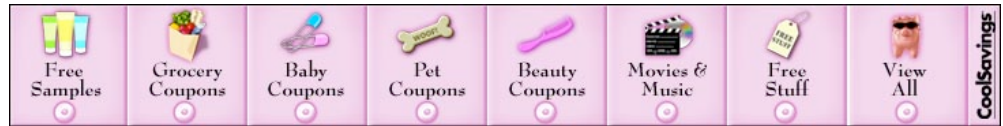


Los Angeles Times



<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-vote12feb12,0,6970893.story>  
From the Los Angeles Times

## Some independent votes won't count in L.A. County

An estimated 49,500 primary nonpartisan ballots are marked wrong, due to design and poll instruction problems.

By Richard C. Paddock  
Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

February 12, 2008

An estimated 49,500 votes were cast incorrectly in Los Angeles County by nonpartisan voters in the presidential primaries and cannot be counted because the voters' intentions are unclear, acting Registrar Dean Logan said Monday.

The mismarked ballots were the result of a confusing ballot design and poor education of poll workers and the public, Logan said. That left many decline-to-state voters unaware of the need to fill in a bubble indicating whether they were voting in the Democratic Party or American Independent Party primary.

The Republican Party did not allow nonpartisans to vote in its primary.

"Unfortunately we are not in a position to count those votes because of the limitations of the system and the ballot layout itself," Logan said.

"We want voters to know that we hear loud and clear that this ballot layout is confusing and we need to identify a less confusing method for crossover voting for future primaries."

Logan released a report of the Feb. 5 voting based on a manual survey of nonpartisan ballots cast in 1% of the county's precincts.

It found that 26% tried to vote in one of the two party primaries but neglected to mark a party bubble on the ballot. Although their votes in the presidential race cannot be tabulated, their votes on the propositions will count.

About 50% of the voters successfully cast crossover ballots, and 24% of the independents intended to vote nonpartisan, the survey found.

Logan said the lost votes would not affect the outcome of the presidential races or the allocation of Democratic Party delegates by congressional district because in each case the margins were too large.

Logan, who took over Jan. 4, said the survey also showed that the training of poll workers was uneven. In some precincts, the voting went smoothly and independents who wished to cross over marked their ballots properly. But in other precincts a high percentage of nonpartisan voters cast ballots incorrectly.

Logan said the number of votes that could not be counted was significantly less than the 100,000 votes he earlier had feared were marked incorrectly.

But despite his hope that the ballots could be counted, he said he had now concluded that the ballot design made it impossible to determine voters' intent. One problem is that ballots do not contain the names of any of the candidates and some of the same ballot positions were used for both Democratic Party candidates and American Independent Party candidates.

Adding to the confusion of overlapping ballots, Logan said, some nonpartisan voters were incorrectly directed to Republican Party polling booths and marked presidential candidates in that primary.

Logan said he understood the anger and frustration that many voters have expressed over the ballot confusion.

"Any time a vote is not counted because of an administrative burden it is significant," he said.

Voter advocates challenged Logan's decision and said he should examine each nonpartisan ballot.

"Mr. Logan and the county have at their disposal the means to count the votes and ascertain voter intent in nearly all cases," said Rick Jacobs, chairman of the Courage Campaign. "Anything short of that is unacceptable disenfranchisement of L.A. County voters."

richard.paddock@

latimes.com

---

If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at [latimes.com/archives](http://latimes.com/archives).

TMSReprints

Article licensing and reprint options

Copyright 2008 Los Angeles Times | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)  
[Home Delivery](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Archives](#) | [Contact](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Help](#)

partners:  