THE
CARTER CENTER

Preliminary Statement: Nonpartisan Election Observation of Training for Arizona's Election Day Poll Workers

As part of a pilot program to provide increased public oversight of the election process, The Carter Center assessed training for Election Day poll workers in Arizona through a combination of in-person observation — where welcomed by county election officials — and a desk review of poll worker training materials. Nonpartisan observers attended poll worker training in Mohave and Navajo counties on Oct. 28 and in Coconino County on Nov. 1, using a standardized checklist to assess the training process and the conduct of key stakeholders. The Center conducted a desk review of poll worker training materials, which included a combination of training manuals and videos, from Apache, Cochise, Graham, Maricopa, Mohave, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai, and Yuma counties.[1] Given that the Center only observed a small number of the poll worker trainings across the state, it is important to note that the findings here are not necessarily reflective of poll worker training in the state as a whole.

Poll worker training is an essential part of any election process. Interactions with poll workers shape in-person voters' perceptions of the election. Volunteer poll workers across the state are responsible for administering elections and ensuring they are conducted in accordance with state and federal law. Effective training of poll workers is critical to ensuring they properly understand their roles and responsibilities and can provide a positive voter experience on Election Day so that voting is safe, lawful, inclusive, and secure.

Nonpartisan Election Observation Methods[2]

In countries around the world, systematic nonpartisan citizen observation efforts play crucial roles in building public confidence in elections. Nonpartisan citizen observation can assess the degree to which elections are well-administered and help detect and deter systematic efforts to subvert election integrity, while providing data-driven recommendations for reform. The Carter Center has conducted impartial nonpartisan election observation in more than 110 elections around the world.

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[1] Materials from Gila and Greenlee counties were not available for review at the time of the statement's release on Nov. 7, 2022. La Paz County election officials informed The Carter Center that poll worker training is conducted on a purely verbal basis; consequently, written materials were not available for a desk review.
[2] Arizona statute defines nonpartisan observers as observers representing a nonpartisan candidate or ballot initiative. The Carter Center, however, uses nonpartisan observer in the sense in which it is more commonly used, to mean an election observer focused on the quality of the process and who does not represent any particular candidate or party.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Environment for In-Person Training: In each of the three trainings observed by The Carter Center, poll worker training took place in a calm and respectful environment that was free of disruptions, intimidation, or harassment. Although training sizes varied considerably — ranging from about 15 poll workers at the Nov. 1 session in Coconino County to about 85 poll workers for the Oct. 28 training in Mohave County — appropriate training venues with sufficient space were provided. While it was occasionally difficult to hear questions posed by attendees in Mohave County, the trainers used microphones, and responses were clearly audible throughout the venue. No official party observers (Democrat, Libertarian, or Republican) nor members of the media were present during the trainings observed by the Center.

Observers found all three training venues (i.e., in Mohave, Navajo, and Coconino counties) to be generally accessible to members of the public with disabilities. All three venues had clearly marked accessible parking spaces and wheelchair-accessible main entrances. Doors into the training facility either had push buttons or could be easily opened with one hand. Paths from the parking lot to the building entrance and to the training rooms were smooth and clear of stairs, narrow doorways, or other obstacles that would be challenging to navigate for individuals with vision or mobility impairments.

While the training venues were accessible to individuals with disabilities, none of the three trainings attended made any noticeable accessibility accommodations to the content of the training, such as providing interpretation into other languages, including American Sign Language; using closed captioning; or providing materials in electronic or large-print formats. The Carter Center was unable to assess whether counties coordinated with poll workers ahead of training to determine whether such accessibility accommodations would be needed nor whether the online training content offered some of these features.

Public Availability of Training Materials:

As of Nov. 7, 2022, Apache, Cochise, Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal counties had made copies of their poll worker training materials publicly available through the county elections department websites. Although not required by law, this is an important measure that could be replicated in other counties. Poll worker training materials — in redacted form if they contain sensitive information such as phone numbers for election workers — can serve as important resources for interested members of the public who want to learn more about how elections are conducted in their counties.

Training Content:

Carter Center observers sought to evaluate the degree to which poll working training addressed the suggested Election Day training topics covered in the 2019 Elections Procedures Manual (EPM) for the

state of Arizona.[3] The EPM training topics are not meant to be mandatory in each county — for example, not all counties operate a Kids Voting program in voting locations on Election Day — but the EPM guidance does serve as a comprehensive list of issues that are important to consider while organizing poll worker training. Given that the Center's observation was not comprehensive, it is possible that additional topics were covered during verbal training, addressed exclusively during specialized trainings for certain senior poll workers like the election inspectors, or can be found in other county elections department documents.

The Center found that the training materials assessed covered the majority of the topics suggested in the 2019 EPM. All county materials that were reviewed provided guidance that was consistent with state law, and provided information on: opening and closing the voting locations, materials made available to poll workers and how to use them, hours that voting locations should be open, hours that poll workers are expected to work, establishing a 75-foot limit beyond which electioneering shall not take place, enforcing rules against electioneering, standard voting procedures, procedures for checking voter identification, procedures for processing provisional ballots, procedures for dropping off an early ballot on Election Day, spoiled-ballot procedures, operating voting equipment, political party observers, and the transmission of results or delivering votes to the central counting place.[4] All county materials reviewed provided information about completing an Official Ballot Report (of which the Certificate of Performance referenced in the EPM is one component).

Content on voter intimidation: Counties provided less consistent guidance on how to define and enforce rules against voter intimidation. In some instances, discussion of voter intimidation was limited to reviewing regulations against bringing weapons within 75 feet of a voting location. Given recent lawsuits regarding voter intimidation at ballot drop boxes during early voting, this may be an important area of electoral guidance and training for counties to review ahead of future election cycles. The 2019 EPM provides detailed guidance (pp. 180-181) on actions that may constitute intimidating conduct inside or outside of a voting location. It would be beneficial to integrate some of this additional guidance and language in future county poll worker trainings. In addition, the state and counties could consult with voter protection organizations and relevant law enforcement agencies that systematically

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[3] These include: opening the voting location, hours that the voting location will be open, poll workers' hours, establishing the 75-foot limit and enforcing non-electioneering and non-intimidation rules, sharing voting locations with tribal elections, procedures for checking voter identification, provisional ballot processing, operation of voting equipment, operation of e-pollbooks or procedures for managing the signature rosters and poll lists, troubleshooting and how to implement wait-time reduction plans as-needed, any voter registration information deemed necessary, who may vote in the election, use of precinct registers and/or issuance of ballot types/styles, standard voting procedures, Recorders' Certificates, spoiled-ballot procedures, procedures for early ballot drop off, political party observers, procedures for challenges, Kids Voting, closing the polls, transmitting results and/or delivery of voted ballots, completing a Certificate of Performance verifying that various election duties were properly performed, and preparing the official and unofficial envelope contents.
https://azsos.gov/sites/default/files/2019_ELECTIONS_PROCEDURES_MANUAL_APPROVED.pdf, pgs. 130-131. The 2019 Elections Procedures Manual is the official guidance document — prepared by the Office of the Secretary of State and approved by the attorney general and governor — in use for the conduct of the 2022 midterm election.
[4] The reviewed materials in all counties except for Yuma County also provided information on how to prepare official and unofficial envelope contents. Yuma County's training materials are tailored to each member of the Board of Elections, and The Carter Center did not have access to the manual for election inspectors; information on this topic could be contained in that document.

track reported incidents of voter intimidation in order to develop more detailed best-practice guidance that can be offered during poll worker training in future elections.

Content on tribal identification and co-location of voting locations for federal and/or state and tribal elections: While most counties provided guidance on how tribal ID can be used to meet the state's voter identification requirements, often this guidance was minimal. None of the trainings attended or materials reviewed by the Center provided information on how to co-locate tribal, state, and federal elections to avoid confusion in the event of contemporaneous elections.[5]

Content on e-pollbooks or poll pads: While most counties provided guidance on setting up and operating e-pollbooks or poll pads (if used) and operating accessible voting equipment, the materials reviewed by the Center did not consistently provide guidance on how to troubleshoot alerts from e-pollbooks, nor how to troubleshoot common issues that voters may encounter while utilizing accessible voting equipment. Such information can be important, however, given the role played by Election Day technicians, who provide poll workers with proactive troubleshooting guidance on common errors. This assistance can help ensure a more seamless experience for voters on Election Day and result in fewer issues for elections department staff to resolve centrally. While precise troubleshooting guidance will vary from county to county depending on the equipment used, training materials from Apache, Cochise, Maricopa, and Pima counties provided detailed guidance on potential challenges that may occur with voting equipment. These manuals could serve as models for other counties.

Content on wait-time reduction plans: In this election cycle, many Arizona counties have longer-than-usual ballots with numerous races and propositions, raising the prospect of wait times at the polls. Although the training materials in most counties provided guidance that wait times should not exceed 30 minutes and that marshals are responsible for monitoring lines and coordinating with the county elections department if wait times are exceeded, most training materials did not provide detailed guidance about how to implement a wait-time reduction plan. This is likely to be more of a challenge for poll workers in counties that rely fully or primarily on precinct-based voting. Voters in counties that use a vote center model can be referred to nearby voting locations with a shorter wait time.[6]

Troubleshooting: It is important for counties to take proactive measures to identify and troubleshoot potential issues that could arise on Election Day, including issues related to ballot length. To that end, during in-person training in Mohave County, election officials noted that the county's long ballots may not easily fit in the county's ballot boxes. To address this, they will be sharing procedures with inspectors about how to open ballot boxes and rearrange the ballots during the day if a ballot box becomes too full. Although this is legal under ARS § 16-564, and county election officials announced their intent to provide additional seals and logs to ensure that this process is well-documented and

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[5] In this regard, the Center notes the recommendation from Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law Indian Legal Clinic, Arizona Native Vote Election Protection Project, 2018 report: "Poll workers assigned to polling locations on Tribal lands should receive specialty training on nonstandard addresses, Tribal identification, and the nature of co-located Tribal/State/Federal Elections at polling locations to avoid confusion."

[6] Yuma County's training materials provided good practical guidance on effective line management to reduce risks of long wait times, which could potentially be applied in other counties — including counties that use precinct-based voting.

secure, public perceptions may be negative given the current environment, in which significant numbers of voters are voicing concerns about the potential for election fraud. The Carter Center urges county election officials and election inspectors to continue to stress that this procedure is a last resort and that poll workers should first encourage voters to fold their ballots before depositing them in the ballot box.

Content on voter challenges: Carter Center observers found that counties were inconsistent in providing information about procedures for filing challenges to a voter's eligibility to vote in line with ARS § 16-121.01 and ARS § 16-591. This included inconsistently sharing guidance about preventing frivolous challenges that may be lodged on the basis of a voter's appearance or name alone. Should such challenges be raised, it is important that poll workers have information about how to properly document the challenges as well as how to respond to frivolous challenges.

Opportunities to Learn from Innovations in Neighboring Counties:

A key strength of Arizona's decentralized system of election administration is that each county has an opportunity to offer additional guidance beyond what is required under state and federal law in order to meet the unique needs of local communities. As a result, each county has developed innovative practices and approaches to poll worker training that could be replicated in neighboring counties. The Carter Center encourages county election officials to take advantage of a post-election forum, such as a meeting of the Association of Counties, where county election officials can meet to share information and discuss best practices from poll worker training.

Counties that do not currently provide written training materials to poll workers could learn about practices used in neighboring counties; written documentation is an important practice that enables poll workers to review what they learned after training. Other good practices could be shared and replicated based on local needs. For example, Graham County provided detailed disaggregated guidance in its poll worker training manual on how to respectfully engage with voters who require different accessibility accommodations, which could be of interest to other counties. In Mohave County, election officials provided a powerful visual demonstration during in-person training of why even significant ballot bleed-through does not affect any of the races on the other side of the ballot. In Coconino County, the trainer integrated pop quizzes into the training format, which was effective in keeping attendees on their toes and engaged. Coconino County also provides an extensive Americans with Disabilities Act compliance checklist to its inspectors as well as resources to retrofit voting locations, including resources to build ramps and accessible parking areas if needed. This is a creative solution that allows the county to continue to provide voting locations in rural or otherwise under-served communities where infrastructure may not otherwise be compliant with this important federal law. County election officials themselves are in the best position to determine which innovations from neighboring counties are most applicable to their contexts.

About The Carter Center

The Carter Center is a not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization that has helped to improve life for people in over 80 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; and improving mental health care. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide.