no, the DOE still has to provide it if the census indicates that it is needed.

Josie Bahnke:

- The DOE has expanded election resources into different languages (for example the Official Election Pamphlet).
- Currently HAVA funds are used for language assistance. Those funds are dwindling so how is the DOE going to maintain an effective language assistance program without HAVA?
 - Language glossaries are a one-time project that the DOE won't need to make every year, but the DOE will have to translate future ballot measures.
 - The amount which needs to be translated depends on the election cycle which the DOE can't predict a budget for.
- The DOE is proactive with individuals in the language community and have begun outreach to tribes in preparation for the 2020 census.

David Becker:

- When discussing ballot technology today, multiple languages need to be considered.

Libby Bakalar:

- For clarification, the DOE needs to provide both oral and written resources.

Barbara Jones (Anchorage Clerk):

- Where are the oral resources housed?

Indra Arriaga:

- It is in person and is also recordings.

2.) Maximize ballot access to all Alaskans who are eligible to vote

3.) Cost effectiveness

4.) Voter satisfaction

Discussion on the three principles above

Libby Bakalar:

- Need a real consideration for vote by mail because it will solve so many problems at once.

Senator Gary Stevens:

- It makes fiscal sense

David Becker:

- We will talk about vote by mail more in the day.

- Many western states have come to this same conclusion.

Joelle Hall:

- Maybe the Postmaster General should join the panel.

John Lindback (ERIC):

- Cost effectiveness is important however, elections are a basic right (similar to road maintenance).
- You should not have to compete with other non-basic government programs. You need a well-run election. Stop apologizing about how much it costs, but money should still be used in a cost effective manner.

5.) Longevity in the solution (something that will serve Alaska for the next 20 years.)

More Discussion on Principles

Josie Bahnke:

- Since HAVA has passed in 2002 the DOE has mostly relied on federal funds. Technology updates were all paid for with federal funding. There were no state appropriations.
- Federal funds will not be around forever.

Senator Gary Stevens:

- The DOE will have to compete with everyone else for funding.
- The DOE also has a responsibility to young people who do not vote yet but will in the future. For example, in California 16 year olds can pre-register to vote.

Lauri Wilson (DOE Region 1 Supervisor):

- DOE has youth ambassador workers – helps introduce them into the election process.

Joyce Anderson (Anchorage League of Women Voters):

- League of Women Voters has a youth vote program in Anchorage. Go into schools to vote on the issues. This has been very helpful to engage children.

David Becker:

- Nationally, turnout for young voters is very low. Many states have tried many things and it is an ongoing issue.

Voting Technology 9:45-10:30am

Presentation on Ballot Tabulation System Shelly Growden (DOE Retired Election System Manager)

- Alaska's ballot tabulation system is very comprehensive and complex.
- One of the best features of Alaska's system is that it is a fully integrated system.
 - The one system produces the ballots that get printed; it accumulates the results; and lets the DOE report the results. It is one system that produces everything.
- System was purchased in 1998.
Bought TSX (Touch Screen) machines in 2003 and 2005.
- The ballot tabulation system has a shelf life of 20-25 years. We are there now.
- It has been a great system. It is accurate. That accuracy has been proven every primary and general election.
 - The DOE does hand count verification after every state election. Have done numerous recounts. We know the system is accurate.
- In 2009, UAA did a security study on Alaska's voting system. We have one of the best systems in the nation because it is a fully integrated single system.
- The problem the DOE has with the equipment is reliability.
 - The system is reliant on an outdated windows program.
 - Equipment parts are no longer sold.
 - The DOE loses voter confidence when machines stop working.
- It needs to be replaced in 5 years.

David Becker:

- Is speed of the machine a consideration in Alaska?

Shelly Growden:

- No, precincts are usually small.

Barbara Jones:

- I see you have less than 60 extra machines how do you allocate that?

Shelly Growden:

- 304 polling place locations use an optical scan unit to count ballots and there are approximately 100 hand count precincts.
 - In some areas it is just as quick to have them hand count ballots then to send out a machine.
- Each regional office has extra machines. Mostly use them as spares and to also count absentee and questioned ballots.
- Some communities cannot get an emergency optical scan unit so we have to send them tally books to hand count on election night.

Senator Gary Stevens:

- You are confident that this equipment will last until 2020, correct?

Shelly Growden:

- We have done annual maintenance to extend equipment shelf life.
- Afraid that the DOE can't get election results out on election night if machines start breaking.
 - For example, if machines fail in the field and a lot of precincts need to be hand counted or sent into a central location for scanning then results may not be put out that night.
- The DOE has 8 servers in the DOE and 2 hosts systems. Every result gets sent into the host servers. We can't replace the servers because our equipment is certified and we can't change an operating system.
- DOE is looking into getting extra memory cards.
- Mass amounts of the equipment are not yet failing but we need to start talking about this now because it is slowly beginning to happen.
- The worst case scenario is that the DOE hand counts everything.
- The DOE is going to make it last as long as possible until we can replace the system.

- DOE also has TXS machines intended for voters with disabilities and for language assistance.
- The DOE purchased the TSX machines and then the legislature passed a law that there has to be a paper audit trail that can be used in any recount. 'Printers' were added to the machine which prints out a paper ballot.
- No more than one TSX per polling place.
- The DOE have 441 TXS's in the polling places (511 total).
- TSX machines are sent to rural areas. Have to have special shipping cases manufactured. Fragile pieces of equipment.
- Hard to get election workers to understand how to set them up, they are heavy.
- It can take up to 20 minutes to vote an audio ballot. The quality of the audio is also not great.
- These were purchased 100 percent by HAVA funds. (Optical scan was by the AK legislature)
- The DOE has a yearly warranty system with the vendor. Use HAVA funds for TSX maintenance.
- Need to think about our municipalities. Need to coordinate with municipalities because they need to upgrade their system when we upgrade our system.

Randy Ruedrich (Public Attendee) :

- Concern about having all the election results on election night. Have a lot of election results that don't happen for a while (absentee, questioned ballot).

- Need to do a better job with the public that our election night results are still very preliminary.

David Becker:

- The education process is a problem for election administrators. Need to meet perception vs reality.
- Better to get it right than get it fast but public expectation is that it is fast.

Josie Bahnke:

- By 9 pm on election night, the DOE is already getting calls for results.
- We know that the results will be accurate but we need time.
- This last year we had the highest amount of voters voting in an alternative method. Those results take much longer.

David Becker:

- With vote by mail, a majority of ballots are received in the office before Election Day.

John Lindback:

- An issue with timeliness of results.
- Vote by Mail laws are different in states
 - In Oregon – needs to be the election officials hands by 8pm on Election Day.
 - In Washington - needs to be postmarked by Election Day

David Becker:

- Vote by mail has a big advantage for political party and groups to help advocate for voters to turn in their ballots.

Shelly Growden:

- Concern: If we are looking at replacing the system. The DOE needs to look at systems out there that are federally certified but can handle the stress of being shipped a lot.
- Cannot store equipment in rural locations.
- More modern technology (such as digital scanning) is not going to be cost efficient to transport to rural Alaska and our regional offices.
- We are going to have storage and logistic issues.
- There are municipalities that are tired of waiting for the state to address the issue and they have started replacing their own equipment – for example Bethel.
- State election and local elections will have different ballots and different systems.

David Becker:

- So voters in Bethel will have to vote on two different types of equipment?

Lori Strickler (Bethel City Clerk):

- Yes that is correct.

David Becker:

- Alaska is unique because it is so centralized.
- In most places, the county manages elections.
- More of a problem if one location is voting using two different systems versus when two different cities use different systems.

Nanci Ashford-Bingham (Fairbanks North Star Borough Clerk):

- Want to avoid voter confusion. Make it consistent.

Barbara Jones:

- One of groups overreaching policies should be **coordination and partnership between the DOE and local governments.**

Libby Bakalar:

- Rural Alaska is the biggest challenge. If it is not going to work for rural Alaska it is not going to work for the state.

Natalie Landreth (US Civil Right Commission):

- Studies have shown that by mail voting depresses voter turnout in Alaska Native populations.
- Lower literacy rates. Here literacy rate is very low in rural Alaska.
- If there is no return postage it won't be returned. Need to talk to the post office about PO Box sharing.
- Language issues – speak vs written.
- Lack of faith that it will get to DOE.

David Becker:

- Populations in Washington and Oregon are not as diverse in Alaska.
- We can address these issues though.

Senator Gary Stevens:

- When the ballot arrives at home the family gets to see and participate.
- It would be nice to see studies about voter turnout and rural Alaska.

David Becker:

- Another principle is **security of the tabulation system.**

Senator Gary Stevens:

- What is paid for using HAVA funds and what are our financial obligations? What are we going to have to continue to pay for in the future that we currently get from HAVA funds?

Josie Bahnke:

- Approximately 300,000 dollars annually with maintenance, language assistance, and personnel costs.

Voting Technology 10:45-11:30am

Ballot Delivery Presentation by Carol Thompson (DOE Absentee and Petition Manager):

- Alaska, in 1996 had electronic voting – one of the first states to have fax voting.
- In 2009 Congress passed UOCAVA (The uniformed and overseas absentee voting act).
 - Required that Alaska allow UOCAVA voters to get their ballots by electronic transmission.
 - UOCAVA – must send ballots 45 days before an election.
- 2010, the DOE began feeling that fax machines were disappearing and this impacted our military voters.
- In 2011-2012 DOE started looking at options and decided to get an online delivery system.
- Voters need to apply every election year and the DOE has to put applications in the system.
- Once their application is processed the voter will get an email that tells them that their ballot is available online. They log in and they get their ballot options. They vote their ballot online, similar to touch screen (click on choices). At the end they get an option to review their ballot. They then must download their ballot to their computer. They must also print off a Voter Certificate which they must sign and must get it witnessed. Then they decide if they want to return the ballot and Voter Certificate by mail or online.
- We are the only state that allows civilians to vote in this way and the first state to allow them to return it online.
- Once a voter has returned their ballot online, it gets sent to the various regional offices.
 - There, both the voter certificate and ballot are printed out. A duplicate (facsimile of the ballot is made on paper that can be run through our optical scan machines). Ballots are put in a secrecy envelope and the voter certificate is put on the outside.
 - Eventually the envelope with the voter certificate will be separated from the ballot.

- Very staff labor intensive.

Discussion about Online Ballot Delivery System

David Becker:

- Controversial nationally about returning ballots to election administrators via the internet.
- Almost every state does ballot delivery (sending a blank ballot).

John Lindback:

- What about ballot secrecy?

DOE:

- Voters sign a waiver for the right to a private ballot when voting electronically.

Josie Bahnke:

- The fiscal challenge with this method is, based on the number of voters that vote this method – compared to cost – are we being cost effective?

David Becker:

- The duplication process seems expensive and laborious.

Joelle Hall (Alaska AFLCIO):

- Human error of the voter. Voters can return their voter certificate or ballot incorrectly.
- Voters are disenfranchised by the system itself.

David Becker:

- Alaska is required by law to send an unmarked ballot to UOCAVA voters via electronic transmission.

Shelly Growden:

- Should the DOE continue to allow voters to send back ballots/voter certificates electronically or should the DOE require it to be sent back by mail? Do we require UOCAVA voters to return it by mail only?

Joyce Anderson (League of Women Voters):

- When you receive voter certificates or ballots that were not uploaded correctly can't you get it back to them and tell them their error?

Carol Thompson:

- Voters return ballots last minute. It's difficult to get back to the voters.

Shelly Growden:

- Also must consider the equality of the voters. By mail voter cannot fix mistakes so why should online delivery voters be able to?

Ballot Delivery App

Carol Thompson:

- In 2016, DOE was contacted by the media who said someone was using an app that delivers the ballot via “fax” to the elections office.
- We have concern about these apps.

Libby Bakalar:

- Don’t understand how it is so hard to get the tech right when we send confidential information to banks and IRS for example via the internet? Why can’t voters send their information back via the internet?

David Becker:

- Banks build in a measure for fraud whereas we can’t do that with ballots.
- In order to do a transaction they need to link it to an identity. With elections we have to separate the transaction with the identity.

Barbara Jones:

- With online delivery, what kind of a voter certificate did the voter sign?

DOE:

- The same certificate as by mail voters however with the loss of a degree of privacy.

John Lindback:

- 2 problems
 - 1.) Security.
 - 2.) The number of civilians choosing this option.
- One way to address this is to establish qualifications for how people can vote in these methods.

Bruce Botelho:

- On the other side, these civilians chose to vote by Online Delivery because it was the easiest way for them to vote. Otherwise they may have not voted.

John Lindback:

- There may be issues with larger national advocacy groups. The potential for this to blow up is huge.

David Becker:

- Worst case scenario someone tries to hack the system and shows how bad it is.
- In 2007 DC tried to make an internet online delivery system. Did a mock election and invited people to try and hack it and a university hacked into it without DC's knowledge.
- Hacking doesn't even need to actually happen in order to decrease voter confidence.

Barbara Jones:

- One other issue is that this is the only method for some people to vote at the last minute.

David Becker:

- Other states, with vote by mail, get a ballot very early. If someone waits until the last minute it is not the election officials fault.
- Drop off locations are often used more than mail.
- We want everyone to be able to vote, especially the last minute voters. You also need to cut it off at some point.

Libby Bakalar:

- What is the status of House Bill 1 which proposes Permanent Absentee Voting?

Carol Thompson:

- Permanent Absentee Voting – apply for a ballot and can stay on a list to receive a ballot every year in the mail until they don't return the ballot or have undeliverable mail.
- It passed the House but is dormant in the Senate.

Liz Medicine Crow:

- We have had to be creative on how we deal with our geographical size. We have done this before we can work through this and find a solution. Technology is here. We are going to have to find a way to make it work. We have some great knowledge of what doesn't work but it would be great to discuss what might work. What other opportunities are there that we haven't tapped into yet?

Josie Bahnke:

- The challenge here is that this is a balancing act for us. We are trying to provide technology but we are in the business of counting ballots. It breaks our hearts when we have to tell people that they didn't submit a ballot correctly.

By Mail Voting

- The DOE works with the postal office extensively for by mail ballots and supplies.

- Ballot Inserters – this machine puts together mail packets which is sent to absentee by mail voters.
- Over the past years there has been an increase in vote by mail.
- Overview of the vote by mail white paper.

Voter Registration Noon-1:30pm

Presentation by John Lindback on the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC):

Introduction

- ERIC was created to assist states to improve the accuracy of voter rolls, reduce costs, and improve efficiency for state and local election offices.
- Match voter lists with SSN and postal service. As a result, members can get reports which help them with their list maintenance. States are required to reach out to unregistered voters.
- First formed in 2012 and was a part of looking at voter registration in this country where stakeholders landed on three recommendations to improve voter registration.
 - 1.) Online voter registration.
 - 2.) Improve process for registration at DMV.
 - 3.) Establish ERIC which allows states to match against each other and outside resources (SSN, PS).

State-run, 20 states and DC

- Membership agreement.
 - 2 full time employees.
 - Routine uploads and reports.
 - Recruiting new members.
 - Goal is to help states improve their data.
 - Every 60 days states do an upload. Important that the data is refreshed
- ERIC has high quality data and the program goes across party lines. Traditionally red and blue states are both a part of this program.

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins:

- What about the Interstate Cross Check program done by Kansas?

John Lindback:

- The Interstate Cross Check program specifically looks for voters who may have voted twice.

Shelly Growden:

- Alaska was a part of Interstate Cross Check at one point to find the most updated registration and also voters who voted twice. Only found 1 person who voted twice.

Question:

- What about counties in other states that do individual lists and don't have a state-wide list like Alaska?

John Lindback:

- HAVA required that states have statewide voter system. The EAC allowed some states to have counties have their own system and feed their data to a central location and the states would then compile a list. Other states did a centralized system.

ERIC Reports

- Provides data to states about eligible but unregistered individuals.
 - Must do outreach to these individuals.
- Provides list maintenance data.
 - In-state Movers, Cross-state Movers, Deceased, In-State Duplicates (common reason for duplicates is a name change, for example someone getting married)
- Must contact voters within 90 days of report.
- Alaska received first eligible but unregistered report in 2016.
 - 160,328 were identified by ERIC and sent info on how to register.
 - Alaska received a grant from PEW to pay for this mailer.
- Alaska can apply for a waiver because of new VR/PFD law.
- How many people are registered in Alaska but go to a different state and maintain their Alaska residency? That's why you see a difference in voter numbers and census numbers.

List Maintenance

- In-State Movers – DMV record with newer address.
- Cross State Movers – Newer voter or DMV in another state.
- Deceased – Match to Social Security Death Master list.
- In-State Duplicates – narrow matching.

Note: That beside deceased individuals, the DOE cannot automatically remove or add these individuals

ERIC membership agreement

- Every one to two months, at least annually requires states to send out mailings.
- 90 day deadline to contact 95%.
- Match only sent once.

- Possible actions: Send postcard to old address and act on undeliverable.
 - Voluntary cancellation request to new address.
 - Notice and inactivation if no response.
 - Depends on state laws.

*Note: This will help with the amount of Questioned ballot. We should see a decrease in this.

- In-state movers are often more than cross-state movers.

Bylaws

- Membership – each state signs membership agreement, pays fee, and dues.
 - First 20 members seated on the ERIC board. Alaska is on the board.
 - Chief elections official appoints state's board member.
 - Any member may resign at any time with 91 days' notice.
 - Board approves budget and annual dues formula.
 - Officer elected at annual meeting for 1 year terms.
 - Board may appoint committees.
 - Privacy and Technology Advisory Board.

Membership Agreement – Privacy

- Reports are to be used only for VR purposes.
- Reports are to be kept confidential.
- SSN & DOB are anonymized.
- Most sensitive data: Anything from DMV.
- State must immediately disclose unauthorized release of data.

ERIC is just an information resource; ERIC won't tell you what to do with the information.

Libby Bakalar:

- Do we want a statutory requirement for people who live in another state and say they want to come back to Alaska and they keep their Alaska residency and voter registration...but they often do not come back?

David Becker:

- Also a movement towards considering how we can replace mail communication with email communication or electronic communication (phone number, email).

Presentation on 15PFVR

Josie Bahnke:

DOE Communications and Technology

- Communications – outreach and mailer.
- Technology – contract with vendor – building business requirements and also programming.
- Coalition – interested in seeing this successfully implemented.
- This year, only applications from March 1-31 – softer roll out to work out issues so that we can do it right the first time.
- Work closely with the Alaska Center, stakeholders, the Brennan Center and the Center for Secure and Modern Elections.
- An issue the DOE has is the cost of automatic voter registration and wanting to work with the legislature to allow for an opt out on the PFD application in order to eliminate the mailer.
- Working with the PFD division.
- DOE has some information on our website. DOE has a FAQ draft for the website.

Bruce Botelho:

- Does the opt out on the PFD application need a legislative change?

DOE:

- Yes.

Libby Bakalar:

- When ballot initiatives are passed they often take a lot of tweaking. You can make a lot of amendments but the law cannot be repealed within two years of its affective date.

Voting Locations 11:30-noon

Voting locations Presentation

Lauri Wilson (DOE Region 1 Supervisor):

Early voting vs. Absentee In person

- Early Voting – 7 locations statewide that have all 40 district ballots. These locations have access to VREMS so that the workers can verify the voter’s eligibility on the spot. Once their eligibility is verified, a voter certificate is printed out which the voter signs. The voter is then issued a ballot which they vote and drop directly into a ballot box.
- Absentee in person – only certain district ballots in locations. Have to fill out an envelope and it goes to a review process.
- Early voted ballots voted up to the Monday before Election Day are uploaded on Election Day.
- Absentee and Questioned ballot:
 - The DOE picks a date for boards to review them in order to count them.

- Friday before Election Day in 2016. All that are logged, reviewed, and opened up to that point are included on election night count. Subsequent counts on the 7th, 10th (Primary) day following election day and 15th (General) day following election day the DOE uploads absentee and questioned ballots as they are counted.
- On precinct registers the DOE can mark that voters voted early. However registers that are sent ahead of time cannot be marked.
 - DOE runs a duplicate voter report.
 - Duplicates are usually not with malicious intent in Alaska and not many voters on the duplicate list.

Absentee in person locations with Absentee Voting Officials (AVOs)

- Single district ballot available in these locations.
 - Had approximately 207 locations that the DOE had set up to serve for 2016 but some opted out because they didn't want to serve as an absentee location. In 2016 there were in 172.
- Prior to 2014 set AVO list early and added 100 new locations later in that year. Increased AVO locations.
 - Out of those new locations there were 32 that opted out in 2016 and 51 locations where there was a zero voter turnout but they were supplied and had a trained AVO. There was 1 where the DOE couldn't find an AVO person and also locations that had workers who couldn't serve at the last minute and the DOE couldn't find a replacement last minute. 1 location that closed permanently.

Josie Bahnke:

- Challenge with training and supplies ordering.
- Real challenge for the DOE is planning for the additional costs (are we being cost effective) versus our ballot security.
- A lot of these locations are in people's homes. Some of these get returned to us, no ballots have been voted, or come back late. We are putting ballots out around the state with not a lot of security around them.

Lauri Wilson:

- To provide training we do phone training where sample materials are sent in the mail for phone training.
- Also do HUB training where many workers from rural areas will fly into one location.
- Also there is a challenge with local clerks because often a clerk changes every 6 months in rural areas. A challenge to keep up with who is there and how much they know about elections.

Joelle Hall:

- Do you think that the system you have created with AVOs can be applied to the vote by mail model and can there be an Alaskan hybrid, with ballots sent via mail and then AVOs helping out the community? AVOs tasks are diminished.

Shelly Growden:

- It is the only way it would work in Alaska.

Lauri Wilson:

- The DOE does run incorporated elections all by mail where they have an AVO in the community.

Election Worker Training

Lauri Wilson:

- Election Workers: 441 polling place – 2,300 polling place workers – training is a huge task.
- 135-200 pounds of materials sent to election workers for state elections.
- Payments to workers: Our workers are basically volunteers and don't make a lot of money. Chair workers make \$10.00 an hour and others make \$9.50. Hard for us to get workers because we don't pay enough. Have not had a raise since 2004.
- Also aging workers don't like to haul equipment. Trying to recruit youth workers but doesn't always work.

David Becker:

- In Colorado, when they went to vote by mail with vote centers they went to about 5 workers per vote center. These workers were County employees and were high level quality workers who did not need training.
- Saw problems go down, cost go down.

Josie Bahnke:

- Postmaster is respected because that is their lifeline in rural Alaska. Understand the sanctity of the mail service.

David Becker:

- Ballot security – all vote by mail states have ballot drop boxes (some have temporary ballot drop boxes vs some have permanent ballot drop boxes)

Lauri Wilson:

- Training costs: Spend about \$200,000 an election cycle just for Region 4, \$60,000 – 75,000 for Region 1 and \$100,000 for Region 3 and about \$500-600,000 total.

- Region 1 did live streaming training at KTOO in 2016 and some in person training – saved money but decreased hands on training.
- Retention – 1/3 polling place workers came back the next election.
- Standardized training supplies and instructions across regions.

Voter Information and Access

Josie Bahnke:

Felon voters

- Inactivation and re-registration of felon voters.
- DOE relies on a Department of Corrections internal list. Database does not limit the names to felons involving moral turpitude.
- Reached out to Department of Corrections and luckily the court system worked with us and helped the DOE outline a criminal code list. So we have solved that problem.
- Working on getting a more reliable list.

Barbara Jones:

- Should we look at why taking away voting rights for felons is in the constitution?

Official Election Pamphlet (OEP)

Josie Bahnke:

- Alaska statute requires the DOE to send a pamphlet to every household.
- Other states are going to a paperless route. It would require a statutory change.
- The DOE brings on two staff, has a Portland printer, must put all the judges up for retention in the OEP and must allow candidates a chance to print something in the OEP.
- Candidates and judges pay for a space but the problem is that people don't end up getting their materials in the pamphlet and then voters blame the DOE. No editorial power over documents that are sent to us.

David Becker:

- You could give people an option to receive it electronically if they choose. As part of a voters file they can indicate their preference to receive materials electronically vs mailing.

Indra Arriaga:

- How do we get Alaska Native Materials to those that need to be reached?

Bruce Botelho:

- Reminder that not everyone is email connected in the state.

Libby Bakalar:

- None of the elections statutes have been meaningfully updated with 21st technology.
- Don't take away paper for elders but you also have all this new technology which you need to offer.

Election Structure 2:00-2:30pm

Redistricting and Primaries

Josie Bahnke:

- DOE is nonpartisan and is not directly involved in the redistricting board.
- There are costs to the DOE associated with redistricting though.
- These are politically charged topics we as a division are not in control of the outcome. We simply wanted to provide an overview of the fiscal impacts on the division.

Shelly Growden:

- The DOE has no involvement in the redistricting process but we have to implement the redistricting plan.
- It's a really big project for the division. We have a GIS system that does not speak to our VREMS system that is used as a mapping system for precincts. Our VREMS addressing does not link with GIS system.
- It is a laborious process.
- Have to take district boundaries from the redistricting board and convert them into a mapping system. See which precincts fit in each district's boundaries.
- The DOE must adjust precinct lines.
 - Considerations need to be made (for example one side of the road ends up in one precinct the other side in another).
- The DOE has to manually look at the new house district maps and what streets are in those maps, the range of address numbers, compare it to our address library in VREMS and literally go down and manually put streets in each precinct.
 - Manually we have to go update every street record in VREMS.
- We do get \$ from the legislature for redistricting.
- Department of Labor helped us create our precinct maps last census. We still had to map them, but they created the pictorial version. Not an automatic process.
- In the next 5 years redistricting is a fiscal problem.

Joelle Hall:

- Could we get a GIS system?

Shelly:

- Yes, possibly.

Joelle Hall:

- How much would GIS be and what is the duration?

Shelly Growden:

- Annual maintenance and software fees.
- Augmenting set of license with other state departments who have the GIS system.

Barbara Jones:

- Accuracy issue. MOA discovered that when using the GIS there were some wildcard areas, where some people were in one precinct that they believed should be in another.
- Often time it was because the voter was mapped to the middle of the street, when they really lived on one side of the street.

Primaries

Josie Bahnke:

- In light of our fiscal challenges we looked at Alaska's state primary system. Cost of 3 ballots.
- Current legislation out there about changing primary system.
- Cost of 3 ballots vs one ballot \$400-500,000 dollar savings over 3 election cycles.
- A primary election is not required in the state constitution but is a statute requirement. Closed primary vs open primary; who pays for the costs?
- 1.8 million dollars to do the primary the way it is.

David Becker:

- Primary election is highly political.
- Looking at election administrative perspective there is a simplistic advantage to one ballot.
 - Top two, modified open primary format. Also defining what vote by mail would look like narrows down what our primary ballot will look like.

Libby Bakalar:

- Changes can be made to political party by law changes.

Barbara Jones:

- Do you know anything about the fence in Thurston County? One ballot with one half with one party and the other half with other party candidates.

David Becker:

- Challenges with parties and automatic voter registration.
- A lot of people in Oregon only got the undeclared ballot because they did not update their political affiliation from undeclared. One ballot solution solves this issue.

Libby Bakalar:

- Solves polling worker error – only have to hand out one ballot.

John Lindback:

- How are you going to make a choice of which ballot should be sent to an undeclared voter in a vote by mail scenario, if we still have separate party ballots?

Joelle Hall:

- Alaska had an open primary system, went to court to close the republican ballot.
- Think more deeply how a nonpartisan will declare which ballot they want in a vote by mail model.

Shelly Growden:

- Legislatively the primary election can be changed.
- The Supreme Court has ruled that the political party has the right to limit who votes their political party.

Discussion of Next Steps and Wrap-Up/Adjournment 2:45-4:30pm

David Becker:

- Suggest setting up a sub group to engage in a series of conference calls where we can try and define what vote by mail recommendations we would want to take to the larger group.

Libby Bakalar:

- A suggestion, do a study or advisory vote to see vote by mail popularity in rural area.

David Becker:

- If we have a vote by mail subgroup who would want to participate?
- Everyone responded.

Josie Bahnke:

- Do we have concerns from anyone about moving from the precinct based system to a vote by mail?

Nanci Ashford-Bingham:

- We need to consider the municipalities.

Senator Gary Stevens:

- Would like to see data on rural voters and vote by mail.

David Becker:

- A lot easier to react to specifics.
- Our goal is to come up with a definition of what vote by mail would look like in Alaska.
- One that would have just as much voter access as now or more and have a cost savings.

Bruce Bothelo:

- Layout a system which will not take into account budgetary impacts. Just what would work.
- Write down principles from this morning and make a hierarchy.

David Becker:

- Look at things in an inverted pyramid. Go up with definitive examples which we can then critique.

Barbara Jones:

- How to accomplish getting in the voters voices.
- Look at this instead as researching an alternative voting system. Emphasize that we are looking for what is the best ballot delivery system.
- We are looking at alternative ballot delivery systems, not just specifically vote by mail.

John Lindback:

- Have a state that has 41 percent of the voters already moving to all vote by mail. The dynamic is different than other states.

Libby Bakalar:

- Need to change hearts and minds about a new system. Need civic engagement so that people don't shut down.
- Need to be careful about the terminology

Josie Bahnke:

- What would be the next logical steps? What can the DOE achieve in the off year time?

Bruce Botelho:

- Regional breakouts possibly.
- Need to consider the legislative schedule and also the MOA election. Concern with not moving fast enough.

Liz Medicine Crow:

- When group was first formed we wanted to make forum with groups that can share opinions and ideas. I think it is possible to bring large groups together and pose hard questions and give insight into Alaskans thoughts and challenges. It helps us refine our solutions. If they can be involved in the process we get a better result. If there is a way to hold those dialogues then that would be great.

David Becker:

- Suggestion: We begin a call to define the process and get a starting point. Give an opportunity so people can give feedback. The end final product we want people to feel like they are participating in the process.

Principle: transparency

- Need public involvement

David Becker:

- Next logical step is to have a call to discuss if we need another meeting soon, do we need a straw man (Make a scenario which people can critique)?
- Do we need to plan what community meetings might look like?
- Follow up meeting in the fall?

Josie Bahnke:

- Meetings through the fall are a way to bring out our best ideas.
- We bring together groups and present our issues to smaller groups and then we can bring it to larger groups.
- Goal to have something to introduce to the legislature in 2018.

David Becker:

- Look at California assembly bill that is specifically for new voting equipment.

Meeting done at 4:30