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# The Street-Level Bureaucrats of Elections: Selection Methods for Local Election Officials

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## Abstract

*The 2000 presidential election and the recount battle in Florida focused attention on local election administration in the United States. The Help America Vote Act, passed by the federal government in 2002, requires wholesale changes in voting equipment and other election procedures. However, the law did not address the selection of individuals who manage elections: both state and local election officials play a great role implementing federal and state election laws. Recently, several election reform advocates have argued for shifting to nonpartisan election administrators in the United States. Others, particularly associations representing election officials, have not endorsed that position. To inform this debate, we provide data on the selection methods and party affiliations for all local election officials in the United States (more than 4,500 individuals or commissions). We find considerable variation in the methods used to select state and local election officials in the United States.*

## Introduction

The United States has experienced several sweeping changes in election equipment and procedures since the disputed 2000 presidential election. To date, however, these changes have not addressed the selection of individuals who enforce election laws: both state and local election officials play a great role implementing federal, state, and local laws. These individuals did not completely escape notice in the 2000 and 2004 elections. In 2000, Florida's elected secretary of state, Katherine Harris, also served as co-chair of George W. Bush's campaign in Florida. Harris was accused of tipping the election results for President Bush, especially given her "massive purge of eligible voters in Florida" ("How America Doesn't Vote," 2004). In 2004, Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell was similarly accused because he co-chaired President Bush's reelection campaign and made some controversial decisions regarding voting procedures for the presidential election.<sup>2</sup> In light of these and other election controversies, some have made proposals to move toward nonpartisan election administrators at the state and local levels (see for example, Hasen, 2005).

While state-level officials such as Harris and Blackwell tend to receive more attention, it is the local election officials who are responsible for the nuts and bolts of elections: conducting such tasks as buying and maintaining voting equipment, registering voters, printing ballots, hiring election workers, and choosing polling places.<sup>3</sup> While these individuals must follow state and federal laws, local officials may interpret and implement those laws in different ways. Michael Lipsky (1980) describes teachers, welfare caseworkers, and police officers as "street-level bureaucrats," who make critical decisions in implementing various laws. He argues that "the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the

devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out” (Lipsky, 1980, p. xii). Similarly, local elections officials might be termed the “street-level bureaucrats” of elections. For example, the infamous “butterfly ballot” used in Palm Beach County, Florida, in the 2000 presidential election was designed by the local election supervisor, allegedly in violation of state law (Wand et al., 2001).

Local election officials have very different challenges in implementing elections, depending on where they are located. In a recent report, the General Accounting Office ([GAO], 2001) identified at least five different reasons why elections are implemented differently. First, the GAO notes there are tremendous differences in how standardized state election rules are. As an example, Oklahoma has standardized rules governing elections, leaving little to administrative discretion at the local level. In contrast, in Pennsylvania there is almost no standardization among the 67 counties. Second, voting technology is a major determinant of how election officials implement elections. For example, jurisdictions that use paper ballots face different challenges in designing and printing ballots than jurisdictions that use lever voting machines. Third, the size of the jurisdiction presents different challenges: Los Angeles County, California, (with over 4 million registered voters) faces more difficulty maintaining up-to-date voter lists than Petroleum, Montana (with 367 registered voters). Fourth, some local jurisdictions have very diverse populations, particularly those with a variety of language minorities. Finally, different districts have different norms and cultures where voting is concerned. Nevertheless, national and state election laws are implemented by local authorities. There are thousands of local election authorities in the United States, but their behavior is not well understood.

In this article, we provide some basic information on the methods used to select local elections officials. These data can be used to examine whether partisan election officials behave differently than nonpartisan officials. However, before one begins to examine differences in behavior, one must be able to describe the individuals whom one is discussing. In light of recent proposals to move toward the selection of nonpartisan election officials, it is important to get some basic information about the people running our elections. How many of them are elected? How many are appointed? How many are nonpartisan? We find that a large majority of local election administrators are elected to their positions, and most of these elected officials openly affiliate with one of the major political parties.

### **Why Nonpartisan Election Administration?**

A growing polarization of politics in the United States and a series of close and competitive national elections in recent years have combined to produce increased controversy and litigation over election procedures (Hasen, 2005). In this climate, there is an increased awareness that candidates and political parties may try to manipulate election rules and procedures for political gain, as seen in mid-decade redistricting disputes in several states. For example, the accepted wisdom is that Democrats want to expand the electorate and Republicans do not, because the demographic profile of nonvoters more closely resembles the Democratic party constituency. Thus, Democratic election officials may promote practices (such as

election day registration or provisional voting) intended to boost voter turnout while Republican election officials may promote practices (such as stricter voter identification requirements and more aggressive purges of registration lists) that reduce turnout.

As a result, reform ideas have appeared in the editorial sections of newspapers and blogs across the country.<sup>4</sup> One reform proposal is to take election rules and decisions out of the hands of partisan politicians. This general idea has been supported by scholars (Hasen, 2005; Pastor, 2004; Shornstein, 2001), election reform task forces (Committee on Federal Election Reform, 2005; Fair Election International, 2004; Governor's Select Task Force on Election Procedures, 2001, pp. 27–28), and ballot initiative campaigns in Ohio and California (though both failed in 2005).

The switch from partisan to nonpartisan elections to choose local government officials was among the primary reforms suggested by Progressives around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Schaffner, Streb, & Wright, 2001). The nonpartisan contests were mostly connected to commission and council-manager governments, which reformers adopted in order to implement scientific and efficient management of cities (Adrian, 1959, p. 451). Reformers thought that taking the politics out of administration might promote the public interest and produce the best outcomes for citizens. In contrast, political scientists have suggested that strong parties are essential to democracy by motivating citizens to participate and providing important information cues for voting decisions (Schaffner et al., 2001).

Despite the long-term existence of nonpartisan governing and its wide use among city councils (MacManus & Bullock, 2003), there is a dearth of empirical evidence to support policy changes, especially for local election officials. It is clear that the switch to nonpartisan campaigns in some jurisdictions has weakened the power of political parties in elections, although parties can still play a major role in nonpartisan elections (Adrian, 1959). Several studies indicate that Progressive reforms intended to limit partisan control of elections (such as the adoption of the Australian ballot, nonpartisan local elections, and direct primary elections) succeeded in reducing the impact of partisanship in voting behavior (e.g., Adrian, 1959; Rusk, 1970; Schaffner et al., 2001). As for the behavior of officials, some suggest that nonpartisan ballots may favor Republicans, but the evidence—mostly case study evidence—on this point has been mixed. In one of the few systematic studies, Welch and Bledsoe (1986) found that Republicans who are city council members enjoy a slight electoral advantage. Part of that can be explained by the fact that Republican leaning cities are the ones that are most likely to have nonpartisan systems.

Concerning local election officials, the few published studies available suggest that their party affiliation can have effects on voting and elections. For example, Stuart (2004) analyzes the use of centralized voter lists to purge felons from the voting rolls in Florida before the 2000 presidential election. Despite the fact that the felon lists contained errors, Stuart's evidence indicates that counties with Republican election administrators purged voter rolls more aggressively than counties with Democratic election administrators. The results are consistent with partisan self-interest in that Democrats are thought to benefit (and Republicans suffer) from expanded voter rolls. Similarly, Hamilton and Ladd (1996) find evidence that

Republican county election boards strategically manipulated ballot formats to influence straight-party voting in the 1992 election. Another study examines partisan machinations among election officials in determining the ballot title for a voter initiative to legalize assisted suicide in Oregon (Lund, 1998). Finally, Hayduk (2005) argues that election procedures passed by the New York state legislature and implemented by local election boards resulted in Republican dominance in party politics in the state in the early 1900s, whose effects are still felt today.

There are a number of studies showing how the two major political parties in the United States have crafted election procedures to thwart independent and third party candidates. One example is the signature requirements needed for candidates or parties to qualify for the ballot (Winger, 2002). Another example involves anti-fusion laws preventing multiple-party nominations of the same candidate in most states (Ryden, 1999). Nevertheless, there is limited scholarship comparing the partisanship of election officials to measurable outcomes, such as the adoption of particular practices in counting votes or in voter turnout. Consequently, we turn to the first question one must ask in approaching this topic: who are our election administrators?

### **How are Local Election Officials Selected?**

Election administration is extremely decentralized in the United States. In most states, local election administration is the responsibility of a county government. However, in some states, mainly in New England, some or all election administration is handled by municipal (city or town) government. Taken together, we identify more than 4,500 local election jurisdictions covering the entire country. To find the method of selection for these local election authorities, we consulted several sources, but first, we obtained the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all officials in charge of local elections in the United States, mostly from state websites.<sup>5</sup> Then, we called many of the local officials to determine their partisanship, but we also consulted the state election office, state laws, county and town charters, and the directories of local officials. Some states have the same methods of selecting local election officials (e.g., New York), where other states have a patchwork of different selection methods or selection methods varying by statute depending on the size of the election jurisdiction (e.g., Nebraska).

We find three pieces of information about each election official. First, we examine how local election officials are selected (whether elected, appointed as individual election administrators, appointed as multiperson boards, or elected as a multiperson board).<sup>6</sup> Second, we examine whether the person was selected in a manner in which party affiliation was an explicit consideration (for the voters or for the appointing body). Finally, we ascertain the party affiliation of local election officials. We were not able to confirm the party affiliation (or lack thereof) of every appointed individual or board self-described as nonpartisan. Thus, we suspect our data may slightly overstate the number of nonpartisan local election officials. We collected these data over a period of time ranging from October 2004 until January 2006. We are thus able to describe the selection methods in a variety of ways, comparing jurisdiction size and region to see if there are any broad differences in the selection methods of officials.

**Table 1.** Selection Methods for Local Election Authority

| Selection Method             | Share of Jurisdictions | Voter Representation |
|------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Individual Elected by Voters | 61%                    | 45%                  |
| Elected Board of Elections   | 2%                     | 1%                   |
| Appointed Board of Elections | 22%                    | 31%                  |
| Appointed Individual         | 15%                    | 22%                  |

Note: The second column indicates the percentage of local jurisdictions using a particular selection method. The third column indicates the percentage of ballots cast in the 2004 presidential election in each type of election authority.

Sources: State statutes, state election offices, directories of county officers  $N = 4,612$  local jurisdictions.

**Table 2.** Selection Methods for Local Election Authority by Jurisdiction Size

| Selection Method             | Less than 20,000 voters<br>( $N = 3,603$ ) | More than 20,000 voters<br>( $N = 1,009$ ) |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Individual Elected by Voters | 64%  | 49%  |
| Elected Board of Elections   | 2%   | 1%   |
| Appointed Board of Elections | 18%  | 14%  |
| Appointed Individual         | 16%  | 35%  |

Looking first at the method of selection for local officials, we see that a majority of local election authorities are elected (Table 1). However, a significant number of localities have an appointed individual (15%) or an appointed board (22%) running elections. Mississippi stands apart as the only state in which local election boards are selected by voters (roughly half are partisan and half are nonpartisan). Alvarez and Hall's recent public opinion survey indicates that an elected nonpartisan board of elections is the most preferred local election authority by a national sample of citizens (Alvarez & Hall, 2005). As our data indicate, that is the least common type of local election authority in the United States.

Generally, elected individual officials are more common in rural, less-populated counties and towns. Table 1 indicates that while more than half of the local jurisdictions elect a person to run elections, less than half of the voters reside in such places. Looking at the data in another way by examining differences by jurisdiction size (measured by number of voters), more densely populated urban and suburban jurisdictions are more likely to have an appointed individual, though the most common model for all jurisdiction sizes is still an individual elected by voters (see Table 2).

We also examine which methods are used in which regions. We find that election boards are most common in the South (mostly appointed), while appointed boards or appointed election officials are more common in the Northeast (Table 3). The vast majority of jurisdictions in the North Central and West elect an individual as the local election authority.

Turning to party affiliation (Table 4), we observe a couple of things. First, partisan election authorities represent almost half of the local jurisdictions and about half of the voters in the United States. Progressive reforms for nonpartisan elections or appointment have not touched as many election authorities as they have city councils, where approximately 77% use ballots that do not include partisanship (MacManus & Bullock, 2003). The share of localities represented by partisan officials is about the same as the share of voters they represent. Bipartisan boards make

**Table 3.** Selection Methods for Local Election Authority by Region

| Selection Method             | South<br>( <i>N</i> = 1,423) | West<br>( <i>N</i> = 419) | North Central<br>( <i>N</i> = 1,064) | Northeast<br>( <i>N</i> = 1,706) |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Individual Elected by Voters | 47%                          | 89%                       | 88%                                  | 49%                              |
| Elected Board of Elections   | 6%                           | 0%                        | 0%                                   | 0%                               |
| Appointed Board of Elections | 42%                          | 0%                        | 10%                                  | 18%                              |
| Appointed Individual         | 5%                           | 11%                       | 2%                                   | 33%                              |

**Table 4.** Party Affiliation of Local Election Authority

| Party Affiliation | Share of Jurisdictions | Voter Representation |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Republican        | 20%                    | 23%                  |
| Democratic        | 26%                    | 24%                  |
| Other party       | 0.1%                   | 0.03%                |
| Bipartisan        | 14%                    | 16%                  |
| Nonpartisan       | 39%                    | 37%                  |

Note: The second column indicates the percentage of local jurisdictions in a particular category. The third column indicates the percentage of ballots cast in the 2004 presidential election in each type of jurisdiction.

Sources: State statutes, state election offices, directories of county officers and calls to local election officials (*N* = 4,566 local election jurisdictions).

**Table 5.** Party Affiliation of Local Election Authority by Region

| Party Affiliation | South ( <i>N</i> = 1,423) | West ( <i>N</i> = 419) | North Central ( <i>N</i> = 1,064) | Northeast ( <i>N</i> = 1,660) |
|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Republican        | 14%                       | 40%                    | 49%                               | 1%                            |
| Democratic        | 54%                       | 26%                    | 28%                               | 1%                            |
| Other party       | 0.3%                      | 0.2%                   | 0%                                | 0%                            |
| Bipartisan        | 6%                        | 0%                     | 9%                                | 29%                           |
| Nonpartisan       | 26%                       | 33%                    | 13%                               | 69%                           |

up roughly 15% of local jurisdictions and voters, and nonpartisan officers and boards represent a little more than one-third of the voters and localities in the United States.

Table 5 indicates that nonpartisan election officials tend to be most common in New England, and on the West Coast. In many of the towns in New England, a nonpartisan official administers elections and this pattern dominates the Northeast. Even though nonpartisanship is a common pattern on the West coast, it is not the majority among election officials. This is also inconsistent with city councils; where most West coast cities do not use partisan identification on ballots (MacManus & Bullock, 2003). In the South, West, and North Central regions, a large majority of election officials are partisan (see Table 5).

Among partisans, Democrats slightly outnumber Republicans among the ranks of local election officers, roughly mirroring the equal division of partisans in the mass public (Weisberg & Christenson, 2005). However, in the West and North Central regions of the country, Republican officials dominate; in the South, Democratic election officials dominate. All in all, there is considerable variation in the methods of selection and party affiliation of local election officials. This allows for fruitful comparisons of different types of election authorities in the future.

## Conclusion

This article takes a first step at describing our election officials nationwide, something which, to our knowledge, scholars have not yet attempted. Given the importance of street-level bureaucrats in the administration of many public policies, such description is very important to analysis of the public policy of election changes and reforms. That will help us begin to understand the success or failure of administration of election reforms. But also, recent election disputes indicate that election administration itself is extremely important to ensure the integrity and legitimacy of elections. Policy proposals for changes to nonpartisan election administration certainly demand further larger-scale study before any significant policy changes in administration are adopted. Thus, we begin to fill that gap by describing the selection methods of local election officials.

We find that while public opinion indicates that an elected nonpartisan board of elections is the most preferred local election authority by a national sample of citizens (Alvarez & Hall, 2005), our data indicate that common practice is not consistent with public opinion. Further, our data indicate that while nonpartisan ballots were one of the primary Progressive reforms, this reform did not impact election officials as widely as another set of local officials, city councils. We also note that any shift to nonpartisan election administration will not be trivial, given the large number of current officials chosen in a partisan manner.

We are at the beginning stages of our understanding of the behavior of local elections officials. Thus, this article does not explain the behavior of the officials or make any empirical (or normative) conclusions about which selection method is best. We will not make conclusions about it without more empirical research concerning measurable behavior of officials, such as differences in provisional ballot counting, levels of absentee and early voting or even the quality of the ballot produced by local officials (see Kimball & Kropf, 2005). Fortunately, the decentralized nature of elections and the wide variation in selection of local election officials makes it possible to compare them and get a better sense of the impact of switching to nonpartisan administration of elections.

In addition, we think there are some other issues that will need to be resolved to ensure more efficient election administration. In fact, report after report notes that states and localities consistently underfund elections. Funding may be more important than partisanship for proper administration of elections and is mentioned in many of the scholarly treatments of bureaucrats. For example, many election officials in Missouri have opposed early voting simply because they cannot afford to implement it, according to Wendy Noren, formerly the Legislative Co-Chair of the Missouri County Clerks Association.<sup>7</sup> She observed that there are many innovations that local election officials would like to make, but cannot afford.<sup>8</sup> County governments are not likely to fund election improvements. "I've got county commissioners that don't mind spending one million dollars on a road that will serve 1,000 people. But the thought of needing a million dollars for election equipment that'll serve 60,000 people is just beyond comprehension to them," Noren said.

A second problem that many have identified is the lack of poll workers, who are arguably even more important street-level bureaucrats. The General Accounting Office found that the majority of elections administrators note that they have

problems recruiting sufficient poll workers (GAO, 2001). This provides a difficult challenge for the fair administration of elections.

Not only that, but we see a couple of hurdles in switching to nonpartisan election administration. The first is political. Switching to nonpartisan election administration would send the large number of partisan officials looking for a new line of work. The National Association of Secretaries of State (an organization that includes most state election officials) recently defended the practice of partisan officials administering elections (National Association of Secretaries of State, 2005).

Second, some states have home rule provisions that leave decisions about the structure of local government to towns or cities. These states tend to be in New England, which already have nonpartisan local election officials in most jurisdictions.<sup>9</sup> However, in other states home rule provisions may complicate efforts by the state government to change the way local election administrators are chosen.

However, any of these proposals are fundamentally about accountability of elections officials. We argue that a very important way to insure accountability is to provide the most information possible, in order to allow social scientists to study elections. Scholars have argued that a variety of data must be available (such as the number of new registrants processed) for the purposes of transparency and measuring the performance of local election officials (Social Science Research Commission, 2004).

## Notes

- 1 The authors would like to extend a special thanks to Lindsay Battles, Laura Wiedlocher and Cecile Denny for their helpful research assistance, as well as to all the election officials who patiently answered our questions. We also thank Rebecca Morton for her helpful comments.
- 2 Blackwell ruled that only provisional ballots cast in the correct precinct would be counted. He also decided that only voter registration applications on a certain weight of paper could be accepted (see House Judiciary Committee Democratic Staff, "Preserving Democracy: What Went Wrong in Ohio.")
- 3 For more information on the different activities that local election officials must do both before and after an election, see General Accounting Office (2001).
- 4 See for example, "Election Integrity: Restoring Honor to a Disgraced Political Office." *The San Diego Union Tribune*, March 17, 2005.
- 5 Several counties have multiple individuals in charge of elections (see Appendix for a table describing how each state selects officials). Those officials appearing to have the day-to-day responsibility are coded in this particular article (for example, who one would contact in order to obtain a copy of a ballot).
- 6 See Appendix for a summary of how each state selects its local election officials.
- 7 Personal communication with Wendy Noren, Boone County Clerk and Former Legislative Co-Chair of the Missouri Association of County Clerks and Election Authorities, April 16, 2003, Columbia, Missouri.
- 8 According to a report prepared about early voting by the Secretary of State's Office, election officials in Missouri estimate it will cost approximately \$2.4 million dollars statewide (about one million would be one-time costs such as equipment purchase), or about \$21,000 per election district. The majority of the counties reported they would hold early voting only at their central office.
- 9 For example, in one of the smaller New England states, Rhode Island, 37 of 39 towns and cities are governed by home rule charters.
- 10 Email communication with Garrett Baxter, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, August 24, 2005.
- 11 According to the SOS office, when they don't run with a partisan label, that is their choice, but the positions are normally partisan.



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## APPENDIX

### Methods of Selection for Local Election Officials

| State                | Information about Selection Method   |
|----------------------|--|
| Alabama              | An elected partisan judge has responsibility for many election-related duties (County Probate Judge) and is coded here. However, duties are divided among several different individuals: <a href="http://www.sos.state.al.us/cf/election/borjop1.cfm">http://www.sos.state.al.us/cf/election/borjop1.cfm</a> .   |
| Alaska               | Appointed, nonpartisan position (regional election supervisor); appointed by state director of elections, who is appointed by Lt. Governor (a Republican)  |
| Arizona              | All the county election administrators are nonpartisan appointees, hired by the Board of Supervisors or the County Recorder (which is a partisan position). (Elections Director, Manager, or Coordinator)  |
| Arkansas             | There is divided responsibility. There is a three-member county board in each county who deal with Election Day procedures, including appointing election officials and canvassing returns <a href="http://www.state.ar.us/sbec/search_ec.html">http://www.state.ar.us/sbec/search_ec.html</a> . Members of this board are chosen by the majority and minority parties. A third member is chosen by the State Board of Elections from the majority party in the state (the party holding the majority of seven constitutional offices; currently Democratic). An elected partisan County Clerk runs the day-to-day operations of registrations and voting. The election board is coded here, and is coded as Democratic. |
| California           | Some counties have a nonpartisan elected County Clerk, while others have a nonpartisan appointed Registrar of Voters.  |
| Colorado             | All are elected positions (almost all partisan) except for Denver, where the Election Director is appointed by an Election Board.  |
| Connecticut          | Town Clerks and Registrar of Voters share duties. For town clerks, selection methods vary. For Registrar of Voters, two partisan officials are elected.  |
| Delaware             | Bipartisan county election boards administer elections; appointed by governor from lists provided by parties and include equal numbers from each major party.  |
| District of Columbia | Appointed, nonpartisan position (Election Board)   |
| Florida              | Elected position; some are nonpartisan. In Gulf County, the current Supervisor of Elections ran without a party and in Miami-Dade, the Supervisor of Elections is appointed.   |
| Georgia              | Various; both bipartisan boards and elected partisans depending on county.   |
| Hawaii               | Nonpartisan position appointed by city or county councils  |
| Idaho                | Elected partisan position (County Clerk)   |
| Illinois             | For most counties, it is an elected partisan position (County Clerk). For certain cities (Aurora, Bloomington, Danville, East St. Louis, Galesburg, Peoria, Rockford, Chicago), a three-member election board is in charge, appointed by chief judge of circuit court (some of the city boards are bipartisan, some not). In DuPage County, three election commissioners are chosen by circuit court.  |
| Indiana              | Elected partisan position (County Clerk)   |
| Iowa                 | Elected partisan position (County Auditor)   |
| Kansas               | In most counties a partisan and elected County Clerk is the election administrator, but in the four most populous counties an election commissioner is appointed by the Secretary of State.  |

## APPENDIX Continued

| State          | Information about Selection Method   |
|----------------|--|
| Kentucky       | Elected partisan position (County Clerk)   |
| Louisiana      | Elected partisan position (Clerk of Court)   |
| Maine          | In most towns or cities, a nonpartisan Municipal Clerk is the election administrator. Roughly half the towns elect a Municipal Clerk, the rest appoint one.  |
| Maryland       | In each county the governor appoints a Board of Elections, with a majority of the board members from the governor's party.   |
| Massachusetts  | Most towns elect a town or city clerk to run elections. Larger cities usually appoint an election commissioner. A handful of cities have bipartisan election boards.   |
| Michigan       | Local election authority is shared by an elected partisan County Clerk, a 3-person county election commission (County Clerk, Judge of Probate Court, and County Treasurer), and a township or city election commission. We code the County Clerk.  |
| Minnesota      | A nonpartisan elected County Auditor is the election authority in most counties. A handful of counties appoint an Auditor or Election Director to run elections.   |
| Mississippi    | Local election authority is shared by a partisan elected Circuit Clerk (voter registration and absentee balloting) and a 5-person Election Commission (all other duties). County election commissions are elected to 4-year terms in the presidential election. In some counties commissioners run under party labels and in some counties they run without party labels. We code the Election Commission.   |
| Missouri       | Elected partisan position (County Clerk) except in St. Louis and Kansas City area counties, where bipartisan boards appointed by the governor to run elections.  |
| Montana        | Elected position; some are nonpartisan. (Election Administrator)   |
| Nebraska       | For counties with under 20,000 population, an elected partisan County Clerks administers elections.<br>For counties with more than 20,000 residents an Election Commissioner is appointed by the following rule: 20,000–100,000 population: the election commissioner is appointed by county board; 100,000 + population: the election commissioner is appointed by the governor   |
| Nevada         | Most counties have an elected County Clerk administer elections. In the two largest counties, a nonpartisan Registrar of Voters is appointed by the County Commission.   |
| New Hampshire  | Elected nonpartisan positions (Town/City Clerk)  |
| New Jersey     | Three separate positions run elections: elected partisan County Clerks, appointed Superintendents, and appointed Boards of Elections. County Clerks are coded in our data.   |
| New Mexico     | Elected partisan position (County Clerk)   |
| New York       | Bipartisan election boards are appointed by a county legislative body.   |
| North Carolina | County Election Directors are nonpartisan appointees. Each county has a 3-member, mixed party County Election Board (no more than two members can be of the same party). We code the Election Boards, which appoint the Election Directors.  |
| North Dakota   | Elected, nonpartisan position (County Auditor)   |
| Ohio           | Ohio county boards are appointed by the SOS, but a county election director is selected by the county board. The Director and Deputy Director are of opposite parties. Counties are not required to have a deputy, but if they don't, then they have a clerk. In general, the duties of the deputy are decided by board members. The director's duties are determined by statute. The party of the chair of the Board is opposite that of the director.  |
| Oklahoma       | County Election Board Secretaries are nonpartisan appointees. County Election Board Secretaries are appointed by the State Elections Board on the recommendation of the Senate (currently Democratic).   |
| Oregon         | All election officials are nonpartisan. In most counties an elected County Clerk is the election administrator; but in some more populated counties an appointed Election Director is the election administrator.  |
| Pennsylvania   | The election administrators are hired or appointed by the county government, although the specific entity that appoints them may vary from county to county. Some may be selected by County Election Boards, others by some other branch of county government, though usually approved by a county commission. Some of the officials have worked for the counties for long periods of time (30+ years) through several boards.                           |
| Rhode Island   | A bipartisan Board of Canvassers runs the elections in each county, though day-to-day operations are handled by either the Town Clerk (who may be appointed by a mayor or town manager and sometimes approved by a county legislature or the clerk may be elected) or a Canvassing Clerk selected by the canvassing board. The Canvassing Board is selected by the town legislature. In our data, the Canvassing/Town Clerk is coded as being in charge. |

## APPENDIX Continued

| State          | Information about Selection Method  |
|----------------|---|
| South Carolina | Nonpartisan county election commissions run the elections, but County Election Commission Chairs (All nonpartisan, all appointed by County Boards of Election) are in charge. A director runs the election when there is no Board Chair, but normally the director just does the administrative duties for the Board Chair. The Director is hired by the Board or other county officials. Occasionally there are temporary vacancies of Board Chairs and Directors run the election.  |
| South Dakota   | Elected partisan position (County Auditor)  |
| Tennessee      | Administrators of Elections (All appointed by the Boards of Elections which are selected by the legislature). <i>Currently, a board comprised of 2 Republicans and 3 Democrats appoints a Democratic election administrator.</i>  |
| Texas          | In most counties a partisan and elected County Clerk is the election administrator, but in more populous counties an election administrator is appointed to run elections.  |
| Utah           | An elected position (County Clerk), and almost all are partisan.  |
| Vermont        | “The Town clerk is the presiding officer for town meeting conducted by Australian ballot 17 V.S.A. § 2452(a), while the Town moderator is the presiding officer for town meeting where voting takes places from the floor. 17 V.S.A. § 2658. In either event it is the board of civil authority (BCA, which is comprised of the selectpersons, town clerk and justices residing in town) that is the body statutorily charged with the actual conduct of elections. 17 V.S.A. § 2451. Even on the BCA the clerk serves more as an administrative clerk, although he/she does have an equal vote. If the BCA does not have at least three members from each major political party, and there is a request by the party committee or by three or more voters, the selectboard must appoint additional members to bring the underrepresented party’s membership on the board to three. In that instance the selectboard must appoint the additional members from a list submitted to it by the underrepresented party.” <sup>10</sup> (We code the BCA.) |
| Virginia       | Each county has a bipartisan electoral board that appoints a nonpartisan General Registrar. The way in which the duties are divided between the Registrar and various board members varies by county. There is a good deal of case law on the circumstances in which Registrars can be removed from office (never for political reasons).   |
| Washington     | Mostly elected positions (County Auditor), nearly all partisan. <sup>11</sup><br>In King County, there is an Election Director (officially the Director of Records, Elections and Licensing), who is appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the King County Council. An Election Supervisor reports to the Director and is hired by the director. He or she is nonpartisan.   |
| West Virginia  | Elected partisan position (County Clerk)  |
| Wisconsin      | Local election authority is usually shared by an elected partisan County Clerk and a Municipal (township or city) Clerk. We code the County Clerks. In Milwaukee County, there is an appointed election commission (appointed by the county executive).   |
| Wyoming        | Elected partisan position (County Clerk)  |

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