



POLLS PACKED DESPITE GLITCHES, DELAYS, DRIZZLE

Turnout in Ohio largest in decades

By FRITZ WENZEL
BLADE POLITICAL WRITER

Voters across Ohio faced ballot-box confusion, technical glitches, long waits, and drizzle as they flocked to the polls yesterday in volumes not seen in decades.

Voter turnout in what many public figures had called the most important election in a generation, perhaps a lifetime, overwhelmed poll workers throughout Ohio in an election complicated because of judicial decrees from federal benches that, seemingly by the hour, changed the rules governing who could be inside polling locations and what they could do there.

Statewide voter turnout was running close to the 72.6 percent predicted by Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell, spokesman James Lee said.

"Turnout has obviously been extremely strong. There have been lines in a lot of locations, but voters have shown extreme cooperation and civility," Mr. Lee said.

In Lucas County, turnout was on its way to exceeding the 73 percent estimated by elections Director Paula Hicks-Hudson.

Several hundred thousand new registered voters across Ohio and Michigan plumped the rolls, contributing to poll congestion. The 2000 U.S. Census reported about 335,000 voting-age adults living in Lucas County, just over 300,000 of whom are registered to vote, Ms. Hicks-Hudson said.

Lucas County citizens worked to fill in the ovals next to their favored candidates and issues on optical-scan ballots, a voting method that, after three elections, remains somewhat unfamiliar. The county had employed mechanical lever machines for 40 years before abandoning them after the November, 2002, election.

Most counties in the region



Christina Isom of the Ohio Voter Protection Coalition hands out copies of the Ohio Voter's Bill of Rights at the polls in Toledo's Spring School. Voters weathered long lines and drizzle.

relied on punch-card systems.

In Franklin and Knox counties, where voters use touch-screen units, long lines developed and voters turned to a federal judge for help as the time grew near for polls to close. To speed the voting, some of those voters were given paper ballots, a spokesman for Mr. Blackwell said.

In Toledo, "a lot of people just walked away, saying they had to go to work," said voter Anthony Bumphis, who said he waited for more than an hour at Gesu School on Parkside Boulevard in West Toledo when it temporarily ran out of ballots.

Throughout the city, polling places reported an assortment of problems, ranging from technical trouble with Lucas County's leased optical-scan voting machines to confusion about precinct boundaries and questions over provisional balloting.

The stress levels reached a peak by midafternoon at some stations. Several precinct judges "are so distressed they're threatening to leave," said Bernadette Noe, chairman of the Lucas County Republican Party. By midafternoon, lawsuits had been filed alleging elections misconduct.

Much-hyped challengers

were visible inside some polls, but no major challenges had been reported by midafternoon. Both Republicans and Democrats staffed many polling locations with challengers, but leaders of both parties said they had no intention of contesting people's right to vote.

Meanwhile, Ohio Voter Protection Coalition members — draped in rain slickers and hunkered under umbrellas — watched the process, questioning exiting voters about the process.

Voter Jaunice McCall simply wasn't happy.

"If you don't have blood pressure now, you'll have it by the end of today," said Ms. McCall, who had gone to her regular polling station at the Frederick Douglass James B. Simmons Center but was informed that she had to go to nearby Pickett Elementary School to vote.

Minutes later, a central Toledo couple marched in. They reported first to Pickett, but were rerouted to Simmons, where they were told to return to Pickett.

Jesse Crowell threw his hands in the air as he headed for the parking lot once again.

"We didn't get to vote yet, but we will," he said.

Technical problems also

snarled the process throughout the day. Jammed or inoperable voting machines were reported throughout the city.

At the Birmingham polling site in East Toledo, the sole machine broke down around 7 a.m. An hour later, when Ohio House Rep. Peter Ujvagi tried to cast his ballot, the poll worker told him to place his ballot in a secure slot so that it could be scanned in later.

"Just stick it in the side here," she said. "It's jammed." He gave her a quizzical look and she shrugged. "I called an hour ago."

The county lease agreement with Diebold Election Systems provided for 20 extra machines to be substituted in such situations, said Ms. Hicks-Hudson. She said machines also jammed during testing last week.

Elsewhere, the day broke with both enthusiasm and confusion as early bird voters — concerned about the possibility of long lines — began queuing up to vote an hour before the 6:30 a.m. opening time.

Blade staff writers James Drew, Robin Erb, Tad Vezner, Clyde Hughes, and Steve Eder contributed to this report.

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Court remedies ballot snafu, but probably too late

By LUKE SHOCKMAN
BLADE STAFF WRITER

In a move that sent election officials scrambling, a Toledo federal judge ruled yesterday afternoon that Ohio voters should have been given provisional ballots if they never received requested absentee ballots.

Because the ruling didn't come until 3:01 p.m. — 4½ hours before the close of polls in Ohio — attorneys in the case said it likely had limited impact.

"We concur with this order, but ... the polls close at 7:30," said Steven Papadimos, chief of the civil division for the Lucas County prosecutor's office, minutes after the ruling. "There are going to be a lot of individuals who don't get the right to vote" because they wouldn't get the news in time.

Mr. Papadimos said he didn't know how many voters were impacted by the ruling. Bernadette Noe, chairman of the election board, said she knew of several people who had been turned away before the ruling was issued and was frustrated the decision wasn't reached before Election Day.

"We're doing everything we can to get the word out," she said yesterday afternoon.

The ruling was sparked by a lawsuit filed at 10:37 a.m. yesterday morning on behalf of Sarah White of Toledo. Ms. White, who attends college in Columbus, argued that she requested an absentee ballot from the Lucas County Board of Elections but never received one.

In an affidavit filed with the lawsuit, she said she checked with the Lucas County Board of Elections twice last month and was told each time her absentee ballot application was in order. On Monday, she said she called for a third time and was told her ballot had been sent to the wrong address in Columbus. She said she went to that address and tried unsuccessfully to find her ballot, and the board of elections then told her she had no other options and that she

couldn't vote.

Mr. Papadimos, who is legal counsel for the board of elections, said the board was aware of such situations on Saturday and wanted to issue provisional ballots in cases like Ms. White's.

He said the board specifically asked Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell's office if the board could issue provisional ballots in cases like this and was told via e-mail that it could not.

"... Board of Elections should not provide a provisional ballot at the polling place so as to avoid facilitating potentially fraudulent acts by creating a situation where someone might vote twice," according to an e-mail from Keith Scott, an attorney in Mr. Blackwell's office.

A spokesman for the secretary of state's office last night said Mr. Blackwell based his decision on state law.

"Ohio law states clearly that a person who has applied for an absentee ballot cannot vote a provisional ballot and cannot vote at the polls," said Carlo LoParo.

He said the problem originated with the Lucas County Board of Elections.

"It's my understanding that Lucas County lost track of absentee ballots they sent out ... and for some reason Lucas County didn't keep track of who voted absentee," Mr. LoParo said.

Ms. White's case was filed by attorneys from the San Francisco-based Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights. Robert Rubin, legal director for the committee, said yesterday his office became aware of the issue Monday and rushed to prepare a challenge to the secretary of state's directive.

U.S. District Judge David Katz directed his order to all Ohio counties and yesterday urged the media to spread the news of his decision, which he said was a rare step for him to take.

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Ottawa County gets new sheriff, coroner

By STEVE MURPHY
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Ottawa County residents voted yesterday to replace longtime Sheriff Craig Emahiser with his chief deputy, giving Democrat Bob Bratton an easy victory over Independent Bud Chasteen.

Chief Deputy Bratton, who has worked for Sheriff Emahiser since 1993, won a nearly 2-to-1 margin over Mr. Chasteen, the police chief of Rocky Ridge.

He credited his victory to his 27 years of experience in law enforcement, which he contrasted during the campaign with Mr. Chasteen's resume of mostly part-time police work and experience as a business owner.

"I think the voters preferred someone with law enforcement experience to run the sheriff's office," Chief Deputy Bratton said. "The only promises we made is we'll try to keep our staffing levels current, and I think that's what people appreciated."

Last night, Chief Chasteen acknowledged that his opponent's law enforcement experience was decisive in the election.

"I think we did a good job of campaigning and so forth, but I think people were a little bit scared of my experience," he said. "I have every bit of experience that it would take to run that office, but he had a big advantage being there and having worked in that office."

The sheriff is paid \$53,993 a

year.

In a rematch of the 2000 coroner's race, Republican Jerome McTague overwhelmingly ousted Gilbert Bucholz, denying the Democrat a second term. Dr. McTague is an attorney and emergency room physician at Fremont Memorial Hospital. The coroner is paid \$25,494.18 a year.

County voters retained Democratic commissioner Carl Koebel for a third term, giving him a comfortable win over Republican Jenine Porter, a first-time candidate. The two candidates sparred during the campaign over county spending, job creation, and infrastructure projects.

The position carries an annual salary of \$40,284. Seneca County voters, meanwhile, chose from among seven candidates to fill two county commission seats.

In one race, Democrat Ben Nutter, a Tiffin firefighter, edged Republican Charles Ardner, director of budgets at Tiffin University. Independent candidates Mary "Kay" Ranker and Dennis Wickert trailed far behind.

In the other race, Republican David Sauber, a union construction worker, handily defeated Democrat David Gross, a former



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director of the county Emergency Management Agency, and Independent Joe Hartman.

Mr. Nutter will replace fellow Democrat Tom Distel, whom he defeated in the primary, and Mr. Sauber will succeed fellow Republican Jimmie Young, who lost to him in the primary.

Issues in the race included the 0.5 percent sales tax increase enacted last year and the future of the Seneca County Courthouse. Both Mr. Nutter and Mr. Sauber said they lean toward tearing down the vacant courthouse and replacing it with a new building.

Both commissioner positions pay \$50,354 a year. In the race for coroner, Seneca County voters ousted incumbent Republican Donald Shanabrook in favor of Democratic challenger Mark Akers. In the treasurer's race, incumbent Republican Marguerite Bernard edged Democrat Elaine Schlenker.

The coroner is paid \$37,332 a year, while the treasurer makes \$48,259.

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OTTAWA COUNTY

County issues

Senior services: 0.3-mill, 3-year, additional levy for senior services and facilities.
✓ For: 14,318 ... Against: 7,912

MH & RS: 0.3-mill, 5-year, renewal levy for expenses.
✓ For: 14,591 ... Against: 7,581

County Commission
✓ Carl Koebel (D) 11,515
Jenine Porter (R) 9,726

Coroner
✓ Gilbert Bucholz (D) 8,776
✓ Jerome McTague (R) 12,626

Sheriff
✓ Robert Bratton (D) 13,600
Bud Chasteen 7,102

Municipal issues

Marblehead village: noise ordinance.
✓ For: 352 Against: 244

Rocky Ridge village: 4-mill, 5-year, renewal levy for fire equipment.
✓ For: 87 Against: 75

Rocky Ridge village: 2.5-mill, 5-year, additional levy for expenses.
For: 46 ✓ Against: 112

Benton Township: 1.5-mill, 5-year, additional levy for expenses.
For: 572 ✓ Against: 636

Catawba Island Township: zoning.
For: 358 ✓ Against: 1,824

Danbury Township: zoning.
For: 987 ✓ Against: 1,199

Put-In-Bay Township: 1.5-mill, 5-year, replacement & decrease levy for expenses.
✓ For: 389 Against: 174

SENECA COUNTY

County Commission
(beginning Jan. 2)

David Gross (D) 9,248
Joe Hartman 3,057
✓ David Sauber (R) 11,887

County Commission
(beginning Jan. 3)

Charles Ardner (R) 9,146
✓ Ben Nutter (D) 9,319
Kay Ranker 3,762
Dennis Wickert 2,404

Coroner
✓ Mark Akers 14,106
Donald Shanabrook (R) 10,394

Treasurer
✓ Marguerite Bernard (D) 12,824
Elaine Schlenker (R) 12,585

Municipal Issues

Tiffin: income tax ordinance.
✓ For: 4,290 Against: 2,912

AVR Fire District: 1.75-mill, continuing, for fire protection.
✓ For: 799 Against: 562

Attica village: 3-mill, 5-year, replacement levy for police.
✓ For: 235 Against: 224

Bettsville village: 2-mill, 4-year, replacement levy for expenses.
✓ For: 164 Against: 144

Bettsville Recreation Board: 0.5-mill, 5-year, for park.
✓ For: 370 Against: 255

Bloomville village: 1.1-mill, continuing, replacement levy for police.
✓ For: 212 Against: 119

Bloomville village: 1.5-mill, 5-year, renewal levy for expenses.
✓ For: 214 Against: 121

Eden Township: 1-mill, continuing, replacement levy for fire protection.
✓ For: 736 Against: 408

Jackson Township: zoning.
For: 281 ✓ Against: 501

Pleasant Township: 0.5-mill, 5-year, renewal levy for fire protection.
✓ For: 633 Against: 224

Scioto Township: 1.5-mill, 5-year, replacement levy for fire protection.
✓ For: 616 Against: 365

SANDUSKY COUNTY

County Commission
(beginning Jan. 2)

Michael Hetrick (D) ...Incomplete
Terry Thatcher (R) ...Incomplete

County Commission
(beginning Jan. 3)

Daniel Liskai (R)Incomplete
Karen Wagner (D) ...Incomplete
Clerk of CourtsIncomplete

Warren Brown (R) ...Incomplete

Sharie Salmans (D) ...Incomplete

Treasurer
Anna Senior (D)Incomplete
Irma Celestino (R) ...Incomplete

Municipal Issues

Fremont: S corporation ordinance.
Incomplete

Burgoon village: 3-mill, five-year, renewal levy for expenses.
Incomplete

Helena village: 3-mill, 5-year, renewal levy for expenses.
Incomplete

Helena village: 3-mill, 5-year, renewal levy for expenses.
Incomplete

Lindsey village: 4-mill, 5-year, renewal levy for expenses.
Incomplete

Madison Township: 0.8-mill, 10-year bond for new fire truck.
Incomplete

Townsend Township: 2-mill, 5-year, replacement levy for fire protection.
Incomplete

9 states decide to ban same-sex marriage

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Voters in nine states approved constitutional amendments yesterday to ban same-sex marriage, in most cases by overwhelming margins. Opponents of the bans held out hope that Oregon, where results were not yet in, would buck the trend.

The amendments — on the ballots in 11 states — won easy approval in Ohio, Michigan, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, and Utah. Exit polls showed the ban

winning by 4-1 in Mississippi, 3-to-1 in Georgia and 3-to-2 in Ohio.

Still to come were results from North Dakota and Oregon.

In Georgia, Ohio, and Mississippi, gay-rights activists were considering court challenges of the newly approved amendments, but supporters of the bans were jubilant.

"I've said all along that this crossed party lines, color lines, and socioeconomic lines," said Sadie Fields of the Georgia Christian Coalition. "The people in this state realized that we're

talking about the future of our country here."

The results — though expected — were dismaying to supporters of gay rights.

"That certainly is disappointing news that many Kentucky voters would think it's appropriate to write discrimination into our constitution," said Beth Wilson of the American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky. "People get harmed when their relationships are not respected, and this means that relationships won't be respected."

Marriage

Continued from Page 1

ing the Constitution that opposed the amendment, said a lawsuit was likely forthcoming.

"We're going to look at challenging this effort to discriminate. There should be a place for all types of people," he said.

The group had some powerful friends, including Gov. Bob Taft, U.S. Sens. George Voinovich and Mike DeWine, and Ohio Attorney General Jim Petro, all Republicans. The state leaders said the second sentence of the

amendment, which bars state and local government from giving legal status to unmarried couples of either sex, was inappropriate and too vague, inviting lawsuits.

Ohio and Michigan join nine other states this election that have amendments to define marriage as heterosexual. In early returns, five others had been approved easily in what was amounting to a national trend. The amendments were approved in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Oklahoma, and were also still being considered in Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, and Utah.

Michigan voters, like those in Ohio, decisively voted to adopt a state constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. Exit polls and early returns indicated the amendment was being adopted by a nearly 2-1 margin.

Proposal 2 would also ban so-called civil unions and attorneys for both sides said may also prevent employers from granting domestic partnership benefits to unmarried couples, as some Michigan universities and municipalities currently do.

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