

# Election Director OK On Proposals

## Secretary Of State Calls For End To Special Elections

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Director of the Scioto County Board of Elections Teresa Knittel says she is in agreement with most of "enhancements for Ohio's Elections," being proposed by Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner.

"I believe doing away with special elections is a good idea," Knittel said.

Knittel was referring to a recommendation from Brunner that would move special elections to primary or general election day, saving taxpayers an estimated \$2.7-\$5.4 million per year. It would also allow the use of

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vote-by-mail for vacancy in office special elections, explore measures such as limiting state issue ballot language length, creating a buying pool for elections materials and implementing a voting center pilot project.

Not having a special election, "saves quite a bit of money for everybody, because in any special election, whoever puts on the special election has to pay for it, which would come out of the taxpayers' money," Knittel said.

Knittel said the February special election which limited Portsmouth City Council to bonded indebtedness not to exceed \$100,000 without voter approval would have cost taxpayers more if her office had not taken steps to do much of the work without employing an outside contractor.

"There are a lot of things we did on that election that saved them money," Knittel said "But for just the city, that special election cost \$18,424."

Knittel said she didn't find anything in the list of

"enhancements" that she didn't like, but did take issue with a recommendation ending early voting no earlier than 5 p.m. the Sunday before Election Day.

"I don't think you should be voting on Sundays," Knittel said. "I don't think that's the correct thing to do."

"For the rest of it, I think, for the most part I agree with most of it," Knittel said.

Brunner said the recommendations were a result of her attempt to continue to partner effectively with local elections officials to improve and refine the processes.

"It was in this spirit that my office worked with the respected Brennan Center for Justice of the New York University School of Law to convene the first Ohio Elections Summit in late 2008 and the expanded Elections Conference this past March," Brunner said. "The result of this bipartisan process is the Report on Enhancements for Ohio's Elections."

### HIGHLIGHT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Cost saving measures for boards of elections. Move special elections to primary

or general election days, saving taxpayers an estimated \$2.7-5.4 million per year. Allow the use of vote-by-mail for vacancy in office special elections. Explore measures such as limiting state issue ballot language length, creating buying pools for elections materials and implementing a voting center pilot project.

- Enhancements for the Statewide Voter Registration Database. Finalize a new voter registration matching process with the Ohio BMV and the SSA. Provide counties with a form of access to relevant nonmatches, with rules prescribing their treatment of relevant nonmatches. Specify that a nonmatch could not, on its own, be the basis for disenfranchising a voter.

- Streamline Ohio's voter ID laws. Bring Ohio into line with other states by focusing voter ID on verification of identity, not address. In particular, allow either an official photo ID or two non-photo IDs for voting purposes, a change that will provide both voters and poll workers with greater certainty and predictability in administering voter ID laws.

- Offer annual vote-by-mail ballot requests. Decrease the administrative burden on boards of elections by creating an annual vote-by-mail ballot request form.

- Expand the number of in-person early voting locations and align Ohio's in-person early voting period with other states. Decrease the period for in-person early voting to 20 days before a general election, while increasing the number of locations allowed from one to four. End early voting no earlier than 5 p.m. the Sunday before Election Day.

- Streamline provisional balloting. Limit the reasons voters are required to vote a provisional ballot and increase the instances where that ballot is counted. Modify the wrong precinct rule by allowing any ballot cast anywhere in a county to be remade and counted if cast by an eligible voter.

The full report can be found on the Secretary of State's Web site at [www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/upload/news/20090422postconference.pdf](http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/upload/news/20090422postconference.pdf)

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