

Review of the July 2008 Civil Grand Jury Report, "A Year of Five Elections for the City and County of San Francisco"

San Francisco Voting Systems Task Force, November 15, 2009

Investigators: Ka-Ping Yee and Beth Mazur

Notable items:

1. The use of RCV delays the certification of machines and creates the possibility of a more difficult manual counting process.
2. Many absentee ballots are not counted due to missing signatures on envelopes or multiple ballots in one envelope.

Relevance to VSTF scope:

The above items influence the auditability of the election and the accuracy of the results.

Recommendations:

1. The VSTF should review the DoE's full manual counting plan for RCV ballots and assess the feasibility of manual counting for RCV in the event of a recount or audit.

Detailed summary:

- **Findings 1–4 and Recommendations 1–2** concern the space and facilities needs of the DoE. These are not relevant to our charter except insofar as the space requirements might be alleviated by machines that are smaller or easier to store.
- **Findings 5–8 and Recommendations 3–5** concern the certification of machines, backup counting method for RCV ballots. It is notable that the additional certification requirement would not be an issue if RCV were not required. I recommend reviewing the DoE's full manual count plan for RCV ballots to determine its feasibility and speed, and finding out whether this plan has been attempted in practice.
- **Findings 9–14 and Recommendations 6–9** concern voter education for RCV, party registration for primary elections, and absentee ballots. The RCV education issues are probably outside our charter, unless we have evidence that a large fraction of the public does not understand RCV. Registration issues are outside our charter. The handling of absentee ballots may be relevant if we have recommendations that would simplify the submission of absentee ballots; the specific difficulty was the requirement of one ballot in each envelope with a voter signature on the envelope.