

Building election data files for 1990 reapportionment

The Republican and Democratic Parties, political consultants and legislators have begun to strategize and organize for the critical 1990 reapportionment. A key factor in the outcome of this major political battle is the quality of election data available to all. Voter Contact Services works with government agencies to develop accurate, comprehensive election data files.

The Colorado Secretary of State's office and VCS have worked together to develop a system to automate the consolidation and tabulation of the election returns from all of Colorado's 63 individual counties.

As in most states, the counties in Colorado have the responsibility for maintaining voter registration files and actually conducting the state and federal elections. They then forward the results of those elections to the Secretary of State, who has the responsibility for consolidating the individual county results and issuing an Official Abstract of Votes Cast in the election. The primary design objectives of the system were:

- Allow the fast and accurate preparation of the Abstract of Votes Cast.
- Provide necessary audit trails so that the Secretary of State can have confidence that the local returns have been submitted and tabulated correctly.
- Provide a single magnetic tape file of precinct by precinct election results on a statewide basis for research and historical record.

The counties in Colorado are widely distributed geographically and sociologically. Denver, the largest county, has over 500 precincts and 200,000 registered voters. Hinsdale, the smallest, has 4 precincts and 350 registered voters. There are over 2500 precincts in the state, but the largest 15 counties contain over 80% of those precincts. All of these counties either have their own computer systems or have access to computers on a service bureau basis for a portion of their election systems.

The Secretary of State notified the counties that magnetic tape would be an acceptable method for submission of election returns data by the counties to the Secretary of State's office. The federal government has long allowed, in fact insisted, on the submission of W-2 data in magnetic tape form, and in many areas medical insurance claim information is routinely passed from provider to insurer directly from computer to computer on magnetic tape.

The counties were completely cooperative, for it is much cheaper and faster for them to write a mag-

Abstract of Votes cast at the PRIMARY Election held on Tuesday, September 5, 1988

STATE SENATE - TWELFTH DISTRICT									
DURHAM, STEVEN J.		R	D	TOTAL		NO VOTE		%	
R	D								
EL PASO	0,087	3,440	2,063	2,083	5,567	567	17.9		
FREMONT	0,091	1,847	1,843	1,843	444	26.3			
TOLLER	126	119	36	66	21	17.6			
TOTAL	0,317	0,246	4,184	4,184	1,082	26.0			
STATE SENATE - THIRTEENTH DISTRICT									
BENSON, JERRY		R	D	TOTAL		NO VOTE		%	
R	D								
EL PASO	0,268	495	382	382	100	20.6			
FREMONT	2,568	875	880	880	318	32.0			
TOLLER	392	128	80	80	33	26.1			
TOTAL	0,738	1,560	1,148	1,148	481	28.2			
STATE SENATE - FOURTEENTH DISTRICT									
STOCKTON, RUTH S. FRANZKO, GEORGE		R	D	TOTAL		NO VOTE		%	
R	D								
JEFFERSON	0,704	0,421	1,282	1,282	0,577	24.4			
TOTAL	0,704	0,421	4,262	1,286	0,577	24.4			
STATE SENATE - SIXTEENTH DISTRICT									
METHUEN, AL		R	D	TOTAL		NO VOTE		%	
R	D								
BOLZER	1,172	741	587	587	174	23.4			
GILPIN	373	187	127	127	60	22.0			
JEFFERSON	10,348	7,481	0,971	0,971	1,490	15.2			
TOTAL	14,891	0,369	0,685	0,685	1,724	20.5			
STATE SENATE - SEVENTEENTH DISTRICT									
STRICKLAND, TED		R	D	TOTAL		NO VOTE		%	
R	D								
ADAMS	11,881	0,810	0,072	0,072	738	12.7			
TOTAL	11,881	0,810	0,072	0,072	738	12.7			
STATE SENATE - EIGHTEENTH DISTRICT									
BURKHARDT, BOB		R	D	TOTAL		NO VOTE		%	
R	D								
ADAMS	10,488	0,708	4,829	4,829	1,178	20.8			
TOTAL	10,488	0,708	4,829	4,829	1,178	20.8			

netic tape containing all of the precinct-by-precinct detail than it is to print the large stacks of paper previously required. Before the use of magnetic tape counties sometimes had to hire people to manually transcribe portions of computer printouts onto special forms required by the state.

VCS provides the Secretary of State a system of computer programs that are used to process the individual magnetic tapes supplied by the automated counties plus the manual keypunch data from the small counties. Out of this system comes printouts which are directly photographed and printed in the abstract. This not only saves the cost of typesetting the entire abstract but insures accuracy and eliminates late updates. The system also provides extensive edit checks, and flags all county data that is incorrect or not in balance. As a final byproduct a precinct by precinct magnetic tape is produced which balances exactly to the Official Abstract of Votes Cast.