

Join Our Team in 2014 – Vote by Mail!
Division A-3/Institutional

RESEARCH/SITUATION ANALYSIS: Why has voter turnout remained under 55% for a General Election during non-presidential election years in Martin County and how can this statistic be increased? After analyzing comments from voter calls and comment cards from 2010, it was decided by the Supervisor of Elections and elections staff that voters wanted a convenient and efficient method by which to cast their votes. This data also indicated voters lacked knowledge about the Vote by Mail method. Voters were unaware they could Vote by Mail without a reason or excuse. Moving forward into the 2014 elections, the decision was made to develop a robust outreach campaign to educate **all** voters about the convenience of Voting by Mail. **Note:** In the state of Florida, gubernatorial elections are held during non-presidential years. Therefore, to have measurable and comparative data, statistics were used from the 2010 General Election.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES: To educate and engage voters to Vote by Mail, with the objective to also increase voter turnout during the 2014 General Election, **three** objectives were established: (1) Increase overall votes cast by mail (2) Increase overall voter turnout by **5%**; and, (3) Implement new forms of communication to Martin County's voters.

IMPLEMENTATION: An expansive outreach program was developed to effectively reach all Martin County voters to educate them about the Vote by Mail process. New forms of communication to create a 'fresh' approach were utilized. **35,000** Vote by Mail postcards were mailed with **eight** creative messages; **30** colorful **Vote by Mail street pole banners** were displayed throughout Martin County; **Vote by Mail inserts** were mailed with county and city utility bills reaching **90,000** homes. A local law firm donated **digital billboard** space throughout the 2014 election cycle which displayed a Vote by Mail message during peak traffic hours. Through partnerships with the United Way of Martin County and the Clerk of the Circuit Courts and Comptroller, **Vote by Mail banners** were placed at the courthouse and heavily traveled areas and intersections of the county. **Vote by Mail postcards** were placed in diploma covers of graduating high school students for them to utilize while away at college. The county engineering department donated two of their electronic traffic message boards which rotated throughout major intersections with a Vote by Mail message. **Secured Vote by Mail drop**

boxes were placed in all six public libraries during early voting to make it convenient for voters to drop off their voted ballot, save postage costs and it also provided peace of mind because the voter knew their ballot was received and would be counted!. Because Florida is a no excuse state, Supervisor of Elections and staff increased **speaking presentations** to include Chambers of Commerce, the Martin County Bar Association, homeowners associations, town hall meetings, the NAACP, nursing and assisted living facilities, churches, adult daycare centers, and service organizations to communicate this message. Other avenues of outreach also included, a **guest column** written by the Supervisor of Elections stating the benefits of Voting by Mail, press releases were issued to the local paper and community news targeting gated communities, a Vote by Mail PSA was recorded and broadcast over the government channel, and information was placed on the Elections Center's home website page. Over 2,000 newsletters were printed and distributed with Vote by Mail information. **EVALUATION:** All objectives were met or exceeded for the "Join Our Team in 2014 – Vote by Mail!" campaign. (1) **24,561** voters elected to Vote by Mail which generated an increase compared to the General Election of 2010 with 17,503 voters casting ballots by mail. (2) The voter turnout increased by **6%** with a 59% vs. a 53% turnout in 2010. (3) **Nine** new avenues to communicate with voters were developed and implemented as compared to the 2010 elections cycle.

BUDGET: Expenses: Street pole banners - \$3,500; Vote by Mail postcards and utility bill inserts (including design, printing and postage) - \$20,592; digital message board was donated space by a local attorney, valued in-kind at \$5,000; traffic message boards are county owned and added **no cost** to the budget; radio and newspapers - \$5,000; the breakdown of staff time was equivalent to one full-time employee working 40 hours a week for an four month period. Total: \$29,092.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

As a gatekeeper of the democratic process, the Supervisor of Elections upholds the election laws of the State of Florida and the Constitution. The Supervisor and staff are committed to increasing voter awareness and education for citizens of all ages; enhancing public confidence; and encouraging voter participation.

The Elections Center is comprised of seven full time staff members and the Supervisor of Elections.