

Bourguignon, Mary

From: Wise, Julie
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2017 9:07 AM
To: Balducci, Claudia; Braddock, Shannon; Camenzind, Krista; Cooper, Adam; Dembowski, Rod; Domingo, Cindy; Dunn, Reagan; Goff, Tom; Gossett, Larry; Kohl-Welles, Jeanne; Lambert, Kathy; Logsdon, Kristina; McDermott, Joe; McMorris, Jeff; Muhm, Jeff; Smith, Sara; Song, Ashley; Upthegrove, Dave; von Reichbauer, Pete
Cc: LeVan Hodson, Kendall; Bourguignon, Mary; Busch, Carolyn; Resha, John
Subject: Prepaid Postage Pilot Results Email

Dear Councilmembers,

Today we certify the [results](#) for the February Special Election and I wanted to share with you what we learned from our prepaid postage pilot. As a reminder, our main objective was to test the process operationally, answering questions like “did we receive more un-postmarked envelopes than we expected,” “did voters return their ballots by mail in greater numbers,” and “did anything else change with respect to our process expectations?”

So, how did it go?

Turnout. Because I don’t want to bury the lead, I’ll start by sharing something we weren’t necessarily expecting – we saw significantly higher turnout than we projected. Turnout is, of course, driven by many factors – but this is very encouraging to me. We projected 30% turnout and were more than a little concerned about both jurisdictions meeting their turnout threshold. Actual turnout ended up being just shy of 40%. The table below shows projected and actual turnout, as well as turnout in the most recent special election for each jurisdictions.

	Previous Special Election*	Projected	Actual
Shoreline School District	30.24%	30%	40%
Maple Valley	31.65%	31%	37%

**Shoreline School District’s most recent special election was in February, 2014 and the City of Maple Valley ran an extremely similar bond measure just last year in April, 2016.*

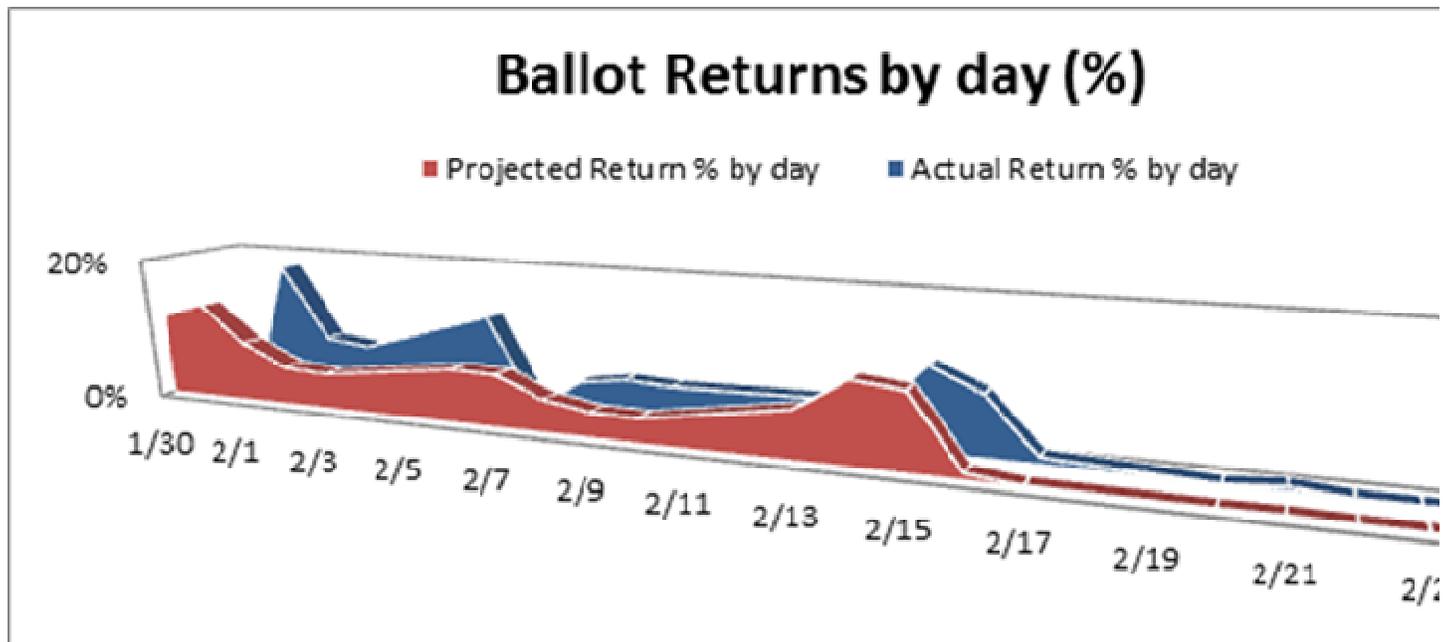
Post Mark/Cancelation Rate. We found no change in the postmark/cancellation rate for business reply mail. As you may recall the postmark is very important for us because it’s what we use, by law, to determine whether or not a ballot is on-time. Our baseline measure was approximately 99% of envelopes receiving a postmark. For this election we saw 98.7% postmarked.

Method of Return. For this election we saw approximately 74% of ballots returned through the mail and 26% through drop boxes. The table below shows the method of return for the same voters in the 2016 general election compared to the February special election. There was clearly a pretty significant shift toward mail in February in both jurisdictions. That said, it’s hard to say what normal behavior would have been for a special election, as we’ve never offered this many drop boxes before and we really pushed messaging about prepaid postage. It’s definitely something we will be analyzing and studying further. I

continue to believe that removing all conceivable barriers and providing our voters with as many options to return their ballot as possible is not only the right thing to do, but also the only way to impact turnout.

	2016 General Election	2017 February Special Election
Shoreline School District		
Mail	41%	72%
Drop Box	59%	28%
City of Maple Valley		
Mail	48%	81%
Drop Box	52%	19%
Total		
Mail	43%	74%
Drop Box	56%	26%

Processing Time. Another concern was whether or not using business reply mail would delay our receipt of ballots. 70% of ballots were received within 2 days of the postmark, which was in-line with our pre-election understanding of the USPS process. This means there was a consistent one-day lag. To be clear, this doesn't mean any ballots weren't counted that normally would have been. It just slightly increases our processing time. Not a problem for this small of an election, but something to consider at a larger scale.



I am very pleased with the results of the pilot not only because of the increase in turnout, but also because it worked well operationally. April will also be a very small election (as of this morning only the Vashon School District has confirmed a measure on the ballot and the deadline is 4:30pm today) and I am planning to test prepaid postage again in that special election. Because of its isolated geography and historically high turnout (they saw 46% turnout in their last special election), I believe it will give us some additional information that will be very helpful in understanding both the voter behavior and operational impacts of prepaid postage.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have questions or would like additional information.

Regards,
Julie Wise
Director
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kingcounty.gov/elections

