

MENDOCINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT TITLED:

ELECTIONS REDUX

The Board of Supervisors welcomes this opportunity to respond to the above entitled report. The Grand Jury correctly notes (F6) "members of the Board of Supervisors stated a willingness to dedicate resources to improvement, including increasing the budget for hiring more election workers and reserving more physical space for ballot counting." This is not merely based on statements by individual members of the BOS, but is the consensus opinion of the BOS stated in open session of one or more meetings of the BOS. The Board of Supervisors is committed to making available the resources necessary to hire personnel, purchase equipment and/or reconfigure physical space to improve the timely processing of election ballots. Specifically, the BOS supports hiring and training additional personnel to process ballots that are not counted on election day. The BOS applauds the dedication to accuracy of the Registrar of Voters but believes it is a disservice to the public when thousands of ballots remain uncounted for weeks after Election Day. In addition to supporting any reasonable method for increasing the processing of votes not counted on Election Day, the BOS also supports increasing the number of polling place voters and is willing to make resources available to do so. Thousands of voters who no longer have the option to cast a vote at a polling place on Election Day choose instead to mail or drop off their ballot at the last minute with the result that it is not counted until days or weeks after the election.

Pursuant to the request of the Grand Jury, the Board is responding to the following:

F2. Lack of timely results frustrates candidates and voters.

Agree.

F6. To achieve more timely results, members of the Board of Supervisors stated a willingness to dedicate resources to improvement, including increasing the budget for hiring more election workers and reserving more physical space for ballot counting.

Agree.

Recommendations:

R1. The BOS and the Registrar of Voters review SB 450 and either adopt the provisions of SB 450 or change the current ballot counting procedures for more timely results. (F1, F2, F4-F8)

The BOS will not implement this recommendation at this time as it is not reasonable. The first opportunity Mendocino County will have to adopt the provisions of SB 450 would be for the 2020 election cycle. The BOS, as stated in

F6, has stated a willingness to increase the budget for more election workers and equipment in order to improve result timelines.

- R2. Regardless of the adoption of the provisions of SB 450, the Registrar of Voters requests updated more efficient equipment and software. (F2-F8)

This recommendation requires further analysis. The BOS has stated a desire to purchase improved equipment independent of the provisions of SB 450. In a timeframe not to exceed six (6) months the BOS would like a discussion on recommended equipment and software needed to ensure a more efficient election.

- R3. The Registrar of Voters hires and trains more workers to provide more timely results. (F1, F2, F5-F7)

This recommendation has been implemented. As stated by the Registrar of Voters, "For every election we attempt to hire more poll workers and extra help...We place a request to fill with the County's Human Resources Department for extra help on an annual basis." The Registrar is actively pursuing increased poll workers. The Board of Supervisors would like an emphasis placed on an increase in persons hired to process ballots not counted on Election Day and encourages the Registrar of Voters to provide periodic updates on election results prior to completion of the final canvas.

- R5. The Registrar of Voters provides training and outreach education instructing voters how to correctly cast a vote with the aim to reduce the number of spoiled and provisional ballots. (F6, F8, F9)

This recommendation has been implemented. Every voter receives instructions on how to complete ballots properly and poll workers are well trained on how to aid voters with questions. These instructions are on both the mailed sample ballot and the official ballot. The BOS would welcome statistics on the number of spoiled ballots and specifics on errors.