

## ***Media Backgrounder***

### **Poll Worker Training: Aggressive Statewide Program Targets Those Who Make the Critical Difference on Election Day**

Even with new technology and new procedures, one thing has not changed about Georgia elections: Those who will have the most direct impact on achieving a smooth, successful election day are the poll managers and workers who will staff Georgia's 2925 precincts on Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>.

With thousands of precincts in 159 counties in the largest state east of the Mississippi River, the task of getting thousands of county-hired poll workers comfortable with new voting procedures is monumental. It began early this summer with the training of county election superintendents and their fulltime staff. The superintendent and at least one other top staffer received two days of intensive training on the new equipment, provided by the manufacturer, Diebold Election Systems. These sessions provided a basic orientation to setting up and conducting an election and compiling the votes on election night. County election staffers have also attended regional "road show" presentations put on by the State Elections Division – day-long sessions designed to go into depth about key topics and to help stimulate information-sharing among counties.

Beginning in September, Diebold trainers began to fan out across Georgia to conduct hands-on training sessions for poll workers in every one of Georgia's 159 counties. As part of its contract with the state, Diebold committed to train at least two workers per precinct – typically a poll manager and an assistant. These sessions, which last from 2 ½ to 3 ½ hours, provide an in-depth orientation to equipment operation and procedures. A 12 ½ minute training videotape, produced and distributed by the Office of Secretary of State, also offers a basic overview of set up, election operations and shut down of the equipment. More than 3000 tapes have been distributed statewide.

To help counties provide incentives to their poll workers to attend training the Secretary of State's office also created a training grant program totaling \$300,000 – about \$100 per precinct to be used to compensate poll officials for their time in training. Secretary of State staffers have regularly audited training sessions to measure the quality of instruction and assess where there may be a need for more follow-up classwork. The state has also provided to all 159 counties a special training kit consisting of a memory card, encoders and voter access cards (140 counties also received an extra touch screen terminal) to enable each county to conduct additional training and mock elections on its own.

The Secretary of State's technical support and training partner, The Center for Election Systems at Kennesaw State University, has also contributed to the training effort by conducting special follow-up training sessions, both at its Cobb County campus and at additional sites throughout the state. Some 32 counties have already held or scheduled KSU training. In addition, Diebold has agreed to provide refresher or follow-up training for remaining counties that request it. That number currently stands at 25 and is growing daily. These sessions will continue right up to Election Day.

In addition to the Diebold and KSU-provided training on touch screen operations, all counties are required by law to train poll workers on the broader scope of duties, including voter ID requirements, checking in and accounting for voters, provisional voting procedures and other procedures.

Georgia's unique model, with a new voting system deployed simultaneously to all counties, has made possible a comprehensive statewide training program. To recap:

### **Major Training Components**

- Diebold-provided classroom, hands-on training to approximately 6,000 poll workers (two each for every Georgia precinct); sessions held in each of the state's 159 counties.
- Supplemental refresher and follow-up training by Kennesaw State University and Diebold to 57 counties.
- \$300,000 in state funding grants to counties to compensate poll workers for attendance at training sessions.
- Special training kits including a touch screen terminal and other major components to permit counties to extend and repeat their training as needed.
- A professional quality 12 ½ minute training videotape covering the basics of equipment set-up and operation.
- A complete poll worker operations manual, along with a simple, step-by-step one page color instruction sheet for each precinct.
- Additional county-provided training to all poll workers on overall Georgia election law and procedures.

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