



County of Orange  
California

**Thomas G. Mauk**  
County Executive Officer

August 4, 2009

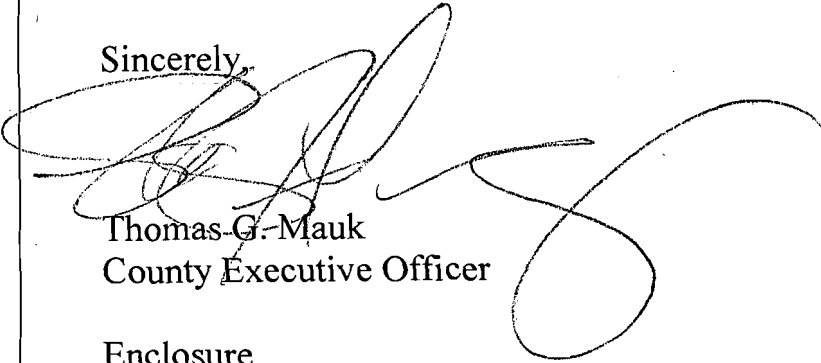
James R. Perez, Foreperson  
2008-09 Orange County Grand Jury  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, "2008  
General Election"

Dear Mr. Perez:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. Respondents are: Board of Supervisors, County Executive Office, and Registrar of Voters. If you have any questions, please contact Kathleen Long at (714) 834-7410 in the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Sincerely,



Thomas G. Mauk  
County Executive Officer

Enclosure

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**“2008 General Election”**  
**Orange County Grand Jury Report 2008 – 2009**  
**Board of Supervisors/ Registrar of Voters Responses to Findings and**  
**Recommendations**

**Responses to Findings: F.1, F.2, F.3, F.4 and F.5**

F.1 The 2008 General Election had a record turnout by mail and at the polling places.

**Response: *Agrees with the finding.***

The Grand Jury is correct in their assessment that more people voted in the 2008 General Election than prior General Elections. With a total of 1,167,657 voters (representing a 72.6% turnout), this election was the largest the County has ever seen. The number of vote-by-mail voters increased over the previous general election record by over 100,000 voters (representing a 16% increase).

There has been steady growth in vote-by-mail voting over the past few years as was accurately reported by the 2006-2007 Grand Jury report “*The Absentee Ballot Process: Does Your Vote Count?*” Recognizing the need to alleviate lines at the polling places, the Registrar of Voters launched a vote-by-mail initiative in 2008. This led to tens of thousands of new vote-by-mail ballot requests and resulted in decreased lines at the polling places.

F.2 The County was well prepared to handle the voter turnout and handled it well.

**Response: *Agrees with the finding.***

The complexity of planning a countywide election is understood and the efforts made by the Registrar of Voters and staff to prepare for the high voter turnout is greatly appreciated. A successful vote-by-mail initiative, precise allocation of voting systems, and special instructions for poll workers at high turnout poll sites were all critical to handling voter turnout.

The vote-by-mail initiative launched by the Registrar of Voters dramatically increased the number of voters requesting a vote-by-mail ballot (over 685,000 mailed) and, therefore, relieved pressure on the poll sites. Approximately 43% of all registered voters in Orange County requested a vote-by-mail ballot for this election.

In addition to the vote-by-mail initiative, the Registrar of Voters did a thorough examination of the allocation of voting systems needed at polling places based on the number of registered voters assigned to each individual poll site and the historical turnout of those voters. Looking at turnout to voting system ratios after

the election showed the Registrar of Voters' calculations to be nearly 100% accurate. The proper allocation of voting systems undoubtedly led to a decrease of lines at Orange County polling places. In addition, the Board of Supervisors approved the request by the Department to purchase 500 additional voting booths in preparation for the increased turnout.

A "Top 100" program was launched that centered on what were likely to be the busiest poll sites on Election Day. These poll sites received the greatest number of voting systems. The Inspectors for these polling places received a diagram of how their specific poll site should be set up for Election Day. They were also offered additional training in line management. Each Inspector at these polling places received a manual and training DVD specifically designed for running a "Top 100" poll site. The training, manuals and DVD were created after the Registrar of Voters conducted multiple drills testing various scenarios.

- F.3 The County was adequately prepared to handle the contingencies which occurred on Election Day and handled it well.

**Response: *Agrees with the finding.***

The Grand Jury summarized clearly the tools that were in place at the Registrar of Voters to handle polling place issues on Election Day. The Registrar of Voters has a complete understanding that issues regarding supplies and technical malfunctions are inevitable in polling places on Election Day. The mechanisms and procedures that are now in place have evolved over the last five years.

In recent years, the Registrar of Voters has added to Election Day operations a Technical Support Line for poll workers to receive assistance; Sheriff's Department radios to communicate and dispatch assistance; and Rapid Deployment Teams that have the supplies and technical training to deal with any issues in the field. The average response time to these inevitable issues was within 10 minutes of dispatch.

- F.4 Security at the Voter Tally Center and at the Vote Collection Centers was without incident.

**Response: *Agrees with the finding.***

There were no security incidents to report from either the Tally Center or the Vote Collection Centers on Election Night. This is a testament to the cooperation and planning between the Registrar of Voters and the Orange County Sheriff's Department. The departments meet to discuss security and communications prior to each election and their attention to detail consistently provides results. The security of the ballots, personnel, and building are paramount. The Registrar of

Voters would like to stress that Election Night operations are open to the public and encourages anyone that would like to view the process to visit operations at the Vote Tally Center.

- F.5 The Registrar's lessons-learned activities following the election were appropriate to improve future election processes.

**Response: *Agrees with the finding.***

The Registrar of Voters department has been on a program of constant improvement since 2004. Debriefing meetings following elections have become standard and resulted in many improvements over the last five years. The debriefing meetings are meant to be a place where any topic can and should be discussed so that management and staff together can identify what is working and what is not. Throughout the entire election planning process, staff at all levels are encouraged to participate. This has led to a better communication structure and greater understanding by all staff as to the different processes in the department.

**Response to Recommendation: R.1**

- R.1 The Registrar of Voters is urged to maintain the positive efforts acknowledged in the report and pursue his established strategies to continue to exact outstanding performance from his organization and deliver excellent service to the public.

**Response: *The recommendation has been implemented.***

This recommendation has been implemented with the full understanding that this is an ongoing process. The County would like to thank the Grand Jury for their kind words and acknowledgement of the hard work of the entire department. The direction from the County Executive Office together with the leadership of this Department will continue to push forward and be a standard bearer for election departments across the country. That can only be accomplished by the Registrar of Voters continuing to meet the challenge of constantly improving and creating innovative approaches to bringing elections services to the public. This must include the continuation of eliciting feedback from stakeholders to advance the electoral process for the taxpayers of Orange County.