The Spirit

of Citizenship & Democracy

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2004 General Election: Witness to History

It was a proud day for democracy on November 2, 2004 when more Ohioans than ever cast their ballots for governing offices of our counties, Congress and the presidency.

As predicted, all eyes were on Ohio by late evening and into the early morning hours of November 3rd as our state played the determining role in the presidential race labeled "too-close-to-call" before Election Day by statisticians and pundits alike.

In the days leading up to the election, Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell and his staff were confident that the state's bipartisan election officials were ready for record turnout in Ohio's more than 11,000 precinct locations, despite the onslaught of legal challenges mounted in courts throughout the state.

This issue of *The Spirit of Citizenship and Democracy* examines Ohio's election process and some of the legal challenges mounted by various interest groups.

We also offer a technical review of election night, as hundreds of thousands of Internet users from across the globe logged on to the Secretary of State's

Web site to follow election results and vote tallies as they were reported by the counties throughout the night.

This issue of *The Spirit* examines the future of voting in Ohio. A recent decision from Secretary Blackwell to implement optical-scan voting equipment in Ohio counties gives the state a uniform statewide voting system. We review the
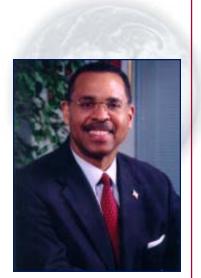
decision behind the choice of optical scan, as well as provide an overview of the system.

In addition, *The Spirit* also cites the Ohio Center for Civic Character's fifth annual call to character for Ohio's candidates for office. This year, more than 200 Ohio candidates responded to the Secretary's calling, publicly holding themselves to the public's high standards of leaders of character.

Finally, while this chapter in presidential history is closed, new or lingering issues surrounding Ohio's election laws and even the status of the Help America Vote Act mandates will be examined well into 2005, as the Secretary of State's office surveys the successes of the November election and considers new ways to confront standing issues and public concerns.

Spirit

J. Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio Secretary of State

I have personally proposed unrestricted use of absentee ballots and consideration of multi-day voting to make the process more convenient and accessible. Yet when the chief problem on Election Day is long lines, that's a great day for democracy in my book.

Ohio's Election System is Sound

By Secretary Blackwell

The electoral system in Ohio worked well on November 2. Every eligible voter who wanted to vote had the opportunity to vote. There was no widespread fraud, and there was no disenfranchisement. A half million more Ohioans voted than ever before with fewer errors than four years ago, a sure sign of success by any measure.

Despite the more than 30 separate lawsuits, hordes of special-interest group "swat teams" descending on polling places, and a circus of Michael Moore-inspired camera crews, our bipartisan election system — and the order, integrity and transparency integral to it — prevailed.

Voter enthusiasm was higher than I have ever witnessed. Problems and complaints were minimal. In some polling places, the record-high turnout resulted in long lines. Yet both poll workers and voters were patient, and the civility that has marked the Ohio election process for as long as I can remember reigned once again.

There is no question the long wait times that plagued some precincts must be analyzed and addressed for future elections — a wait of several hours is clearly unacceptable. I have personally proposed unrestricted use of absentee ballots and consideration of multi-day voting to make the process more convenient and accessible. Yet when the chief problem on Election Day is long lines, that's a great day for democracy in my book.

Elections are a human endeavor and, as such, can never be totally error-free. Yet every eligible voter had the opportunity to vote, using regular or provisional ballots.

Was the process perfect?

No. But it was perfectly inspiring — a testament to the strength and power of our democratic system, the commitment of American voters to have their voices heard, and the integrity of the process that encouraged participation and demanded fairness.

More than 5.7 million Ohioans voted on Election Day. Three key steps paved the way for our successful election:

◆ We took out the guesswork that plagued Florida's administration of the 2000 election by implementing clear standards, policies and procedures.

◆ We created an inviting atmosphere by training poll workers and restraining outsiders from interfering with voters and compromising the sanctity of the secret ballot.

◆ We instructed Ohioans on when to vote, where to vote and how to vote with the most comprehensive voter-

Instructional videos from the Your Vote Counts Ohio *campaign illustrated the correct way to cast a vote using Ohio's voting system, such as optical scan, depicted here.*

In a television commercial for the Your Vote Counts Ohio *campaign, Secretary Blackwell urges Ohio voters to familiarize themselves with voting equipment in their counties.*

education program ever undertaken in this state.

Because we set clear standards, the lawsuit frenzy that followed Florida's 2000 election was controlled this year in Ohio in advance. By having litigation decided before the election, the confusion these lawsuits can wreak on poll workers and the voting public was minimized.

Perhaps most importantly, the Secretary of State's *Your Vote Counts Ohio* launched an unprecedented statewide voter-education program.

♦ Through the Web site www.YourVoteCountsOhio.org, voters could learn what type of voting equipment would be used in their county and then watch a video demonstrating how to use it.

♦ Through television, radio, newspaper and Internet advertisements and public-service announcements, voters using punch-card machines were shown how to vote properly by checking their ballots before turning them in and by making sure "hanging chads" were eliminated. A second wave of advertising emphasized the importance of voting at the correct precinct, in accordance with Ohio law, and it informed voters how to find their voting location.

♦ Posters and "how to" pocket guides for voters were available free of charge to third-party groups involved in voter registration and turnout activities. (Our office

worked with more than 60 different voter registration campaigns over the past year, helping register more than one million new Ohio voters.)

♦ More than a million "intelligent" automated telephone calls were placed to households in Ohio's urban centers, where past error rates have been highest, to remind voters to vote and make sure they knew their polling location.

Since 2000, election reform has become an important issue in America, and rightfully so. But as we continue to address it, let us not aggrandize the problems with our election system. In Ohio, it's a good one, as we demonstrated on Nov. 2.

As our nation moves forward, adopting more modern tools to manage voter lists, register voters, and cast and count votes, let's remember that at the center of the system are people — not software and hardware. It was this recognition, and the action we took in Ohio to ensure the people were prepared, that played pivotal roles in our tremendously successful election on Nov. 2, 2004.

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Election Day:
How and Why Ohio's

On November 2, more than 5.7 million Ohioans voted in the 2004 general election. While most Ohioans saw little of the process outside visiting their polling place on Election Day, the Ohio Secretary of State's office, along with Ohio's 88 county boards of election, worked for more than a year to ensure a smooth election for the record number of Ohio voters.

In a presidential election year, the eyes of the nation and the world were on Ohio, a swing state with 20 electoral votes. Combine that with the importance of the election, as well as the heated nature of the contest, and you have a recipe for pressure.

Planning for the 2004 general election actually began after the last presidential election, in 2000. To avoid a repeat of that year's situation in Florida, Ohio's lawmakers passed legislation designed to standardize the vote counting process across the state. Congress also played a part, by passing the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), to upgrade voting systems and standardize the election process across all 50 states.

The 2004 general election was the first major test of HAVA. Since 2002, the Secretary of State's office has been working to ensure that Ohio meets all HAVA requirements. A new division, the Election Reform Division, was created to implement HAVA statewide *(see article, page 6)*.

The Secretary of State's office had to work, not only to make sure Ohio complied with HAVA standards, but also to ensure an accurate, safe and civil election for all Ohioans.

More Ohioans voted in the 2004 general election than in any prior election. Aside from long lines at some polling places, the state's election system ran smoothly. Sherri Dembinski, chief of staff for the Secretary of State, attributes that to the months of preparation carried out before hand, which paid off not only at the polling place, but also through a timely and accurate count of votes on election night.

"We worked diligently with the county boards to prepare for this election," Dembinski said. "We wanted to be in a position where the United States and the world would know Ohio's outcome as early as possible, after the polls closed."

Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell certifies the general election results on December 6, 2004.

Election Officials Got It Right

By Tom Chansky, Staff Writer

The preparation process contained two major factors: training and communication.

Over the past year, the Secretary of State's office provided training sessions, as well as conferences for members of all county boards of elections. The boards also provided their own training, designed for poll workers in all of Ohio's 11,360 precincts.

The Secretary of State's office also enhanced communication with the boards in the months leading up to the election. Secretary Blackwell issued several directives, advisories and memorandums to the boards. These helped clarify election law, especially in the area of provisional ballots, which had new requirements because of HAVA.

"We made sure the boards had what they needed," Faith Lyon, Board of Election Liaison said. "The open lines of communication made the difference."

To improve communication, the Secretary of State's office also opened up its phone lines to the boards. Starting in mid-October, the Secretary of State held a daily conference call with all 88 counties. Members of the Secretary's Elections, Legal and Elections Reform Divisions took this time to answer any questions the boards had about the election. Board members had the opportunity to e-mail questions beforehand, and the questions were answered during the call for the benefit of all the county boards.

The conference calls enabled boards to share their concerns and issues, while the calls gave Secretary of State staff the opportunity to help the boards as a group.

The questions asked by board members included issues surrounding challengers at polling places, provisional balloting and clarification of election law. Questions and answers were documented after each call and made available to all of the county Boards of Elections for reference. This process gave the counties the opportunity to hear the conversations and also to have written answers to use for training.

"This gave the counties direction and the confidence to know they were doing the right thing," Chief of Staff Dembinski said.

The Secretary of State's office also helped the boards in person, providing its regional representatives to assist the boards in the weeks leading up to the election.

Perhaps the largest success of Election Day was the 5.7 million-voter turnout. While the turnout for presidential elections is historically large, the turnout for 2004 trumped all previous years.

The record turnout was the result of the efforts of the Secretary of State's office, local boards, Ohio's political parties and other groups. Ohio saw an unprecedented number of new voters register throughout 2004. The state and local boards worked with more than 60 registration groups, resulting in more than one million new Ohio voters. The Secretary of State's office alone distributed more than five million voter registration forms.

The volume of new registrants proved to be a challenge for election officials, as the Secretary of State's staff and local boards processed the large volume of incoming voter-registration forms right up until mid-October. In the end, more than 900,000 newly registered voters were added to Ohio's voter rolls.

Clearly, the large number of new voters — many whose forms were not received until the deadline itself — impacted the efficiency at the polling places: Because large numbers of new voters were added merely weeks before the election, the county boards of elections did not have enough time to reallocate voting equipment or redraw precinct boundaries.

Consequently, a number of the state's precincts experienced longer-than-normal lines of voters — many of them first-time voters — who were faced in some places with dozens and dozens of candidates and issues for which to cast their ballots. In Franklin County alone, some voters saw more than 100 issues on the ballot. Because most voters took longer than usual in the voting booth to make their choices, the voter lines moved that much more slowly.

Getting both registered voters and new registrants to the polls was another task. In September, Secretary Blackwell launched the *Your Vote Counts Ohio*, a voter education campaign. This campaign informed voters of the importance of voting at the assigned polling location, as well as checking ballots before they were cast.

Following the election, concerns over those long lines and the final vote tally led some minor party candidates to request a statewide recount, which was completed in December.

Legitimate concerns with Ohio's election process and voting equipment are being studied by the Secretary of State and his staff, especially as the state moves forward to fully comply with HAVA.

Still, Secretary Blackwell said the integrity of Ohio's election process is sound, as the state's thousands of bipartisan election officials worked together to ensure safe and fair elections — certainly a point Ohio voters should take comfort in noting.

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Help America Vo
Progress on the Path to El

Voting in the United States has evolved from colored beans to paper ballots to electronic machines. As voting technology progresses, Ohio election officials face the challenge of implementing a secure, accurate voting system.

Talk of disenfranchised voters, "pregnant," "dimpled," and "hanging chads" in the 2000 presidential election promoted a higher level of awareness in the election process and inspired the nation's lawmakers to improve the way Americans vote.

In 2002, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to improve voting systems nationwide. This federal mandate authorized $3.86 billion to make America's voting systems more accessible and more secure.

By the first federal election in 2006, HAVA requires that punch-card voting systems be phased out across the country and that any new voting system reliably register a voter's choice.

HAVA also requires states to maintain a centralized database presenting an accurate list of citizens who are registered to vote, and that provisional ballots be issued to voters who report to a precinct, but are not on the list of registered voters.

Likewise, HAVA also requires voting systems and polling places be fully acces-

sible to registered voters of various disabilities. Ohio will fulfill this requirement by adding compliant electronic machines by 2006 — a step delayed because of recent legislative mandates.

Put simply, the Ohio legislature's requirement for electronic voting machines to have a voter-verified paper-audit-trail (VVPAT) requires special equipment. This paper-audit-trail equipment is not yet certified by the independent certification agency. Nor has it been through Ohio's security review.

"HAVA is improving the accuracy of the democratic system and helping the way Americans vote," said Judy Grady, director of Election Reform. "Under HAVA guidelines, poll workers and election officials are required to undergo training, which is critical to a successful election."

Since 2002, Ohio has received $132 million to improve election procedures, and will likely not receive additional federal funding from Congress. Ohio's voters have already seen two facets of HAVA already implemented: a statewide voter-education campaign and a centralized voter-registration database.

While data from some counties were manually loaded last fall, about 74 of the 88 counties were connected to the Secretary of State's office and

operational prior to the election. The last 14 counties are scheduled to be fully loaded and operational with the state's centralized database by June 2005.

Upgrading the state's voting systems is still the main goal of HAVA. Secretary of State staff spent the last two years evaluating the types of voting machine systems and equipment.

Due to their reliability, flexibility and cost effectiveness, Secretary Blackwell named the paper-based precinct-count optical-scan device as Ohio's statewide voting system, the only system that will be paid for through HAVA funding.

"Precinct-count technology just makes sense considering the flexibility it provides to financially-constrained counties," Secretary Blackwell said.

The Secretary of State seriously considered direct recording electronic (DRE) systems to upgrade Ohio's voting system. However, with the General Assembly mandating a voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) in Substitute House Bill 262 last spring, it made more economic sense to adopt an optical-scan system as Ohio's voting machine of choice.

Specifically, the DRE system made little economic sense when rising costs due to the VVPAT requirements

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— Secretary Blackwell

...ote Act:
...lection Reform

By Serena Brown-Travis, Staff Writer

pushed the cost to nearly $190 million. Considering Ohio will likely not get more than the $132 million it has already received from the federal government to pay for HAVA, the $58 million-shortfall was a great concern. (This cost is even greater than originally projected, as the newly-registered 900,000 voters increased the ratio of voters-to-machines needed per precinct.)

What is the cost of the optical-scan voting system? The Secretary of State's staff estimates about $100 million — well within the financial parameters of available funding.

Using an optical-scan system will also simplify the distribution of voting machines across each of Ohio's 88 counties. Instead of relying on a voter-turnout formula to calculate machine placement, optical-scan voting systems can be administered without matching a set number of voters to each machine. In a precinct using an optical-scan device, the voter will mark a paper ballot, which is then inserted into an electronic ballot reader. The reader tabulates the ballot and will alert the voter if there is an over-vote, as required by HAVA.

At the end of the voting process, the actual paper ballot cast by the voter is retained for auditing and recount purposes, satisfying the requirements of Substitute HB 262.

Meeting the elements of the law, while ensuring security and reliability, are key requirements of any new voting system for use in Ohio.

"Precinct-count optical-scan voting devices will allow more citizens to vote in an expedited manner while providing accurate, dependable and paper-auditable results," Secretary Blackwell said.

Secretary Blackwell's decision has received the support of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, who say optical-scan systems make economic sense.

"County Commissioners are having a difficult time balancing budgets at the local level," Larry Long, CCAO Executive Director said. "Given the limited federal and state dollars that are available to meet the requirements of the Help America Vote Act, it appears the proposal to use optical-scan voting is the only way Ohio can comply with federal law without counties being required to pay for part of the cost for installing new voting devices."

HAVA is the most recent federal law governing state and local elections since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In addition, HAVA is the first legislation to provide federal funds for states to make mandatory changes in the election process.

A Look at Optical Scan

Much like a standardized test, optical-scan voting devices require voters to mark their choices on their ballots. However, under a precinct-count system, each ballot is counted at the polling place, as well as checked for errors.

After signing in, voters are given their ballot, a special quick-drying marking pen and a "secrecy folder." Voters fill out their ballots by shading in corresponding ovals. When the voter is finished with their ballot, he or she places it in the secrecy folder and places that ballot in the tabulation machine.

The ballot reader will alert the voter of any over votes or mistakes on the ballot.

Much like with a punch-card ballot, a voter has three chances to cast his or her ballot. If the voter realizes a mistake has been made, he or she can trade in that ballot for another one up to two more times. The voter then runs the ballot run back through the ballot reader.

While the machine tabulates the vote, the individual ballots are still available for auditing and recount purposes. Precinct-count optical-scan systems satisfy state and federal law by being able to perform these two tasks.

Thirteen Ohio counties used optical-scan systems for the November 2004 election.

Two vendors, Diebold Election Systems and Election Systems and Software have agreed to contract terms with the state of Ohio to provide optical-scan voting devices.

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The Eyes of the World Watch Ohio's Election Night Web Site

By Tom Chansky, Staff Writer

By 11 p.m. on November 2, pundits on various broadcast and cable news programs stated that the presidential race would come down to Ohio's 20 electoral votes.

This consensus turned the eyes of the world to Ohio.

Not content to wait for the latest numbers from the media, election-watchers went to the source for the latest Ohio election results: the Ohio Secretary of State's Web page, which received nearly 40 million visitors on November 2nd and 3rd.

A special Web site designed for Election Night provided updated results from all Statehouse, Congressional and statewide races, as well as the State Issue One vote and Ohio's presidential tally. The Election Night site provided not only results, but also was modified late on November 2 to include a running county-by-county tally of provisional ballots.

Planning and preparation for the site took place throughout 2004. While the site was used in the 2003 general election and the 2004 primary, few could have predicted the simultaneous 500,000 visitors the site received the night of November 2. Thanks to the pre-November 2 efforts, the site and system designed to support the Election Night traffic remained stable.

"Everyone knew Ohio would be examined through a microscope," said Assistant Secretary of State Monty Lobb. "Our team realized we needed to push our capacity to the limit."

In the months leading up to the election, the Secretary of State's Information Technology staff worked with outside contractors to stress-test the system. A secondary server, located off-site was also prepared to handle the load.

"We performed automated stress tests and the system held up," said Sherri Dembinski, Chief of Staff for the Secretary of State's office. "But we didn't know what volume the system could really handle until Election Night."

Fortunately, the traffic never reached the breaking point.

After the media reiterated the importance of Ohio, the site received two large spikes in traffic. At that point, a decision was made to balance incoming traffic between the primary and backup servers, a decision that ensured the site remained up and running.

By the end of the night, visitors from 120 countries had accessed the site for the latest election results.

The content of the site was just as important as traffic capacity. The main drawing card — live returns — were pulled straight from the Secretary of State's election-returns database. However, the site also provided other information, such as district maps, listings of candidates for office and

Ohio law regarding recounts. In the months leading to the election, the Secretary of State's Information Technology, Media and Public Affairs divisions worked to compile an informative site for users interested in Ohio's electoral process.

Additionally, the site also provided options for users who wished to customize their viewing experience.

For the first time, the Secretary of State offered a news feed for Web-site operators who wished to syndicate results straight from the Secretary of State's site to their Web sites. The news feed received more than 25,000 hits.

The Election Night site also offered a Dashboard feature, an interactive application giving users the ability to customize election results on their desktop. The Dashboard provided Web surfers quick access to the results in the races that mattered most to them.

When users logged on to Ohio's Election Night Web site, they found a site loaded with information, options and most importantly, live election returns. The site and system to support the traffic was the result of months of work by several divisions of the Secretary of State's office. All this planning and preparation paid off when the eyes of the world came looking on Election Night.

Around the World

Top 10 Foreign Countries
Accessing SOS Election Night site:

1.	Canada	146,118 visitors
2.	Norway	97, 872 visitors
3.	Australia	79,285 visitors
4.	United Kingdom	62,477 visitors
5.	The Netherlands	46,757 visitors
6.	France	31,140 visitors
7.	Germany	25,450 visitors
8.	Japan	23,524 visitors
9.	Italy	20,062 visitors
10.	New Zealand	18,016 visitors

**U.S. Department of Defense addresses around the globe registered 66,812 visitors on election night. If placed on the above table, U.S. military users would be fourth, behind Australia.

2004 Election Legal Challenges: Lessons Learned

By Serena Brown-Travis, Staff Writer

With all eyes on Ohio on Election Day and a tight, highly-publicized race, many believed Ohio's 2004 presidential election would echo the 2000 Florida disaster and become a disappointment for the state's elections officials.

Despite the pressure, Ohio was well prepared for the election, thanks in part to tests in the legal system. Secretary Blackwell said the need for transparency is key to a secure and reliable election.

"As Secretary of State, it is my responsibility to conduct Ohio's elections in a manner as open and accessible as possible, consistent with the absolute requirements of integrity and fairness," Secretary Blackwell said.

By the time Election Day was over, Ohio's election was considered a success, surpassing expectations.

Ohio's election officials were prepared for this election on all fronts, including in the courtroom. In the months before Election Day, the system and Ohio's election procedures were tested through legal challenges.

With more than 30 lawsuits filed, opponents on all sides of the political spectrum challenged issues surrounding Ohio election law. The most contended issues involved the legitimacy of challengers at polling places and controversies over provisional ballots.

While "challengers" may seem like a new term, for many years, Ohio law has allowed partisan challengers inside polling places. However, there were some who felt the presence of challengers would lead to voter intimidation.

"State law allows challengers in polling places which is a part of the determination of whether or not a person is eligible to vote," said Cassandra Hicks, secretary of state general counsel. "Challengers can assist in the qualification or disqualification of voters.

"As Secretary of State, it is my responsibility to conduct Ohio's elections in a manner as open and accessible as possible, consistent with the absolute requirements of integrity and fairness."

— Secretary Blackwell

Questions such as your name, address and age should not threaten or intimidate a voter."

While there were accusations challengers would oppress and discourage voters, Ohio's law was upheld and by the end of Election Day, there were no reports of voter intimidation due to challengers.

Another heated dispute was over provisional ballots, which have been allowed by Ohio law for a decade. The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) set new nationwide standards for provisional ballots to ensure that voters who turn up at a polling place, but are not on the list of voters, will receive a ballot.

In counting provisional ballots, the county board of elections examines the provisional ballot after Election Day. If it is determined the ballot was cast by a registered voter who voted in his or her correct precinct, is otherwise eligible and had not already voted on Election Day, then the provisional ballot is counted.

The debate surrounding HAVA's intent for provisional ballots became a highly partisan issue. Some felt votes cast by registered voters in the wrong precinct should count, while Secretary Blackwell maintained Ohio law required the ballots must be cast in the correct precinct to avoid confusion and voter fraud.

"It only makes sense that citizens vote in their correct polling places in order to make decisions on what will directly affect their locality," said Hicks. "Polling places are strategically located in neighborhoods where voters have easy access to them."

In the end, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit supported the state on the matter of provisional ballots.

On Election Day, provisional ballots made up about 2 percent, or more than 153,000 of the more than 5.7 million votes cast.

"The legal issues of provisional ballots were decided prior to, and not after the election. After that, our office focused on getting voters to the corerct precinct through our voter-education efforts," said Secretary of State Chief of Staff Sherri Dembinski.

"The greatest lesson is that democracy has proven itself again. The media and outside entities were instrumental in swaying the public to believe that Ohio would get things all wrong," said Hicks. "However, in light of election reform and critical decisions that voters faced, Ohioans were vigilant in the election process. Voters' concerns were addressed, and Ohioans made their presence known to their lawmakers."

There are still a few outstanding cases and others waiting an appeal. However, most judges have ruled in the Secretary of State's favor.

Testing the system in court prior to the election guaranteed Ohio's election was decided not in the courtroom, but at the polling place.

Spirit

Voters Look for Leaders of High Character

By Monty Lobb, Assistant Secretary of State

When Americans go to the polls on Election Day, they are charged with making a judgment within their five minutes in a voting booth regarding the character and competency of the candidates for a particular office.

It can be frightening to think of the magnitude of the task in these terms: *Five minutes* to choose the *leaders* of our country or state and the communities in which we live.

This is a task that we hope all Americans take seriously — seriously enough to educate themselves on the candidates' backgrounds and records, as well as the issues of the time.

In short, in that five minutes, we are asked to make a judgment call to determine which candidate has demonstrated the character to lead.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Secretary of State's office made a call for character to Ohio's candidates for public office. This year, we saw a tremendous increase in those candidates who wanted to be called a "candidate of character," those who pledged to carry out their campaigns demonstrating respect and compassion for their constituents and opponents alike.

Why is this important? All voters have the right to expect high character among those who seek to serve in a public leadership role. There is no more telling spectacle than a candidate on the campaign trail — purposely trying to convince voters of their competency, while similarly displaying the candidate's character along the way.

As the head of the Secretary of State's Ohio Center for Civic Character, I am charged with working with community leaders from the business, government, academic, faith and service sectors to build communities of character.

We believe character is the cornerstone of good citizenship — that people who demonstrate fidelity of character and purpose within their personal and professional lives will go on to be good citizens in their communities. We believe citizenship means leading involved and caring lives by responsibly caring for our own, while embracing the potential of a diverse community of others and participating in efforts to work harmoniously together.

As citizens of a particular community — whether it be our country or state or the town in which we live — it is imperative that our leaders subscribe to this belief. If they want the honor of being elected community officials, then they must demonstrate their commitment to living lives of high character and embracing a need to be inclusive, respectful and compassionate in their work.

For candidates to do otherwise would jeopardize, not only the success and legitimacy of their candidacy, but also the health and vitality of our communities. Voters are too smart to tolerate candidates whose behavior proves hypocritical.

Through the efforts of the Ohio Center for Civic Character, we will continue our work with government organizations, like the County Commissioners Association of Ohio and the Ohio Municipal League, to lead the discussion on building communities of character. Our work with these organizations has been engaging and positive because many of these government-leader members are committed to leading with integrity, to do what is right for Ohio's communities.

We find every day that government leaders want to discuss character and the mechanics of building a community of character, because it helps them in conducting their work with others — employees, colleagues, constituents and other community leaders. Leaders everywhere agree it is much easier to make progress and collaborate on important issues, when everyone involved is committed to the same principles.

And once again come fall, we will make our next call for candidates of character — calling upon those who are committed to demonstrating high character as the cornerstone of their candidacies.

No one individual, leader, candidate or community is perfect. Yet having a high view in the way we care for and treat others is certainly something to which we all can aspire. May the New Year find us all striving to be good citizens.

Monty Lobb
Assistant Secretary
of State

The Future of Xpect More

By Tom Chansky, Staff Writer

In the world of movies, one test of a successful film is whether it can spawn a sequel.

After a movie has been screened and made millions of dollars at the box office, plans soon get underway to bring back characters and locations to continue the film's story line. Sequels, which often introduce new characters and locations alongside old ones, are also different from their predecessors in one telling way: the name of the movie is different.

Like a successful film, the Ohio Secretary of State's civic awareness initiative, *Xpect More in 2004*, effectively reached its audience. Xpect More took the idea of community involvement through voting, volunteering and building character to youth audiences. And Xpect More in 2004 will be back for a sequel, although it will likely undergo a slight name change.

Xpect More, which combined a 30-minute in-class presentation, with publications, a targeted advertising campaign and a Web site, reached out to Ohio youth, encouraging them that they can make an impact in their communities.

In past surveys and focus groups, Ohio youth said they hold low expectations of their leaders, their communities and themselves. Xpect More challenges Ohio youth through illustrating the premise that when they expect more, they get more. This idea is the foundation of Xpect More.

Xpect More was launched in late spring, reaching out to all Ohio high schools, colleges and universities, as well as a number of other youth and community groups. Aside from the presentation, the program also offered groups the chance to become "Xpect More schools," where they could receive newsletters

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"We're proud of the impact Xpect More has had on our youth. This is an important message to convey to young people. We look forward to continuing the Xpect More initiative in 2005."

— Assistant Secretary of State Monty Lobb

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and other material from the program. Nearly 40 colleges and high schools throughout the state signed up to become an Xpect More school in 2004.

The Secretary of State's office also worked with boards of elections' staff members in 16 counties to take the Xpect More message to Ohio schools. Throughout the summer and fall, Secretary of State staff traveled throughout the state to deliver the in-school presentation to more than 1,000 students.

"We're proud of the impact Xpect More has had on our youth," said Assistant Secretary of State Monty Lobb. "This is an important message to convey to young people. We look forward to continuing the Xpect More initiative in 2005."

As part of the presentation, students were encouraged to register to vote, an opportunity many students took advantage of.

Most teachers responding to a post-presentation survey said they felt the presentation and other aspects of Xpect More were an effective tool for their classes.

"It was well done and very professional," one teacher wrote. "The presenters could relate to my students."

Some teachers have already asked for the program to continue beyond 2004, which is part of the plan.

Planning is currently underway to market the Xpect More program in 2005. The Secretary of State's office will increase outreach to schools and other youth groups, as well as enhance coordination with the county boards of election.

The Public Affairs division, which oversees Xpect More, is also planning to offer presentations in the spring, to reach Ohio youth before the May primary. The staff hopes to use these presentations to illustrate to youth what the benefits of being a person of character are, what individuals get in return for volunteering and what is at stake in the 2005 elections.

Unlike a Hollywood sequel, the success of Xpect More in 2005 doesn't hinge on box-office receipts. Instead, Xpect More will continue its success of encouraging Ohio youth to look inward and make a difference for their communities and for themselves.

Provisional Ballots by the Numbers

By Tom Chansky, Staff Writer

The term "provisional ballots" became a catch phrase following the November election.

While Ohio did not lead the nation in the number of provisional ballots cast, a recent survey says Ohio led the nation in the percentage of provisional ballots counted.

Of the 153,539 provisional ballots cast in Ohio, 118,734 were counted, a 77.33 percentage rate. According to a survey released by the Election Reform Information Project, Ohio's acceptance rate was the highest in the country.

Across the state, Cuyahoga County posted Ohio's highest total provisional ballots cast, 25,309. Of those, 66.2 percent were counted. Champaign County had Ohio's highest acceptance rate, with all of the county's 514 provisional ballots deemed valid and counted. Lucas County had the state's lowest percentage of provisional ballots counted. Of the 7,591 provisional ballots cast in Lucas County, 4,469, or 58.9%, were counted.

Of the provisional ballots deemed invalid, most were not counted because they were not cast by registered voters. Others were not counted because voters cast the ballots in the incorrect precinct.

Nationally, Colorado placed second in the survey, posting a 76.08 percent acceptance rate. Other acceptance rates varied from 69.8 percent (Kansas) to 6.38 percent (Delaware).

Voters in other states, such as California (439,969) and Arizona (more than 200,000) cast more provisional ballots than voters in Ohio. Some states, such as Delaware and Wyoming had voters casting fewer than 100 provisional ballots.

Across the nation, more than 1.2 million voters cast provisional ballots.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Office of the Ohio Secretary of State is to tirelessly invigorate Ohio voter, officeholder and corporate citizenship by advocating the critical cause of civic literacy, assuring the absolute integrity of elections data and safeguarding valuable Ohio corporate identities. We shall fulfill these exceptional ideas through: the investment in secure state-of-the-art technologies, the vigilance of example-setting leaders, and the partnership of empowered teams of individuals possessing extraordinary character and competency.