

PETE DUNCAN

MACOUPIN COUNTY CLERK

P.O. BOX 107 CARLINVILLE, IL 62626

Macoupin County One of Dozens of Counties Facing Unprecedented Problem of Ballots Being Printed Too Large

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Carlinville - At last Tuesday's primary election, Macoupin County was one of dozens of counties across the state that had ballots that were printed slightly too large. Several questions have been raised concerning the difficulty in voting last Tuesday, therefore Macoupin County Clerk Pete Duncan compiled a list of common questions so everyone will know what caused this to happen, what steps were taken locally, and how we protected the integrity of the voters of Macoupin County.

Why did the ballots not fit into the tabulator machines?

ABS Graphics, the printing house used by Macoupin's vendor to print ballots for many elections, had this to say: "...The ballots we printed were not able to be processed correctly. Although ABS is continuing to assess the problem, the company has identified a single production line in which the width of the trim was slightly wider than the stated scanning equipment tolerances. This discrepancy escaped the rigorous testing procedures continuously performed by the company, and resulted in a small percentage of the ballots being affected.

The company apologizes for any inconveniences to governmental units and voters affected by the problem. We will continue to evaluate and strengthen our testing procedures even further to prevent this from ever occurring again."¹

Why did this only happen in Macoupin County?

It did not. Dozens of counties across the state faced this same unprecedented problem.

Why did Macoupin County not test the ballots before Election Day?

Macoupin County followed state statute in having a pre-test of ballots from all precincts run before Election Day. While this large test deck was printed from the same company, there were no issues of ballots being too large for the machine during this test. Once printed, ballots are left in shrink wrap until opened by judges on Election Day to prevent any accusations of tampering with ballots.

What did Macoupin County do to fix the problem?

Once the County realized nearly all precincts were affected, judges were asked to trim a sliver less than one eighth of inch so the ballot would fit the machine. As the precincts checked in at the end of day, a

procedure was put in place that required any precinct experiencing any problem was immediately checked in and ballots, tabulators and official ballot records were taken to experienced Democrat and Republican election judges. These judges then individually ran each ballot through the tabulator, verifying that the total count on the tabulator reflected the ballot being read and counted. Every step possible was taken to ensure that each vote was counted and counted correctly.

Who decided on the procedure to fix the problem and have the ballots rerun?

Macoupin County Clerk Pete Duncan made the decision working in conjuncture with the State Board of Elections. Overseeing the process on Election Night were two representatives from the State Board of Elections, an Assistant State's Attorney of Macoupin County, the Democrat and Republican County Chairmen, nearly all candidates (or their representatives) in contested races, members of the media, as well as any member of the general public who wished to be present.

How much did the incorrectly printed ballots cost the taxpayers?

Not a single dime. Duncan said he would take any step necessary to guarantee Macoupin County taxpayers will not be charged for the incorrectly printed ballots or any of the extra work required to fix the problem.

Why did it take so long for Macoupin County election results to be released?

In November 2010, just one tabulator had an issue that required all ballots to be rerun. Because that problem caused results to be reported that were incorrect, many news reports proclaimed one candidate a winner who after the ballots were reran turned out not to be the winner. Duncan was elected County Clerk in November 2010 and said at the time, "The press, public and candidates must depend on the accuracy of the information coming from a county clerk's office, and the process necessary to ensure its accuracy is the county clerk's responsibility."² Duncan made the call this election not release any results until all votes had been counted saying "Our goal is not to get results out quickly, but to get votes counted correctly, however long it takes."

Why was Macoupin County the last County to have results reported?

Macoupin County was not the last county to have results reported. Winnabago County, near the Wisconsin border, was still counting votes until 11:00 p.m. on Wednesday as just one example.

What steps will be taken to prevent this problem from happening in November?

Macoupin County Clerk Pete Duncan has already begun work to ensure this issue does not happen again, including working with the State Board of Elections to put in place new procedures and checks to verify ballots are printed correctly.

Was every vote counted?

Duncan assured all voters that if they exercised their right to vote at last Tuesday's election, every step possible was taken to make sure their vote was counted and counted correctly.

Any voters or taxpayers with a question or concern about the election is encouraged to call the Elections Office at (217) 854-3214 ext 707.

1. Statement from ABS Graphics dated March 20, 2012.
2. Borman, Maggie. "Duncan Elected County Clerk and Recorder." Alton Telegraph 3 Nov. 2010. 21 Mar. 2012
< <http://www.thetelegraph.com/articles/county-46796-duncan-clerk.html> >.

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