

# ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT

## Cass County General Election 2022

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

After the June 2022 Primary Election, community leaders and organizational partners came together to prevent voter suppression of New American and Immigrant communities in Cass County for the November 2022 General Election. The effort was a success, with many thanks to 25 volunteers who observed early in-person voting and Election Day at Fargo and West Fargo vote centers. What follows is a broad assessment of the voting process.

*These recommendations and observations have been shared with Cass County election officials.*

### OBSERVER REPORT SUMMARY

Overall, our volunteers observed that poll workers were respectful, helpful, and professional. The main issues they observed occurred on Election Day at the sites with the heaviest traffic. A handful of sites seemed inadequate in size or scope to handle the high number of voters, or the process included limitations (i.e. running out of pre-printed paper ballots or arrangement of the voting space). There appeared to be an election judge shortage, especially at the busy sites, that could have been a factor in the long lines. Observers also reported the need for additional poll worker training, especially on provisional ballots and interacting with diverse voters.

### OVERVIEW OF VOTING SITES

#### Early In-person Voting

**Recommendation:** Cass County should consider expanded early in-person hours.

- Early voting hours ended at 6pm.
- Cass County had no Saturday hours, unlike Clay County and Burleigh County.

#### Election Day

**Recommendation:** Evaluation of polling locations. From observer reports:

- Improving workflow for busy sites (West Acres, Calvary, Atonement, etc.).
- Lacking space for voter privacy (Calvary & West Acres Aquarium Court).
- Address potential violations of ND Century Code 16.1-10 (West Acres Aquarium Ct).
- Improving the Fairgrounds' signage - reports of voters struggling to locate site.
- Improving signage to ensure voters understand they do not pay for parking.
- Environmental factors, like the high temperature at West Acres.

#### Signage at Sites

**Recommendation:** Ensure all sites are compliant with ND Century Code.

- Multiple observers reported inadequate signage at polling locations.

# VOTING PROCESS

**Recommendation:** If we are to keep vote centers, as opposed to precinct voting, Cass County needs to ensure there are enough pre-printed paper ballots at appropriate sites, more trained judges, and enough square footage in the vote centers to allow for the lines of waiting voters, voting tables, and voters exiting the polls. Observers reported:

- Long lines on Election Day.
- Some sites ran out of pre-printed paper ballots, and some voters were uncomfortable with ballot marking machines.
- Election judge shortage at some sites.
- Ballots hard for judges to find in the bins - observer noted "archaic system."
- A few reports of tech not working for clerks or voters.

**Recommendation:** Ensure there is a worker at the front of the line of voters to direct them to an open clerk. This worked well at the Fargodome and could assist other busy sites.

**Recommendation:** Post instructions in simple writing at each voting station how to vote with the express voting machines so judges do not have to spend so much time explaining how to use them. Consider calling it "touch pad" voting instead of "express voting."

# POLL WORKER TRAINING

**Recommendation:** Improve training for poll workers and consider adding an additional online training video they can review if needed before heading to their shifts. Below are some training topics to enhance:

- **Practice for poll workers on registration tablets.** Some clerks had trouble entering data into the tablets.
- **Know when to offer a provisional ballot.** Provisional ballot offering was not consistent, depending upon the poll worker being observed.
- **How to handle voters with Minnesota IDs.** A Moorhead election judge reported Cass County poll workers were directing ND voters to MN to vote even if they were not a MN resident, because the residents still had MN IDs.
- **How to work with various voter groups.** Poll workers need more training on how to interact with transgender voters as well as voters who have a translator.

# POLL WORKER COORDINATION

**Recommendation:** Improve the communication process with poll workers and potential workers to include: an email receipt upon web signup, an email response if they are not selected to be a poll worker, and a survey post-election on how their experience went.

**Recommendation:** Hire more poll workers and have extra workers trained to ensure enough are ready in case of poll worker absence.

**Recommendation:** Improve the poll worker booklet and training. Poll workers are having to rely on experienced poll workers to guide them. Clerks may need a step-by-step training on how to check in voters on the tablets and a one-pager with the basics.

**Recommendation:** Hire other workers to set up and take down the computers on election day to make it easier for the poll workers.

**Recommendation:** Find ways to shorten the poll workers' shifts. With setup and takedown of computers, some of them worked a 16-hour shift. Consider moving to shorter shifts.

# CANVASSING BOARD

**Recommendation:** Ensure the meeting is posted in accordance with state open meeting law.

**Recommendation:** Display voter signatures side-by-side on the screen for Board viewing to cut deliberation time.

**Recommendation:** The Chair should better moderate Board discussion to keep it relevant to the motion on the table.

# PUBLIC EDUCATION

**Recommendation:** Increased voter education in Cass County regarding ID requirements.

Living along a state line leads to resident crossover, making ID education crucial for voting.

- Observers reported voters bringing a Minnesota ID along with supplemental documents to the vote centers, so those voters were not eligible to vote.

**Recommendation:** Increased marketing of early in-person and absentee voting - when where, and how - to minimize Election Day lines.

**Recommendation:** Increased education on express voting machines so more voters feel comfortable using them.

**Recommendation:** Increased communication with long-term care facilities each election year to ensure they know how to issue long-term care identification certificates, which is an acceptable form of voter identification in North Dakota.

- A voter reached out to our group that her parent in a long-term care facility was having trouble getting a certificate because the staff at the facility did not know how to issue one.

# KUDOS

Thank you to all of the observers who volunteered for our first-ever election observation program. Here are some of their positive reports:

"I was AMAZED with staff's professionalism."

"The inspector lined up a driver to take a 92 year old woman to Cass County Court House to pick up an absentee ballot for her husband who had recently fallen and was unable to leave their home."

"After voting on the Express Vote, many smiled and put thumbs up to the staff, commenting they liked using it."

"Clerks announced "1st-time voter!" when each checked in. The rest of the clerks cheered and clapped. This brought smiles to each 1st-time voter and all those around. It was uplifting to see and hear. I have to say that what I saw at the Fargodome was a model operation. I thanked the inspector for the work he was doing."

The West Acres' Inspector received many compliments from observers - "He was proactive, energetic, positive, helpful, [and] went out of his way to help both poll workers and voters."

"Poll workers welcomed voters and made voting fun. Extremely efficient."