

## **VOTER REGISTRATION & COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

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## **Introduction:**

Our County Voter Registration and Election Office has many services and information to offer the Voters of Gibson County. Still, they don't like to talk about politics, are afraid to ask, or don't know what to ask. I gave a departmental report to our county commissioners, talking about the two grants we had received from the Secretary of State and our plans for the money. When I was done, a gentleman in the audience said we should take some of the grant money and create a program for homebound people to vote from home. I was taken aback by something so simple and in place for years. So, I decided as Clerk that we should no longer keep quiet about the services and information we offer.

Knowing exactly what information they need is difficult because people don't talk about politics anymore. We are trying to break down that barrier. While in the community, we discussed the election process and answered many questions about how their local town governments operated, giving them names and phone numbers to contact. People were eager to ask questions and ultimately were glad to have someone to talk to from the local government office to discuss issues.

2024 was such a pivotal Election year for our Country. I wanted voters to vote and to be educated voters, no matter their age. My Voter Registration and Community Outreach project helped us reach out and relay information to the Public. It was great for me to talk to people, answer their questions, and put them at ease. We put ourselves out there; in some environments, we saw tremendous success; in others, we saw no interest.

## **Project Goals:**

As an Election Administrator, I strive to make my departments approachable through face-to-face contact, social media, our latest phone app, or telephone conversations. We work for the Public, and even as County Auditor, I believe in transparency. We are all experiencing difficult times. Our citizens need to know they have a voice; it is best heard when we vote! I don't want to stop at just registering someone to Vote; I want them to be an educated and informed Voter, and when they walk into that booth, they feel confident in their selections. This would also mean a more engaged community.

## **Methods:**

With a Grant from the Secretary of State, we purchased a tent, iPad stands, table coverings, wristbands, and information bags. We used all this to set up a Voter Registration and Election Booth. We set up several locations over a few months. These locations can be found below.

- Gibson County Fair: July 7<sup>th</sup> - July 13<sup>th</sup>, (Sunday through Saturday, 4 pm - 9 pm)
- Watermelon Festival: August 1<sup>st</sup> - August 3<sup>rd</sup>, (Thursday and Friday, 5 pm - 9 pm and Saturday, 12 pm – 9 pm)
- Sweet Corn Festival: August 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>, (Thursday and Friday, 5 pm – 9 pm and Saturday, 12 pm to 6 pm)

The Haubstadt Summer Fest will be added in 2025. We also plan to bring equipment from our Learning Lab so people can experience the entire voting process. By attending several community events the Citizens of Gibson County can walk up and ask questions freely. We are focusing on all the major communities in our County.

We had a beautiful tent canopy with photos of the Courthouse and labeled Voter Registration & Elections all around the top flaps. We also had Candidate information, Voter Registration Applications, an Early Voting Calendar, a Hands-on Learning Lab Flyer, ABS Voting Flyer, Poll Worker Information, Facebook and Phone App QR Codes, "Vote" wristbands, crayons, and coloring books.

Leather, Kellie, Tanner, and I were working at the booth. I thought we were set, but the first night, people avoided us like the plague. I had to re-think what we were doing, so I asked the kids if they would like a coloring book, crayons, and a wristband; what kid turns that down? We would grab a bag and put some information into it as well. It was a cumbersome process, but at least we could get some information into their hands.

Then Tanner MacIntosh, with the Secretary of State's Office, said, "Why don't we pre-stuff the material in the bags!" Brilliant idea. It was great seeing the SOS Vote Bags everywhere. We used the children to get to the adults. No one felt awkward; we did not have to talk politics. We did not feel like we were pushy or imposing on anyone. What an icebreaker! We listened to their problems, gave them contact information within their local town governments, answered their questions, checked voter registrations, and signed voters up online, right in the booth.

The libraries' Voter Registration and Community Outreach events were not as successful as the others. I will let them look at their schedule and let me know what day they think could work best rather than tell the libraries what day we can be there. We also went to the Senior Citizens Center, where we did have good conversations. This was expected.

As with most counties, we are always looking for poll workers. Our local high schools have a Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) Program, which is a work-based learning program. We spoke to them about Elections, registered them to vote, and signed up poll workers. We had 30+ CEO students on Election Day; it was a huge success. They all worked well together. It was a win-win for both sides; we had a blood transfusion of new, younger poll workers, and they used that day for their extra credit project, plus they got a paycheck to boot!

We went back into SVRS and started putting together online voter information from the first day of the fair through the Watermelon Festival, which ended 30 days after the Sweet Corn Festival.

Online registration was well worth our time and effort. First-time voters at the Polls were given a hand of applause, and everyone could feel the excitement in the polling locations.

We had 16,022 ballots cast in the 2024 General Election, about 67.3% of our Registered Voters. From the numbers below, we feel we tremendously impacted online voter registrations.

From 01/01/24 – 04/08/25, we added 80 voter records

From 05/21/24 – 05/31/25, we added 46 voter records

From 06/08/24 – 07/07/24, we added 73 voter records.  
From 07/08/24 – 08/31/24, we added 129 voter records  
From 09/01/24 – 09/11/24, we said 23 voter records.  
From 09/12/24 – 09/17/24, we added 133 voter records.  
From 09/18/24 – 09/30/24, we added 153 voter records.

Our citizens understood the importance of their vote, and their voices were heard loudly and clearly.

### **CEATS Principles & Tools:**

Have and will continue to utilize processes from Elections, Election Calendar, Voting Machine and Electronic Poll Book Inventory, Operating Systems, HAVA, IT basics, Spreadsheets and Databases, Process of Voter Registration, Election Management Systems, Process of Voting, and Election Administration and Media.

### **Conclusion:**

I truly believe this approach and community outreach are well worth the time and effort. I did not always sit behind a desk, but going out to where the people were was very enjoyable as I applied this “no pressure” way of putting quite a bit of information right in their hands. Sometimes, it is more than just numbers; people want and need to know that their Elected Officials are working for them and are approachable.

### **Acknowledgements:**

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Finally, I thank Lisa Gray and Matt Housley for their help and direction with my PowerPoint presentation.

**References:**

IN SVRS (Indiana Statewide Voter Registration System)

We had an original idea. This public relations program would involve getting out into the community with information on Voter Registration and Education. We just wanted to make ourselves available. We started tracking online voter registrations as we saw what worked and how well. Our presence did have an impact and was well worth the time and effort.