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College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Patrick McDonald

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## Review Committee

Dr. Linda Day, Committee Chairperson,  
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Raj Singh, Committee Member,  
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Mi Young Lee, University Reviewer,  
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer  
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

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Abstract

The Affects of Vote by Mail on Voter Turnout, Cost of Elections, and Ballot Completion  
in the State of Washington from 1992 to 2012

by

Patrick Joseph McDonald

MPA, The Evergreen State College, 1997

BA, Saint Martin's University, 1984

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

Prior research on American elections over the past 2 decades demonstrates a decrease in voter participation and ballot completion, and an increase in election costs. With poll site voting, ballot shortages are common and unscrupulous poll workers are known to deny citizens the right to vote. Voting by mail has proven a viable alternative that reduces or eliminates these electoral challenges. Oregon and Washington State are the only states where elections are conducted completely by mail. Although a number of studies have documented the impact of voting by mail in Oregon elections, only 2 minor studies have been undertaken in Washington. In contrast to highly partisan Oregon, Washington's non-partisan electoral process is considered the future of American elections. The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of voting by mail on voter turnout, cost of elections, and ballot completion in the state of Washington from 1992 to 2012. These outcomes are considered by election administrators and legislators as essential to gauging the benefits of voting by mail over poll-site voting. The theoretical foundation for this study was Downs's voting economy theory, and Fitzgerald's legal-institutional constraint theory. Data collected from the Washington's Secretary of State Office included election results from 36,230,553 Washington voters who participated in either poll-site or vote-by-mail general elections from 1992 through 2012. The time-series design analysis showed that voting by mail increased voter turnout and higher ballot completion than poll site voting but it did not decrease the cost of elections. The implications for social change include informing election administrators and legislators about the value of transitioning to all vote-by-mail elections. Finally, voting by mail enhances the opportunity for citizens to engage in democratic elections, thus influencing government and those who govern.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who work for the cause of free, fair, accessible, and transparent elections. I also honor the hundreds of election workers I had the privilege to work with during the 2005-06 and 2008-09 Iraqi national and provincial election process. Each performed their work with constant threat of harm and death from those who opposed the right of the Iraqi people to elect their leaders. I am especially mindful of 45 Iraqi election workers who lost their lives during my time in Iraq.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Background**

The purpose of this research was to gain a greater understanding of the effect of Washington State's recently implemented all-vote by mail election process on voter turnout, election costs, and ballot completion by analyzing electoral data over a 20-year period from 1992 through 2012. The first time Washington State permitted registered voters to request a permanent absentee ballot without a reason was 1993 (Washington State Secretary of State, 2007). By 2010, the state had entirely switched to all vote by mail elections. Like the state of Oregon, Washington voters embraced vote by mail in large numbers when given the choice, but unlike Oregon's rapid transition to vote by mail, Washington's system was gradually introduced over 18 years. In addition, Oregon's transition to vote by mail has been the subject of more than 20 major studies, whereas Washington has only two of any consequence. This study builds on that previous voter participation research by updating the previous studies while analyzing not only voter turnout, but cost of elections and ballot completion as well. Chapter 1 consists of the background, purpose, research questions, and discussion of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, and scope, and closes with a comment on the significance of the study.

Elections have long been a force for social change. As Shafritz (1993) commented, for many it may be the only interaction a citizen has with influencing or reforming government policy. As Shafritz (1993) notes, by providing an alternative to single-day poll site voting could positively influence voter participation levels, lower the

cost of elections, and increase the ability of voters to complete their ballots at a higher rate than at poll sites.

### **Brief Summary of Related Research**

Selected articles relating to vote by mail are as follows:

1. Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott (2001) provide a revealing look into the impact of vote by mail on the nation's electoral system.
2. Hamilton (2008) analyzes and compares vote by mail and poll site voting from the perspective of the election administrator.
3. Karp, and Banducci (2000), Southwell and Burchett (2000), Southwell (2004) and Southwell (2011), present detailed research into Oregon's vote by mail experience.
4. Magley (1987) and McDonald and Popkin (2001) developed an extensive analysis of voter participation levels among permanent absentee voters.
5. McDonald and Tolbert (2012) contend that the electoral process changed in a vote by mail environment to include the way a voter votes, the impact on electoral costs, and political campaigns.
6. Gerber, et al (2013) present a detailed analysis of the implementation of Washington's gradual transformation from poll sites to all vote-by-mail on the country level.
7. Fitzgerald (2005) presents the institutional theory of voter participation where governmental institutions can impact voter turnout by making voter

registration and the act of voting easier or more difficult through implementation of electional laws and procedures.

8. Downs (1957) presents an economic theory of voter participation where a voter weighs their intention to vote against the cost of voting.

### **Study Significance and Identified Gaps in Literature**

The research for this dissertation is unique in its focus on the under researched Washington State vote by mail election process. It contributes to the body of knowledge for utilization by state and local government policy makers who are considering the implementation of vote by mail within their jurisdictions. While research on Oregon's vote by mail system, the only other state besides Washington without polling sites, has been extensive, only two peer-reviewed studies exist on vote by mail in Washington State. One dealt primarily with the ethical and political motives behind election reform initiatives in the state (Wang, 2006), and the other focused on the underlying transition to vote by mail in Washington State from the perspective of county election administrators (Gerber, et al, 2013). In addition, Washington and Oregon have very different political histories, with Washington having a less partisan and far more open electoral system, as documented in a study by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS, 2012).

Historically, unlike Oregon, Washingtonians have never declared their political party preference and, except for a single primary election in 2004; voters have never been obligated to choose a particular party ballot during a primary election. In addition, Washington State's primary system does not recognize political parties (Washington State Secretary of State, 2007). It advances the top two vote recipients to the general



election. Lastly, Oregon's abrupt transition to vote by mail by statewide ballot initiative in 1994 is in contrast to Washington's gradual and locally based transformation to all vote by mail elections. These differentiating factors provide a strong impetus for further analysis into Washington's experience with vote by mail.

### **Problem Statement**

Chand (1997) noted, "Elections are the lifeblood of democracy" (p. 544). For the average citizen the process of voting "is the only means by which most citizens participate in political decision-making" (Shafritz, 1993, p. 506). The ability of American citizens to vote, while greatly expanded in recent times, continues to have significant challenges during poll-site voting, including long lines, lack of ballots, ill-trained poll workers, and allegations of voter suppression by election workers (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987; Keyssar, 2000; Wilentz, 2005). Vote-by-mail elections may mitigate many of the challenges of poll site voting, while providing a more convenient and cost effective way to vote (Southwell, 2011).

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the effect of vote by mail on voter turnout, cost of elections, and ballot completion by analyzing electoral data in Washington State over a 20-year period from 1992 through 2012. The data is divided into two separate general election series, those being presidential and non-presidential elections. This is done in order to account for the difference in turnout levels between two types of elections (Fitzgerald, 2005).

The study utilized a quantitative based, aggregate, time-series model to explore county and state-level data. Time series design can best track voter behavior over a period of time differentiating between effects observed for the first time and successive experiences of it (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004). The independent variable is the application of vote by mail to the electoral system. The dependent variables are voter turnout, the cost per ballot, and ballot completion rates.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What impact does vote by mail have on voter turnout in Washington State elections compared to poll site voting?

RQ2: Does administration of vote by mail directly impact the cost of running elections compared to poll site voting in the state of Washington?

RQ3: Does voting by mail in Washington State affect a voters decision to fully vote their ballot compared to poll site voting?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Elections are at the core of most theories of democratic representation, accountability, and legitimacy (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller et al, 2008; Shklar, 1991). The research for this dissertation rests on two theories, one concerning the voter and the other the election official administering the election. Both are based on the central proposition that if given the opportunity to vote-by-mail, voters are more likely to participate in the electoral process (Southwell, 2009). This is especially true in non-presidential elections and non-general elections that include elections for local and county officials, special district bond elections, and special elections held to fill a

vacancy (Gerber, et al, 2013) which do not have the same high level of voter turnout as presidential elections. Southwell and Burchett (2000) and Gronke and Miller (2012), while disagreeing on the impact on voter turnout on all mail general elections, do agree that vote by mail elections in Oregon increased voter participation by as much as 20% in off year local or special elections.

One theoretical framework for this study comes the structural-legal-institutional constraint theory (Fitzgerald, 2005; Oliver, 1996; Rusk, 1974) based on the proposition that a potential voter will make a calculated decision to vote based on convenience and personal motivation. While both may appear as separate concepts, they are interrelated in their explanation of voter participation behavior. Rusk (1974) first proffered the legal-institutional model. He noted that when election officials make participation in the electoral process more convenient through decisions and actions, voters are more likely to participate. This includes easing of voter registration restraints, lifting of voting restrictions, proximity of poll sites to the voter, longer hours at poll sites, and more voting booths. All have an important impact on “influencing and shaping voter behavior” (Rusk, 1974, p. 1044). This theory reflects the level of voter registration and turnout (Oliver, 1996; Fitzgerald, 2005). As Timpone (1998) noted in his analysis of the legal-institutional model, “even minor differences in the ease of voting and distance to the polling place significantly affects voter turnout” (p. 146). Given this research by Rusk (1974) and Timpone (1998), providing a ballot hand delivered to someone’s place of residence is the most convenient access to voting any voter can have outside of Internet voting.

The other theory is Downs' (1957) economic theory of voter participation. Scott (2000) noted in his analysis of Downs' (1957) theory, “people calculate the likely cost and benefits of any action before deciding what to do” (p. 126). There is a substantial amount of electoral research on voter turnout and transactional costs. Luechinger, Rosinger, and Stutzer (2007) note that Downs (1957) theory, while plausible, does not take into consideration that a candidate or issue may drive someone to participate above and beyond mere convenience and personal cost of participation. It is the voters “individual benefit from the act of voting or from political participation in general” (p. 169) which also prompts people to vote.

Still, it is Downs (1957) cost and benefit of voting theory that determines whether someone saved money, time, and convenience, while calculating their decision to vote. It is theorized that vote by mail does all this and more (Geys, 2006; Hortala-Vallve & Esteve-Volart, 2011; Rosenfield, 1994). Geys (2006) sums up the concept by noting that a voter “pursues his self-interest by choosing in a free and rational manner between diverse alternatives of which he has calculated the costs and benefits” (p. 12). In that same vein, Southwell and Burchett (2000) make an important point concerning voter participation,

Proponents of all-mail elections assume that easing the burdens of voting will result in greater participation. Primarily, this argument arises from theoretical models of the decision to vote that weigh the collective and individual benefits of voting against the costs of voting (Piven & Cloward, 1988; Teixeira, 1992; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). (p. 72).

### **Nature of Study**

Quantitative analysis was the basis of the research and analysis for this dissertation. Quantitative methodology is a consistent method of analyzing large amounts of aggregate numerical data from a variety of sources, especially concerning election results (Kousser 1980). The researcher analyzed the overall number of registered voters, voter turnout, cost per ballot, and ballot completion rates using a quantitative time-series model and aggregate county and state-level data. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) recommended using time-series design when analyzing voter statistics in quantitative research. Time series design can best track voter behavior over time differentiating between effects observed for the first time, successive experiences of it, and the introduction of a variable (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2005). Time-series design is ideal to use “to uncover a statistical relationship between a reform or set of reforms and voter turnout” (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller, et al, 2008, p. 6). Most significant is the use of time-series design by those who studied the impact of Oregon’s transition to vote by mail on voter turnout and election costs. Nearly every major study on the subject used time series design as a major element in reporting research results (Bergman & Yates, 2011; Gerber, et al, 2013; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008; Karp & Banducci, 2000; Loyal, 2007; Richey, 2008).

Election data for this research was readily available and highly verifiable. For statewide data on voter turnout, the Office Election Division of Washington's Secretary of State maintains an exhaustive list of voter turnout data online without the need for access codes or permission for use (Washington Secretary of State's Office, 2013). A

legislative body designated by state and local law certifies all election results on the Washington State Secretary of State website. Each entity, which provided the data for this study, produced and published their election data and results online in an easily retrievable format. Verification of data comes from both checking the final numbers from county election results with those reported by the state, to include the official elections abstracts produced by the state and county election officials and verified by legal certification. Each of the 39 counties in the state of Washington maintains records on the cost of elections and ballot completion. State law, enacted in the 1980s, requires data on election costs and ballot completion to be uniform and readily available to anyone who requests it. None of the data is published instruments and reliability evidence is available by obtaining official certification documents Washington's Secretary of State's Office, and each County Auditor's office.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Absentee Ballot:* A ballot issued to a voter, either in person or by mail, who is unable to appear at a polling site to vote on Election Day. For this research, absentee ballot differs from the term "vote by mail" in that one can choose to obtain an absentee or choose to vote at a polling site. Vote by mail is a system of voting where all voters receive ballots by mail and there are no polling sites (Bealey, 1999; Thompson-Hill & Hill, 2001).

*Ballot:* A means by which officially recorded votes by a voter are placed either in a ballot box or in envelope to be mailed or dropped off at a designated drop-off box or election office (Bergman & Yates, 2011, p. 116; Shafritz, 1993, p. 32).

*Ballot Box:* Voted ballots, placed in a sealed lock box, are available at polling sites (Bealey, 1999, p. 26).

*Congress:* The legislative branch of the U.S. federal government created by Article I of the U.S. Constitution and composed of the House of Representatives and Senate. Does not refer to state level legislatures (Thompson-Hill & Hill, 2001, p. 57).

*County Auditor:* The elected county officer in the state of Washington who manages and oversees the execution of elections along with other duties prescribed by law (Washington State Division of Elections, 2011).

*County Clerk:* The elected county officer in the state of Oregon who manages and oversees the execution of elections along with other duties prescribed by law (Shafritz, 1993, p. 126).

*Disenfranchise:* The legal or procedural process of taking away a person's right to vote (Thompson-Hill & Hill, 2001, p. 79).

*Early Voting:* The process of voting at a designated polling center or by absentee ballot prior to Election Day (Gronke, et al, 2003, p. 640; Stein & Vonnahme, 2011, p. 307).

*Election – General:* Regularly scheduled elections in which political office holders are selected on even numbered years (Gerber, et al, 2013, p. 92; Shafritz, 1993, p. 161).

*Election – Primary:* An election held prior to a general election where candidates are winnowed down to either the representatives of their respective political parties

(Oregon) or the top two vote getters regardless of political affiliation (Washington and non-partisan elections) (Shafritz, 1993, p. 388).

*Electorate*: Those who are legally eligible, qualified, and registered to vote (Thompson-Hill & Hill, 2001, p. 89).

*Fraud – Electoral*: Alteration or misrepresentation of the results of an election (Jacoby, 2008, p. 681).

*Fraud – Voter*: Misrepresentation of a voter, or manipulation of the balloting process by an individual or group of voters (Lott, 2006, p. 2).

*Help America Vote Act (HAVA)*: A Congressional Voting Reform Act passed after the controversial 2000 Presidential Election. According to Nolo's Plain-English On-Line Dictionary, "This law made federal funding available to states to update their voting procedures and equipment, created the Election Assistance Commission to provide information on federal elections, and specified uniform technology and administration standards for federal elections" (Nolo, 2013, p. 64).

*Hybrid Electoral Systems*: A system of poll site voting and vote by mail that run side by side in a single election (Gronke, 2005).

*Initiative*: A process that allows citizens in some states to enact local or state laws bypassing the legislative process (Bealey, 1999, p. 166).

*Legislature*: One of the three branches of local, state, and federal government that are empowered to enact write, vote on, or make laws (Burgan, 2013, p. 57).

*Low-Intensity Election*: Non-primary and general elections held either regularly or by special legislative designation. Known as special elections, the subject is usually



limited and, for the most part, consists of special bond elections in support of special taxing districts (fire, medical, and cemetery), school districts, or to fill a vacant elected office (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008, p. 437).

*Non-Partisan Election:* Non-partisan elections are those in which the candidates are not nominated by a partisan primary and do not legally represent a political party. Most often used for local or judicial elections (Karp & Banducci, 2000, p. 226).

*Political Campaign:* Organized activities used in order to convince the electorate to support and vote for a candidate or political issue (Burgan, 2013, p. 56).

*Political Party:* An organization that attempts to achieve political power through the election of its members to public office in order to advance the political philosophy of the organization and its membership (Thompson-Hill & Hill, 2001, p. 236).

*Poll Book or List:* A book or list of all legally registered voters of a particular precinct or designated electoral region. In the states of Oregon and Washington, the voter registration list is maintained by the Secretary of State's office, and updated by county election officials (Shafritz, 1993, p. 371; Washington State Secretary of State, 2007).

*Poll Site or Place:* The official government designated site where voting can take place. Election board workers at the site keep voting lists for that particular polling place while the election is underway. Polling sites, for the most part, are set up in government facilities, such as schools or courthouses, churches, and armories (Burgan, 2013, p. 57; Thompson-Hill & Hill, 2001, p. 238).

*Precinct:* A geographic region designated as a polling place on Election Day and comprising between 200 and 500 registered voters. Managed by the county election

offices, it is a designated geographical area for a campaign or political party organizing (Shafritz, 1993, p. 376).

*Provisional Ballot:* A ballot used at a poll site to record a vote where the legal status of the voter clears or is challenged. The counting or rejections of ballots are contingent on further research of the voter rolls (Washington State Division of Elections, 2011).

*Referendum:* An electoral process by which laws and constitutional amendments are submitted to the electorate for their approval or rejection. Either the legislative authority presents it to the voters or it is placed on the ballot by a petition signed by a specified number of registered voters.

*Registered Voter:* An individual who has established their qualification to vote legally in an election (Shafritz, 1993, p. 416).

*Residual Vote:* A residual vote is where a voter did not, by choice or mistake, vote in every race or issue on a ballot. The non-voted races or issues are an undervote or residual vote.

*Rolling Election Day:* The term used to define a time starting when a mailed ballot is received by a voter and Election Day when the ballot must be returned to the county election office. This is different from a traditional election involving single day poll site voting (Pirch, 2012, p. 711).

*Secretary of State:* In the states of Oregon and Washington, it is a constitutional officer elected by the people of their respective states. Among the many duties assigned

to the office is the responsibility of overseeing state and local elections (Washington State Division of Elections, 2011).

*Turnout:* The overall number of voters who turned out for a particular election as opposed to the total number of those registered to vote (Washington State Secretary of State, 2007).

*Undervote:* The same as a residual vote, the residual vote is where a voter did not, by choice or mistake, vote in every race or issue on a ballot. The non-voted races or issues are an undervote or residual vote (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004, p. 381; Sinclair & Alvarez, 2004, p. 1).

*Vote by Mail:* Different from absentee voting, vote by mail for this research project concerns all vote by mail elections where there is no poll site and ballots come to the voter through the mail (Gerber, et al, 2013, p. 91; Southwell & Burchett, 1998, p. 346).

### **Assumptions**

For this research, it is assumed that vote-by-mail elections provide the voter with greater convenience than traditional single-day, single visit poll sites. The primary elements of this framework are convenience of voting, the extended period of time a voter has possession of their ballot prior to Election Day, and the fact that the ballot delivered to the assigned registered voter will come to their home instead of the voter coming to an assigned polling site. It is assumed that the participating voter will recognize their ballot for what it is, fill the ballot out, and return it back to their local election office either in person or by mail prior to 8:00 p.m. on the given Election Day as

prescribed by Washington State law, RCW 29A.40.091(4) (Elections by Mail Act, 2011). Another assumption is that a voter decides whether to vote before they decide how to vote (Qvortrup, 2006). It is also important to note that when voting by mail the voter has to make a deliberate decision not to vote and discard the ballot as opposed to just forgetting or ignoring Election Day and not stopping by a poll site (Southwell, 2011).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Specifically addressed in this study is the effect of vote by mail on voter turnout, election administration costs, and ballot completion. These three concepts, basic to democratic theories of elections, are the focus of the majority of research on the subject, and are of highest interest to election administrators as documented by previous studies of Oregon's vote by mail elections (Southwell, 2004; Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008). A tight and focused purpose was maintained in order to keep the research clearly defined and not prone to endless extension and research creep. Issues relating to voter disenfranchisement, voter fraud, and growing partisanship in elections, along with the theories behind each, while important and worthy of study, would significantly alter the original intent of this research.

### **Limitations**

As Page (2008) notes, "External validity refers to whether the results of a laboratory experiment can be extended to a real world situation" (p. 56). In this research, no laboratory experiment was needed since the archival data is aggregate, public and "real world". The Secretary of State and local election officials lawfully certify election and budgetary data.

Internal validity consists of avoiding “experimental procedures, treatments, or experiences of the participants that threaten the researcher’s ability to draw correct inferences from the data about a population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 162). With time-series design, cause precedes effect in temporal precedence, and that there are related cause and effect with no other plausible alternative explanation for observed covariation or nonspuriousness (Brewer, 2000). The use of aggregate numbers for election turnout and ballot completion goes a long ways to counter threats to internal validity. The ten elections analyzed and the number of registered voters, 36.5 million, yields a large level of comparisons. Philosopher Edmund Burke noted, “The greater the number of comparisons we make, the more general and the more certain our knowledge is likely to prove” (Burke, 2001, p. 54).

The threat of bias is understood, but every effort was made to counter bias. As the researcher for this dissertation, I am closely involved with the implementation of vote by mail in the state of Washington. Realizing the challenges of bias upfront, having an uninterested third party review the study, and listening closely to the input of the dissertation committee was a major counter to bias and any threat to internal validity. Finally, not using a sample, and not picking and choosing which data to use is also important to maintaining an unbiased analysis of the data.

Use of aggregate data along with the confidential nature of voting contributes greatly to a high level of confidence that no individual voter or set of voters are personally identifiable and their confidentiality compromised. At no time was voter identification information obtained from county and state election officials. There was no

recruitment of human participants, nor was permission necessary to gather the publically available election and budgetary data from state or county officials.

### **Significance**

This research is unique in its focus on the under researched Washington State all vote by mail election process. It contributes to the body of knowledge for utilization by other state and local governments interested in the effects of vote by mail on voter turnout, election costs, and ballot completion. Research on Oregon's vote by mail system, the only other state without polling sites, is extensive, in contrast to Washington State where only two peer-reviewed studies exist. In addition, while the two states share a common vote by mail system, they have very different political histories. Historically, Washington's political system is decidedly less political than Oregon's. Except for a single election in 2004, voters in Washington State do not choose a particular party ballot, as is the case in Oregon. In addition, Washington State's primary system does not recognize political parties. The Washington State primary advances the top two candidates to the general election regardless of party affiliation. Lastly, while a vote by the people of Oregon on a statewide ballot initiative abruptly transitioned Oregon to vote by mail in 1994, Washington gradually transitioned to vote by mail on the county level starting in 1993. The lightly researched and unique political experience provided a sound basis to research the effect of vote by mail on Washington's electoral system.

### **Social Change Implications**

Elections are a dynamic expression of societal will and have long been a force for social change (Rogers, et al, 2012). For the average citizen voting in elections provide the

only input into government policy reform (Shafritz, 1993). As Shklar (1991) noted, the simple act of voting is that which the edifice elected government is built on and from which it gains its legitimacy. Providing a more convenient alternative to the challenges of poll site voting has the potential to positively influence voter participation, lower the cost of elections, and provides voters with greater opportunity to complete their ballots at a higher rate than voting at poll sites (Gerber, et al, 2013).

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 focused on the research that analyzed the effects of vote by mail on voter turnout, election costs, and ballot completion in Washington State. The analysis included two different general election cycles separately consisting of presidential Election and non-presidential Election elections from 1992 – 2012. Utilizing a quantitative time-series design analysis, overall voter turnout was compared poll site voting with vote by mail. Poll-site voting continues to operate under significant challenges including long lines on Election Day, lack of ballots, and denial of the right to vote, ill-trained election workers, and charges of voter suppression by unscrupulous election workers. Many of the problems of poll site voting mentioned above may result in mitigation with implementation of all vote by mail elections (Page & Pitts, 2008).

A gap in the literature exists. Oregon's experience with vote by mail has been highly analyzed compared to that of Washington. Election data for this research is readily available and highly verifiable. Verification of data comes from checking the final numbers from official elections abstracts produced by the election commissions and legally certified. In the end, the purpose of this study is to provide election

administrators, government policy planners, and legislators with an alternative to the challenges of poll site voting. This could positively influence voter participation, decrease the cost of elections, and contribute to the ability of voters to complete more of their ballots at a higher rate than at poll sites (Gerber, et al, 2013).



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

Chand (1997) noted, “Elections are the lifeblood of democracy” (p. 544). Dunleavy and O’Leary (1987), and Shafritz (1993) commented that the process of voting “is the only means by which most citizens participate in political decision-making” (Shafritz, 1993, p. 506). Wilentz (2005) and Keyssar (2000) noted that the ability of American citizens to vote, while greatly expanded in recent times, continues to have significant poll-site challenges, including long lines, lack of ballots, ill-trained election workers, and allegations of voter suppression by election workers. Vote-by-mail elections can mitigate many the challenges of poll site voting, but as Southwell (2011) and Hamilton (2008) warned, it is not a panacea to counter falling voter participation and increasing election costs. The purpose of this research is to gain a greater understanding of the effect of vote by mail on voter turnout, the cost of elections, and ballot completion by analyzing electoral data from two sets of general elections in Washington State over a 20-year period from 1992 through 2012. The year 1993 marks when Washington State permitted registered voters to request a permanent absentee ballot without a reason. By 2010, the state had transitioned to all vote by mail elections.<sup>1</sup> The major sections of Chapter 2 include strategies to obtain literature, theoretical and conceptual framework used in this research, and a review of the literature.

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of a small number of precincts that continued to operate in Pierce County until 2011.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature search for this dissertation included an exploration of public policy, public administration, electoral, and political science peer reviewed journals at the Washington State library, libraries at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, Walden University, The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, and the U.S. Library of Congress. Computer generated databases utilized were PROQuest Central, Academic Search Complete, Political Science Complete, Sage full-text collection, and Google Scholar. Main search words (and variations thereof) used to generate results include: election reform, vote by mail, absentee voting, convenience voting, election cost, voting barriers, overseas voting, election turnout, electoral fraud, postal voting, disenfranchisement, ballot roll off (drop off, residual), voter education, voting eligibility, hybrid elections, political discourse, and early voting . The results generated over 165 relevant articles which, after review, 114 articles are included in this research. The literature review covers early research on the subject of vote by mail by Magley (1987) and the economic theories of voting by Downs (1957) to the most recent analysis of county level implementation of vote by mail in Washington State by Gerber, et al (2013). While most of the literature involves peer reviewed journal articles, there are also books, conference reports, and post-election studies. None of the research involved articles from newspapers, magazines, or non-attributable documents.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Elections are at the core of most theories of democratic representation, accountability, and legitimacy (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008; Shklar, 1991).

The assumption guiding the research for this dissertation rests on the theory that if given the opportunity and convenience of vote-by-mail, voters are more likely to participate in the electoral process at higher levels. This is especially true in off-year elections, non-presidential, and other special elections (Gronke, et al, 2007). Southwell and Burchett (2000) and Gronke and Miller (2012), agree that the effect on low intensity and off year elections in Oregon has been an increase in voter participation by as much as 20%.

Gerber, et al (2013) take it a step further in that while they agree that the effect of all mail elections on turnout in Oregon may be have mixed results, their analysis of county-based elections in Washington State demonstrate that it has a positive effect in voter turn-out regardless of the electoral type.

In the case of this research, the concept is that vote-by-mail elections provide the voter with greater convenience of voting that is not available at single-day, single visit poll site voting. The primary elements of the vote by mail framework are convenience of voting, the extended period of time a voter has possession of their ballot prior to Election Day. The fact is that a ballot is delivered to the assigned registered voter at their home instead of the voter coming to an assigned polling site by either car, bus, or on foot.

Two social participative theories provide the theoretical framework for this study, one grounded in the action of the election official and the other on the response of the voter. These theories are the structural-legal-institutional constraint theory of election administration (Fitzgerald, 2005; Oliver, 1996; Rusk, 1974) and Down's (1957) rational choice economic participation of voting theory. Both the legal-institutional and rational choice theory focus on participation in the electoral process being made more convenient

by election officials. This should have an important impact on “influencing and shaping voter behavior” (Rusk, 1974, p. 1044). Downs (1957) economic theory of voter participation provides much of the theory behind research on convenience voting defined by Scott (2000) as a process where “people calculate the likely cost and benefits of any action before deciding what to do” (p. 126). In the end, the theoretical models of the decision to vote weigh the collective and individual benefits of voting against the costs of voting (Timpone, 1998; Southwell, 2009).

### **Literature Review**

The act of voting is a process of dynamic social expression, a duty to one’s self and society, as opposed to a strictly instrumental process of casting a vote or interacting with a government agency (Powell, 2000; Shklar, 1991; Rogers, et al, 2012). Elections are a “critical democratic institution which identifies a contemporary nation-state as a democratic political system” (Powell, 2000, p. 4). Widespread participation in the electoral process is crucial to a vibrant representative political system (Fitzgerald, 2005). The simple act of voting is the ground upon which the edifice of elected government ultimately rests and is central to our entire system of government (Shklar, 1991). As Powell (2000) noted, “The election brings representative agents from all the factions in the society into the policy making arena” (p. 6), and in general gives people influence over policy and those who make it. It is, for many, the only means to effect civic decision-making for the vast majority of people (Shafritz, 1993) and broadens citizen involvement in public life (Zatepilina, 2010). Still, valid concerns exist that elections do not represent the will of the people, just those who take part in the process because of

their greater socio-economic means. As Berinsky (2001), Fitzgerald (2005), and Slater (2007) note, elections do not fully represent the electorate. The underserved or underprivileged populations are left out creating a distorted picture of the will of the people in general. With vote by mail there is an increase in voting by those who rarely vote especially among the poor (Qvortrup, 2006; Gerber, et al, 2013). While vote by mail may help bring low propensity voters into the process, it does not directly affect the outcome of an election except in close races (Sled, 2007).

Prior research demonstrates that voting by mail, as opposed to poll site voting, has gained a strong foothold in the United States. The rates of postal voting participation doubled nationally from 14% of the electorate in 2000 to 30% in 2008 (Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008). It is unlikely that vote by mail, as an election reform, will not go away any time soon (Giammo & Brox, 2010). What is not entirely clear is the effect of vote by mail on voter turnout rates, administrative costs of running elections, and ballot completion when compared to poll site voting. Oregon's experience with all vote by mail elections provides the basis for most of the existing literature (Gerber, et al, 2013).

In order to gain a greater understanding of how the implementation of vote by mail in Washington State effects the electoral process, this chapter includes a history of vote by mail, an exploration of the literature what prompts people to vote in general. The analysis included the impact of vote by mail on election turnout, election costs, ballot completion, concerns of fraud, effects on political campaigns, and impact on political discourse.

## History of Vote by Mail

While no-excuse vote by mail is a relatively recent phenomenon, the initial method of using absentee ballots is not new (Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008). The practice has its roots in 17<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts where voters, for fear of attack from local tribes, could cast a ballot from the security of their homes (Keyssar, 2000). In 1850, the Oregon territorial government provided for the first publically sanctioned ability of men<sup>2</sup> to cast a ballot while away from their community. It was the U.S. Civil War where absentee balloting took hold on a large scale. Soldiers, away from home, were able to cast a ballot (Gronke 2008, Keyssar 2000, and Loyal 2007). As soon as the war was over, most legal provisions allowing soldiers to vote absentee expired (Alvarez, et al, 2011).

During World War I, nearly every state provided for soldiers to vote outside their communities. As with the Civil War, those provisions expired at the end of the conflict. It was not until the passage of the federal Soldier Voting Act of 1942 that a soldiers' right to vote abroad became a federal law. The Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955 added civilian employees living abroad to the 1942 act (Smith, 2009). Once the war was over, 20 states continued to allow absentee voting for those “who could demonstrate a work-related reason (and in a few cases, any reason) for being absent on Election Day” (Keyssar, 2000, p. 151).

Still, no-excuse absentee voting did not become part of the electoral landscape until authorized by the California legislature in 1979 (Qvortrup, 2006). In April 1977, responding to the relaxation of absentee restrictions, Monterey County, California mailed

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<sup>2</sup> Only white males over the age of 21 could cast a ballot in Oregon in 1857.

out over 44,000 ballots for a tax proposal referendum, marking the first time an all-vote by mail election happened. In 1980, San Diego County mailed over 430,000 ballots in an election witnessed by dozens of observers from other states, including the states of Washington and Oregon. By 2008, more than 42% of Californians voted by mail. That increased to 62% by the May 2009 election (Arceneaux, et al, 2011). Colorado loosened its absentee rules in 1991 allowing counties to conduct tax and referendum elections entirely by mail. In 2000, the legislature authorized no excuse absentee voting followed up with permanent vote by mail in 2008. In just seven years, from 2004 to 2011, the rate of voluntary vote by mail went from 11% to 70% (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011).

Nationwide, by 2005, 27 states provided for no excuse absentee voting, tripling in number in only 15 years (Fitzgerald, 2005). The percentage of voters who cast their ballots away from traditional polling sites went from 8% in 1996 to 18% in 2010 (Stewart, 2011). Currently eight states offer permanent absentee voting, seven others offer permanent absentee to those who meet certain criteria, and 17 states allow certain elections to be held by mail by 2013 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013) which does not including Washington and Oregon who vote entirely by mail.

The Washington State legislature authorized absentee voting in 1917 and maintained the law with few changes until 1965 when the state legislature authorized county election officials to conduct vote by mail elections in precincts of less than 200 voters (Pirch, 2012). The 1974 legislature authorized no excuse absentee voting but a voter had to request a ballot for every election. That changed in 1985 when disabled and elderly voters could be on permanent absentee rolls. Vancouver, Washington was the first

city in the state to run an entire election by mail in 1984 (Magley, 1987). Then in 1993, the legislature authorized anyone to permanently vote by mail (Washington State Secretary of State, 2007). By 1996, Washington led the nation in the percentage of absentee ballots requested, with 18% of the electorate requesting a ballot compared to California's 17% and Oregon's 14% (Oliver, 1996). In 2002, five rural eastern Washington counties drew their precinct populations down to below 200 registered voters each in order to conduct all their elections by mail. That prompted the 2005 legislature to authorize any county to conduct all their elections by mail if authorized by the respective county commissions. Within a matter of weeks, 23 other counties joined the original five in conducting elections entirely by mail leaving 11 counties with a hybrid mail and poll site electoral process (Gerber, et al, 2013; Washington State Secretary of State, 2007).

It is clear that when given the choice to vote either at polling sites or by mail, Washington voters made their preference known from 1993 to 2008 as more and more of the voting population transitioned to permanent absentee. In 2000, 55 percent chose vote by mail. That number rose to 70 percent by 2004 (Gerber, et al, 2013) and increased to 90 percent in 2006 (Gronke, et al, 2007). Still in 2004, Washington's hybrid system was a major cause of concern in the aftermath of the closest Governor's race in U.S. history and the judicial challenges that followed (Southwell, 2011). While the margin of victory was a mere 153 votes, the number of votes cast by more than 2,400 convicted felons who did not have their voting rights restored, three dead people, and more than 2000 questionable provisional ballots cast at polling places clearly demonstrated the weakness of the hybrid system (Gronke, 2005). The election signaled a critical juncture for Washington's



electoral process. It would either transition to all polls or all vote by mail but it was no longer tenable to continue both. The popularity of vote by mail and difficulties with hiring poll workers tilted the decision by state and local officials towards vote by mail instead of poll site voting. By 2011, only one county still conducted a hybrid electoral process when the Governor signed Senate Bill 5124 into law requiring only voting by mail in all counties. The 2011 primary election was the first held entirely by mail (Gerber, et al, 2013).

Oregon, like Washington, also adopted absentee voting at the onset of World War I, but did not expand the system until the Legislature authorized local non-partisan and initiative elections to be entirely run by mail in 1981 (Harris, 1999). In 1982, Portland, Astoria, and Albany, Oregon ran school district bond elections entirely by mail (Magley, 1987). The landmark event that heralded the introduction of vote by mail in a partisan election was the resignation of Oregon Senator Bob Packwood on October 1, 1995. The Oregon State Legislature authorized the Secretary of State to fill the vacancy through an all vote by mail election. The vote, held in January 1996, made Oregon the first state to hold a federal election entirely by mail. That followed in March 1996 with the presidential primary and in November 1997 with an initiative vote on assisted suicide, all vote by mail (Southwell & Burchett, 2000; Southwell, 2009; Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008). The legislature attempted to institute all vote by mail elections in 1995 only to have it vetoed by Governor John Kitzhaber because he felt the concept needed more analysis. Later that year, Oregon voters countered the governor's veto with

the approval of Proposition 60 by more than 70 percent making vote by mail permanent for all elections in the state (Harris, 1999).

To gain a greater understanding of voter turnout, it is important to examine the literature on what prompts people to choose to participate in the electoral process especially since it has never been easier for a voter to participate in the electoral system, as it is now in states like Washington and Oregon (Giammo & Brox, 2010). The percentage of those turning out to vote has steadily decreased over the past 40 years even though the overall number of voters participating has steadily increased with the growth in population (Fitzgerald, 2005; Harrelson, 2012; McDonald & Popkin, 2001).

The reasons why people do not register to vote include a feeling of disconnection from the political parties, the electoral process, and candidates, and a low level of trust in government (Geys, 2006; Harrelson, 2012; Timpone, 1998; Trenchart, 2011). Concern about political corruption and confusion with voting procedures are also reasons (Harrelson, 2012). As Shklar (1991) noted, for some, the act of voting is a meaningless gesture in support of a political system that is indifferent to their concerns. There is a segment of the population that will never turn out to vote, no matter the issue, candidate, or cause (Berinsky, Burns, et, 2001; Gronke & Miller, 2012).

For those already registered to vote, more esoteric reasons for not voting are numerous, but normal. Trying to balance home, work, childcare, illness, and personal issues are some of the conflicting demands on time of the typical voter (Fitzgerald, 2005; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller, et al, 2008; Southwell, 2011; Stein, et al, 2005). The choice to take part in the electoral process is predicated by social, demographic, and

political characteristics along with political effectiveness, campaign efforts to get out the vote (GOTV), registration laws, availability of voter information, and electoral regulations (Southwell, 2011). The level of political competition has a direct effect on turnout as well (Bergman & Yates, 2011; Geys, 2006; Timpone, 1998; VonSpakovsky, 2010). An article on voter turnout in the winter 1999 edition of *The CQ Researcher* adds to the list of reasons why people did not vote on Election Day. Of those who responded, 63% cited timing or accessibility issues (35% too busy, 11 % unable because of disability, 8% out of town, 9% weather, no transport, and forgot), 18% did not like choices, and 19% had other reasons or did not respond (Cooper, 1999, p. 5). Lastly, and probably most salient to the issue of vote by mail is the location and distance to the polling site (Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008; Karp & Banducci, 2000). As Dyke (2005, p. 5) noted, the distance to the poll site and voter participation cannot be separated. The further the distance, the greater the chance a typical voter would not vote. Still, with that said, the issue of distance impacts those who live in urban areas more than rural since rural residents are used to driving long distances (Gronke, 2008).

### **Making Registration and Voting Easier and More Convenient**

As Smith (2009) notes, “The easier the voting process is, the more voters will be pleased with their voting experiences” (p. 18) and are more likely to vote. In discussing why people chose to, or not to, vote, one cannot disconnect how voter registration and absentee restrictions have on citizen participation in the electoral system (Dyck & Gimpel, 2005; Hanmer & Traugott, 2004; Timpone, 1998). States with liberalized absentee rules and lower registration hurdles have higher rates of turnout (Oliver, 1996),

especially states with low levels of participation in the first place (Karp & Banducci, 2000; Oliver, 1996; Rosenfield, 1994). That includes young people who expect convenience over tradition (Stein & Vonnahme, 2011). Reducing barriers, especially concerning registration and absentee ballot requests, are integral to increasing the numbers of those registered to vote requesting an absentee ballot (Kuttner, 2006; Loyal, 2007). It also counters partisan efforts to dampen voter turnout through poll site intimidation or campaign disinformation (Friedman, 2005). Still, there are those who question whether voting should be made easier and more convenient (Southwell, 2004) or of bringing in uninformed voters who would otherwise not take part (Southwell & Burchett, 1998), especially those unschooled in election law (Stewart, 2011).

### **Voter Turnout, Election Costs, and Ballot Completion**

This section focuses on the effects of vote by mail on turnout, election costs, and ballot completion, central to the research of this dissertation. Those who support or oppose vote by mail list these three aspects of the process that are different when applied to traditional poll site voting and vote by mail (One-hundred and Tenth Congress, 2007). As Gronke (2003) noted,

Oregon's Secretary of State, Bill Bradbury, for example, argues that voting by mail increases turnout and results in more citizens having a stake in their government; results in more thoughtful voting, enhancing the democratic process; offers greater procedural integrity; and finally, saves taxpayer dollars” (p. 8).

It is a popular process that is here to stay. Even opponents to vote by mail acknowledge that the issue is not whether or not implementation of vote by mail

continues, but how best to implement it and maintain voter confidence (Gronke, et al, 2003).

### **Voter Turnout**

Early research on the effects of vote by mail on voter turnout provides mixed results. While Southwell (2011) contends that initial research focused primarily on non-candidate races, Gerber, et al (2013) comment that early vote by mail turnout in California was depressed because only a few isolated precincts were included. That, as well as the lack of a robust voter education effort by county election officials negatively influenced turnout. Still, while turnout depends on a number of factors mentioned previously, some researchers have found that the implementation of all vote by mail elections does have a positive impact on turnout (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Gronke, et al, 2008; Jacoby, 2008; Lott, 2006; Southwell, 2004; Southwell, 2011; The CQ Researcher, 1999). While no two elections are the same (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004), there is little evidence vote by mail suppresses overall turnout (Arceneaux, et al, 2011). For example, in Oregon, only 4.1% of voters surveyed indicated they voted less often and 29% indicated they voted more with all vote by mail elections (Southwell, 2004).

While turnout has increased in most elections, the greatest impact is off year or low intensity elections that include bond or local issues and city council races (Arceneaux, et al, 2011; Gerber, et al, 2013; Karp & Banducci, 2000; Kousser, 1980; Oliver, 1996; Southwell, 2011). Some argue the gains in turnout are short-lived or have a “novelty” effect which wears off after time (Giammo & Brox, 2010; Gronke, 2005; Magley, 1987; Sled, 2007), but Qvortrup (2006) counters by noting, “Contrary to some

fears, this higher level of turnout does not generally decline once the novelty of postal voting wears off” (p. 1). The novelty contention is refuted by data gathered in the aftermath of elections in Oregon and Washington over a ten-year period demonstrating that increased voter turnout is consistent (Gerber, et al, 2013; Gronke & Miller, 2012; Monroe & Sylvester, 2011; Southwell, 2004; Southwell & Burchett, 1998). The first Oregon all vote by mail election in 1998 had a turnout rate of 67% placing it in the top ten in turnout among the states (Jamieson, et al, 2002). That number steadily rose to 83% by the 2012 election. In Colorado, vote by mail boosted turnout over 10 years of elections by 15% (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011). Increases in California trended anywhere from 4.7% to 7% over a 15-year period (Gerber, et al, 2013). In the 1994 Minnesota primary, statewide poll-site turnout hovered around 27%, but turnout by those who voted by mail increased to 34%. Turnout increased from 8% to 54% in non-candidate initiative elections in Fergus County, Montana. Counties that utilized vote by mail in Washington State’s 1994 primary election averaged 52% compared to 32% for poll site voting (Harris, 1999). Overseas, the turnout boost in Switzerland’s vote by mail elections held between 1970 and 2005 increased 4.1% (Luechinger, et al, 2007) and in Canada at a steady rate of 10% over seven elections (Blais, et al, 2003).

Others argue that when given the choice to vote by mail, those already predisposed to vote by mail chose the process more than those who are not (Giammo & Brox, 2010; Monroe & Sylvester, 2011). It did not increase the likelihood of those not registered to vote to become registered (Oliver, 1996). Better put, vote by mail does more

to retain voters than mobilize non-voters or help in recruitment (Berinsky, et al, 2001; Giammo & Brox, 2010; Hanmer & Traugott, 2004; Slater & James, 2007).

Some consider early analysis on the issue to not be useful because those who chose to vote by absentee already had a high propensity to vote anyway and are not entirely reflective of the population in general (Gerber, et al, 2013). This is not a unanimous opinion. Southwell's (2011, 2005, and 1998) analysis of the Oregon electorate demonstrated an increase in low turnout voters taking part with greater frequency over 13 years with similar results in Washington (Gerber, et al, 2013). Women, disabled, homemakers (Soccer Moms), and those 26-38 increased their propensity to vote when voting by mail (Southwell, 2004).

Research on the impact of vote by mail on turnout among minority communities is also mixed. While Latinos and African-Americans generally vote at lower levels than other ethnic groups, elections held in Denver in November 2004, May 2005, and May 2007 showed both groups voting at higher rates by mail than at poll sites (Southwell, 2010, p. 7). Overall, vote by mail participation increased among African-Americans relative to Caucasians and Hispanics (Lott, 2006, p. 9) while those among the marginalized voted at higher rates with vote by mail (Richey, 2008; Southwell, 2004). Even in Australia, voting among the poor and minority groups increased with the introduction of all vote by mail elections (Qvortrup, 2006). Alvarez, et al (2008) countered with research that demonstrated minorities voted at lower rates when voting by mail in California. As Stein (1998) noted, those in minority and disenfranchised communities will chose what is familiar to the unfamiliar when voting. Still, he did not

find any decrease in minority voting in Oregon's vote by mail elections compared to poll site voting. What sets their research apart from prior analysis on the issue is the sample used. Instead of utilizing data from Washington and Oregon where vote by mail is mandatory, the data is from precincts in states where vote by mail is optional.

An increase in participation with vote by mail is not uniform across key demographics. Those predisposed to vote are usually from higher socio-economic levels (Karp & Banducci, 2000). For Berinsky, Burns, & Traugott (2001) vote by mail may exacerbate electoral stratification as it has apparently done in Oregon according to their research. Nor is the electorate more representative of the voting age population. This is countered by those who contend that vote by mail elections are more accessible and convenient to underrepresented groups (Rosenfield, 1994) and increases in voting for working people, the young (Loyal, 2007) and disabled (Magley, 1987; Qvortrup, 2006; Southwell & Burchett, 1998). In addition, vote by mail is considered fairer and safer for those who participate (Jacoby, 2008), especially voters who have experienced poll site disenfranchisement, and unequal treatment by poll site workers (Dworkin, 2000). One issue researchers agree on is that those who are less residentially stable, who move constantly, are at the highest chance of falling through the cracks in an all vote by mail system if a voter does not personally update their home of record (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Gerber, et al, 2013). While Gronke (2005) cautions that vote by mail should not be a panacea to counter declining participation levels, it is one of many avenues for increasing political dialogue and participation while lowering election costs.



### **Electoral Administration Costs**

One issue researchers, election managers, and budget directors do agree on concerns the decreased cost of running all vote by mail elections compared to poll sites or hybrid elections. Poll sites or hybrid elections can be considerably more expensive to run, depending on the number of races and issues on the ballot (Giammo & Brox, 2010; Loyal, 2007; Southwell, 2011; Southwell & Burchett, 1998;). Decreased costs of election administration are due to not hiring and training poll workers, renting poll sites, purchasing, storing, maintaining, and setting up polling machines. For vote by mail, there are some increased costs mostly associated with higher use of postage, printing of voter instructions, and return envelopes (Harris, 1999), but the “cost of conducting all-mail elections is one third to one half of the amount required for polling place elections” (Southwell & Burchett, 2000, p. 77). Cost savings has become a driving factor for the transition to vote by mail for local governments (Stewart, 2011, p. 2).

A recent study concluded that if the 2008 Colorado general election were conducted by mail, the cost savings would be as high as 45% compared to poll site (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011). In Oregon, the May 1994 poll site election cost \$4.33 per ballot but the May 1995 all vote by mail election cost \$1.24 a ballot (Harris, 1999; Southwell, 2004). By 1998, the state of Oregon saved more than \$3 million with vote by mail compared to poll site elections (Karp & Banducci, 2000). Thurston County, Washington not only experienced higher turn-out in off year elections, but a large drop in the cost from \$8.10 per ballot at poll sites to \$2.87 ballot in 2002 (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008). New Zealand’s first all postal election saved an estimated \$3.6 million (US)

over the cost of poll sites (Karp & Banducci, 2000, p. 224). While in Australia, the cost of running the nation's 1997 constitutional convention delegate election dropped from an anticipated \$60 million (US) poll site election to \$24 million (US) for vote by mail election (Qvortrup, 2006).

It is important to note that when running hybrid elections costs are significantly higher. Hybrid systems require both hiring of poll site election workers and renting poll sites as well as mailing ballots to those who have requested them (Gronke, et al, 2005; Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008; Montjoy, 2010). The hybrid system in Washington's 2004 gubernatorial contest was a major cause of controversy in the aftermath of the nation's closest Governor's race in U.S. history (Gerber, et al, 2013). The controversy and costs associated with the ensuing court fight set the stage for the rapid transfer to vote by mail in the state (Southwell, 2011, p. 983). In the end, while costs can be a driving factor in the switch to vote by mail, Berinsky (2005) cautions that one should not only concentrate on saving money but also "on the less perceptible costs of becoming engaged with the political world" (p. 485). While voter turnout and election costs have had their fair share of documented research, the issue of ballot completion, the subject of the next section, does not.

### **Ballot Completion**

Ballot roll-off or undervoting happens when a voter does not vote in every race on their ballot (Bullock & Dunn, 1996). Roll off rates vary by circumstance, to include voter fatigue, ballot confusion, and ballot length (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004; Saltman, 2008; Southwell, 2009). An analysis of judicial races in Georgia and Illinois listed at the end of

a ballot and Illinois (Streb, et al, 2009), and congressional races in presidential election years (Wattenberg, et al, 2000) have demonstrated that lack of voter education and limited time to complete a ballot at the polling site are major factors in undervoting.

Vote by mail can have a mitigating effect on diminishing ballot roll-off due to the proposition that “when voters complete their ballots at home they can take more time and consult reference materials if they are confused by their choices” (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011, p. 27). On average, a voter has possession of his or her absentee ballot for up to three weeks prior to Election Day. Voters tend to be more deliberate when voting by mail than when being rushed through the process at the poll site with only the information they bring to the polling site to refer to (Southwell, 2009; Gronke, 2008). While higher ballot completion rates are considered a result of a better-informed electorate (Kuttner, 2006; Rosenfield, 1994), the quality of voting is higher and ballot error are lower using vote by mail (Alvarez, et al, 2008; Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Funk, 2005).

While the evidence of greater voter education is strong, it is not conclusive. Southwell and Burchett (1998) noted that in many cases, vote by mail does not bring in the uninformed, but the better-informed voter. Those who tend to undervote are financially underprivileged and poorly educated (Sinclair & Alvarez, 2004). While there is no evidence that vote by mail increases ballot drop off rates (Stewart, 2011), most of the studies on this issue only focus on the state of Oregon where roll off votes are historically low, thus skewing the results (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004). No current analysis of voter roll off exists on Washington’s vote by mail system.

### **Support and Opposition to All Vote by Mail Elections**

Along with the potential of increasing turnout, decreasing election costs, and higher levels of ballot completion, those who support the process also identify strong popular support, stricter and more consistent adherence to election law, overcoming poll site challenges, postal system availability, and strong voter education programs. Critics cite concerns about voter fraud, negative impacts on civic ritual and political discourse, negative effects on campaigns, and last minute political news that is rendered irrelevant by earlier voting. This section will review the literature on those issues.

### **Popularity of Vote by Mail Elections**

There are two paths to measure the popularity of vote by mail: voter surveys and tracking the number of voters who chose between permanent absentee and poll site voting. While few surveys on the popularity of vote by mail exist, those that do center on Oregon with the exception of two nationwide polls. One such survey was a 2008 a state-by-state poll of 9,778 voters that found support for vote by mail lowest among several election reform recommendations. Those recommendations included making Election Day a holiday and Internet voting (Alvarez et al, 2011). Still, while the survey did not gauge overall support or opposition to vote by mail, it was most preferred among the seven recommendations offered. It is interesting to note that vote by mail was supported by a majority of respondents in Oregon (66%) and Washington (53%) demonstrating that among states who have adopted vote by mail as a permanent option the process is supported more highly than the other alternatives. Support for vote by mail was highest among those under 34 years old, African-Americans, Asian, and Hispanics, those who make under \$50,000, and tend to be liberal and Democrat. Still, this survey is at odds

with a 2009 survey of 32,800 voters nationwide that showed 44% support for vote by mail nationwide (Southwell, 2009). Like Alvarez's (2010) survey, states with the highest level of permanent absentee voting also have the highest rate of support.

Also countering Alvarez's (2010) survey is the first poll taken after Oregon adopted all vote by mail elections reflecting a 76% support among Oregon voters (Southwell & Burchett, 1998) to include 77% support among those under 25. A 1998, a survey of Oregon voters hit 76% support for vote by mail (Southwell & Burchett, 1998; Storey, 2001). A 2003 Oregon poll showed 81% support among Oregon voters that cut across all demographic and political persuasions (Stein, et al, 2005). A 1997 poll conducted among Washington voters noted 72% support for vote by mail (Harris, 1999; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008), 22 percentage points higher than the Alvarez (2010) survey.

The personal choice voters make to either vote by mail or by poll site is probably the most accurate gauge of support for one system over the other. As Gronke (2003) noted, when given a choice, the high acceptance levels of vote by mail reflect voter's approval of it. By 2008, he noted that citizens voted with their feet in support of vote by mail with nationwide rates steadily growing from 2000 (14%), 2004 (20%), and 2008 (30%) (Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008). Colorado experienced the highest increase in permanent vote by mail rates from a low of 11% in 2004 to 69% in 2009 (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011). In Pierce County, Washington, vote by mail rates hit a high of 94% in 2010 prior to the county transitioning to all vote by mail elections in 2011 (Gerber, et al, 2013).

Voting by mail is unlikely to diminish given the growing acceptance and support of it among the electorate when given the option (Giammo & Brox, 2010). As Kuttner (2006) noted, no politician or election official would dare oppose it. Gronke (2005) notes that vote by mail does positively influence voter turnout rates but cautions, “Voting by mail is not a panacea for declining participation and should not be adopted solely for this reason” (p. 6).

### **Poll Site Issues and Election Procedure Uniformity**

Some of the challenges of running traditional poll site elections are the recruitment and training of poll workers, site procurement, and long lines of Election Day voters waiting to vote, ballot supply shortfalls, and questionable rule interpretation by temporary poll site workers. Poll sites need to be rented from local community, religious, governmental, or educational institutions, must be handicapped accessible, and, in most cases, at high cost to the local election office (Alvarez & Hall, 2006). Electronic polling machines have a higher level of breakdown than the more reliable centralized ballot-counting machinery at the election headquarters where machine malfunctions can be quickly remedied (Kuttner, 2006). Another issue with poll site elections is potential for ballot shortage that is not the case when registered voters receive individual ballots.

In a 2010 poll, 11% of those surveyed cited long lines at the polls for not voting, especially among minorities (Spencer & Markovits, 2010). Even those who endure long lines feel pressured to vote quickly, even more so when the ballot is full of candidates and ballot initiatives (Fitzgerald, 2005). In many states, voters may not legally spend more than a few minutes at the voting booth before the poll worker can ask them to

complete their work. In the state of Indiana, for instance, a voter can only spend no more than three minutes during a primary and two minutes for a general election, completely at odds with the three-week period of time provided for anyone who votes by mail (Page & Pitts, 2008). In such cases, the temporary poll worker enforces the rule.

As Waring and Waterman (2008) noted, when it comes to the quality of poll workers, much depends on training, retention, and the integrity of citizen-volunteers who may only work twice every two years. The challenge of “having inadequately trained staff at the polling place can lead to inefficiency and long lines, or worse, the unintentional disenfranchisement of voters because of errors” (p. 1). Poll workers, considered the Achilles Heel of the electoral process (Alvarez & Hall, 2006), have a great impact on a voters’ confidence in the fairness and integrity of the election process (Hall, et al, 2008). These same poll workers receive legal authority to decide who can and cannot vote. While most are law abiding and hardworking, there are those whose inherent bias, racial and otherwise, create an atmosphere at the polling center of mistrust especially among minority and foreign-born voters. (Alvarez & Hall, 2006; Page & Pitts, 2008). As Spencer and Markovits (2010) note, the electoral authority invested in trained, professional, and full-time election officials are turned over to two million temporary poll workers, many of whom are poorly trained and ill-equipped (United States General Accounting Office, 2001). With the advent of advanced balloting technology, training of poll workers has become even more critical, even with the average age of a poll worker reaching 72 years old nationwide (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011).

The controversial 2000 presidential election resulted in a number of electoral law changes that further complicate the situation for poll workers who are already dealing with constantly changing technology issues. With evolving technology and legal requirements, errors by poll workers increase exponentially. It is these same poll workers who decide what laws to follow and how to interpret them (Hall, Monson, & Patterson, 2008) and who are sometimes accused of “sabotage, shirking, or discrimination” through voter intimidation (Southwell P. , 2010, p. 2). Worse of all, poll sites and poll workers, who operate in an environment of pressure and quick decisions, create the “optional setting for unconscious bias” (Page & Pitts, 2008, p. 4). All these challenges have led to a dramatic drop in poll worker retention and recruitment across the nation (Montjoy, 2010; Cuciti & Wallis, 2011).

Vote by mail counters many of the challenges of poll site voting. Professional full-time staffs are the only ones who handle voted ballots, there is increased oversight by professional full-time election workers, and electoral laws are closely interpreted and adhered to rather than being left up to temporary poll workers who have a passing knowledge of election law. A 2005 report to the Commission on Election Reform notes, “Analyses of Vote by Mail (VBM) by two separate academic teams concluded that VBM, and absentee balloting systems more generally, result in a more accurate count” (Gronke, 2005, p. 5) when compared to poll site voting. While vote by mail is not a perfect alternative to poll site elections, concentrating the processing and counting of ballots in a single location at the county election office serve to strengthen procedural integrity. Vote by mail also ensures a paper trail where errors are lowest when using a paper ballot as



opposed to poll site based electronic machine voting (Sinclair & Alvarez, 2004). Errors by election officials are dramatically lower in Colorado counties where vote by mail became law in 2010 (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011). Hall, Monson, and Patterson (2008) commented that when the wrong ballots were handed out in a 2006 Orange County poll site election there was no way to catch up to voters as there is when wrong ballots are mailed out. While those who support vote by mail point to the tough issues facing aging and technologically challenged poll workers, those opposed to vote by mail fault the postal system for losing ballots and unreliable service.

### **Postal System Issues**

The postal service can have its own set of challenges since vote by mail is only as reliable as the postal system. This is especially significant in light of a highly mobile population in the U.S. where as many as 43 million people move yearly (Slater & James, 2007). While opponents view postage as a poll tax (Harris, 1999; Storey, 2001), supporters counter by noting that a voter can drop off a completed ballot at predesignated ballot drop off locations or the county elections office (Gronke, 2005) and some counties pay return postage. Opponents to vote by mail claim that the postal system is very porous, losing ballots in small yet significant numbers (Stewart, 2011), that a voter will equate their ballot with junk mail (VonSpakovsky, 2010), and voters would have no idea if their ballot has been processed once mailed to the elections office (Stewart, 2011). To counter these arguments it is important to note that the postal system is in every community and has a global reach (Richey, 2005). Ballot tracking software in Oregon and Washington State allows a voter to verify the acceptance of his or her ballot by

county elections officials (Washington State Secretary of State, 2007). Vote by mail elections also reminds a voter to vote when their ballot arrives by mail, especially in low-intensity elections, and particularly among those who are not regular voters (Gronke, 2008; Kousser & Mullin, 2007). Lastly, during a 2007 Congressional hearing on the issue of vote by mail, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren of California commented that if vote by mail “is good enough and secure enough for the men and women in the military, does it not make sense to extend that right to all eligible voters” (United States House of Representatives, 2007, p. 2). Still, Southwell (2007) notes that it is imperative that a good relationship between election officials and the postal service, an accessible and up to date ballot tracking system, and a strong voter education program be part of any vote by mail regime.

### **Voter Education**

The value of a robust and thorough voter education program during the implementation phase of a new all-vote by mail election system is recommended by Southwell (2009). The program must continue through successive elections to counter a highly mobile population as well as reinforcing election procedures to regular voters (Giammo & Brox, 2010). Such a program has a positive effect on turnout, especially during a transitory period between poll site voting and all vote by mail elections (Bergman & Yates, 2011). Focusing the program on those less likely to vote, the elderly and young helps increase turnout among these groups (Monroe & Sylvester, 2011). Overcoming the challenge of implementing vote by mail will not come with experience, time, or convenience, but by continued and constant contact between election

administrators and voters through their voter education program. Each direct contact by an election official increased the likelihood the person would vote by at least 4%; the effect was especially profound with multilingual instructions (Bergman & Yates, 2011). Still, even the most robust voter education program cannot counter charges of voter and election fraud. That can only happen with a thorough a robust legal and judicial process.

### **Electoral Fraud and Vote by Mail**

As Cuciti and Wallis (2011) note, “Democratic legitimacy is undermined if citizens do not have confidence in the electoral process” (p. 32). Opponents of vote by mail often cite cases of election fraud as a justification to curb the process. They cite a 2008 Survey in the Performance of American Elections that queried voters as to their confidence that their ballot counted. Those who cast poll site ballots are 75% very confident and 19% somewhat confident had a higher level of confidence than mail voters who are 60% very confident and 31% somewhat confident that their ballots counted. The chief concern cited was the probability of lost ballots and electoral fraud (Alvarez, et al, 2011). Deborah Phillips of the Voting Integrity Project, a major critic of vote by mail, notes “The mail-only ballot is an invitation to organize and mechanize fraud” (Storey, 2001, p. 3). Those who administer elections view the issue much differently especially compared to party officials. In Colorado, Cuciti and Wallis (2011) polled every party and county election official and noted that the latter anticipated either no increase in electoral fraud or a decrease in the potential of fraud while more than 60% of party officials predicted an increase.

Another organization critical of vote by mail, the conservative Heritage Foundation, cited a number of abuses of absentee voting in a recent report on the process (VonSpakovsky, 2010). Those cited include one case of voter fraud in a 2007 New Jersey state Senate race and 11 convictions in Alabama that were quickly uncovered and prosecuted. The most notorious was the 1997 Miami Mayoral contest with more than 4,740 absentee ballots thrown out and the election invalidated. In the end, 21 individuals were in jail for falsely witnessing a fraudulent absentee ballot (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller, et al, 2008; Storey, 2001; VonSpakovsky, 2010). Miami police uncovered more 100 absentee ballots in local political boss Alberto Rossi's home. Other cases of absentee ballot fraud alleged to have occurred in Denver, Colorado; Benton Harbor, Michigan; Albany, New York; and Tallahatchie County, Mississippi (Gronke, 2008).

Such fraud by third parties include undue influence, misappropriated or mismailed ballots, vote buying, and coercion that happen at higher rates with vote by mail according to Slater and James (2007), but a 1996 poll conducted in Oregon found that less than 1% felt coerced by a coworker or family member when voting by mail. While intimidation is possible, it is not empirically demonstrated (Southwell & Burchett, 1998). Since 1995, there has been only one prosecuted case of voter fraud in the state of Oregon (United States House of Representatives, 2007). Even abroad, there is little evidence of election fraud. As Professor Matt Qvortrup comments in a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters of the Australian Federal Parliament, the issue

of fraud in vote by mail elections should not be dismissed, but the problem may be greatly overstated (Qvortrup, 2006).

The few cases of voter fraud highlight the importance of strong safeguards, such as those currently in place in both Washington State and Oregon (Harris, 1999). Those include individual signature checks and ballot tracking where the voters' signature and address are individually checked when the ballot is processed (Harris, 1999; Trenchart, 2011) which happens much more rigorously than at poll sites (Gronke, 2005; United States House of Representatives, 2007). Also, election administrators receive returned ballots with outdated or bad addresses and update the address immediately, whereas the traditional way of updating poll books depended more on the voter notifying the election office of an address change which could take up to four years to rectify (Gronke, 2005; Gronke, 2008; Southwell & Burchett, 1998). In the end, while it is important not to dismiss issue of voter fraud, a rigorous process of tracking ballots, signature checks, and address updating will go a long ways to counter the possibility of fraud and provide the trust voters seek in their electoral system. Along with the specter of voter fraud, opponents to vote by mail decry the loss of what they refer to as civic rituals with the closure of polling sites.

### **Impact on Civic Rituals and Political Discourse**

Another concern by opponents of vote by mail is the loss of certain civic rituals and political dialogue with the end of poll sites. While some decry the weakening of the experience in participating in a common civic process and reinforcement of civic values (Burden, et al 2010; Kuttner, 2006; Qvortrup, 2006; Richey, 2005; Storey, 2001; Taylor,

2011; Thompson-Hill & Hill, 2001). Others note the loss of the communal act of voting (VonSpakovsky, 2010) as if voting alone by mail is akin to bowling alone without the assistance of a team, in this case your fellow voters and election workers (Thompson, 2004; Putnam, 2000). Outside of these concerns, no survey data is available on the individual voter's reaction to the loss of the polling place. Still, as Gerber, et al, (2013) note, increased turnout, cost savings, and convenience may outweigh the loss of the social experience of poll site voting as voters adjust to vote by mail.

Concerns raised on the negative impact on political discourse repeat some of the same concerns with the loss of polling sites. Those who counter such concerns focus on the longer time one has to fill out their mailed ballot. It is during that 3-week period of time, from the day the ballot is received until the day it must be turned in to be counted, that voters may engage with coworkers, family, friends, and others, differentiating it from the few minutes a voter has when voting at the polling station (Southwell, 2004). In this case, vote by mail leads to more political discussion and discourse. It does not mean voting alone, but to the contrary, it enhances personal contact over a longer period of time (Qvortrup, 2006; Richey, 2005), especially in the age of social networking (Stein & Vonnahme, 2011). Gronke, et al (2003) note, "Voting is an individual act" (p. 1) no matter how it is done and that the issue of a loss of communal experience is not as apparent as the opponents would have one to believe. As Richey (2005) notes, "Voting by mail makes it is easier for the emotions of a campaign to spur the voter to discussion and action, due to their access to information in a potentially deliberatory setting" (P. 3) when one is holding onto a ballot for three weeks rather than three minutes. In such a

setting, people learn from each other and imitate successful ways of decision-making and engagement in the electoral process (Geys, 2006). As noted earlier, the polling place offers a limited chance for interaction, especially since most states prohibit any type of discussion at the poll site except with polling site personnel. While this could curb politicking, it has a greater unintended effect of squelching public debate far beyond the concerns raised by vote by mail opponents (Page & Pitts, 2008; Richey, 2005). While issues raised by opponents about the loss of polling sites and its impact on political discourse lack documented research, the impact on campaigns is more apparent as campaigns change their strategy in response to a different election timetable.

### **Effects on Political Campaigns**

Opponents of vote by mail have decried the effect of vote by mail on campaign planning and budgets. While research on this issue is minimal and mostly anecdotal (Green & Gerber, 2008; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008), the spread of vote by mail has recently slowed due to concerns about its impact on campaigns and a perceived partisan advantage (Taylor, 2011). While opponents to vote by mail in Oregon cite partisan advantage (Harris, 1999), research that exists on the issue shows no partisan advantage in states like Oregon and Washington that have all vote by mail elections (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004; Gronke, 2008; Southwell, 2004; Stein, 1998).

In order to respond to changes brought on by vote by mail, campaigns need to create a more effective campaign plans (Pirch, 2012), change their outreach program (Stein, 1998), and mobilize earlier (Stein & Vonnahme, 2011). There are concerns that last minute issues raised by campaigns are not considered by those voting early

(Rosenfield, 1994; Storey, 2001) but there is no research available on this issue. Some cite the higher expense of campaigning stretched out over a longer period of time (Berinsky, et al, 2001; Rosenfield, 1994; VonSpakovsky, 2010). Others cite the savings to campaigns that no longer need to expend money mobilizing supporters who have already voted (Green & Gerber, 2008) due to the fact local election offices make daily lists available to party officials of who had already turned in a ballot (Oliver, 1996; United States House of Representatives, 2007).

Mobilization efforts by political parties, unions, churches, and other organizations to encourage early ballot turn-in have a direct effect on turnout (Green & Gerber, 2008; Oliver, 1996) even though “Campaigns may have an easier time mobilizing turnout on election day” (Gerber, et al, 2013, p. 3). Even with that said, some insist that an individual’s choice to vote has a greater chance of affecting turnout than party mobilization (Karp & Banducci, 2001). In the end, the popularity of vote by mail, higher turnout, and savings by election offices may outweigh the inconvenience on campaigns that have to adjust to the characteristics of vote by mail rather than a single poll site based Election Day (Gerber, et al, 2013). The period, referred to as a rolling election day, lasts three weeks (Pirch, 2012) rather than one that lasts a single day.

### **Defining the Differences: Oregon and Washington State**

While both Oregon and Washington State have adopted all vote by mail elections, their different political histories and culture, and electoral process set the two apart. Existing literature and research centers on Oregon’s vote by mail experience (Gerber, et al, 2013; Southwell, 2011) with only two reports on Washington State, and those focused



on local government elections. Voters register by party in Oregon; there has never been party registration in Washington (Arceneaux, et al, 2011). Partisan election officials in Oregon have demonstrated their propensity to remove those from the opposite parties at higher levels from the voter rolls (Gronke & Miller, 2012) since voters are required to identify a political party. Oregon's decision to go all vote by mail was driven on the state level and sudden while Washington's was gradual and based on precinct by precinct and county by county decisions to adopt the system over 18 years. Washington's gradual decentralized implementation process and extensive voter education program swayed both election officials and the electorate to adopt the system with little opposition. Even political campaigns in Washington moved ahead of the county and state in preparing get out the vote programs that encouraged voters to vote by mail, something that was non-existent in Oregon (Southwell, 2011). Washington's implementation of vote by mail was also different from California's effort to switch certain small precincts to all vote by mail at the last minute and without a strong voter education program. While Washington's turnout grew under vote by mail, California's saw a drop in turnout (Gerber, et al, 2013). These differences as well as Washington's non-partisan primary system sets it apart from Oregon and the rest of the country.

### **Summary**

The extensive literature on the subject of vote by mail, while deep, is primarily focused on the state of Oregon. The common thread that runs through the literature is the clear understanding that vote by mail is here to stay and does have a positive effect, in most cases, on voter turnout, reduced election costs, and ballot completion. Still, the

research available is not entirely conclusive on the subject. The conceptual framework includes institutional constraints theory that focuses on election administrator and how government can encourage or discourage voter turnout through ease or difficulty of a voter to register and vote. The theoretical framework is the economic theory of voter participation as proffered by Downs (1957) where a voter weighs their intention to vote against the cost of voting. While elections are the core of most theories of democratic representation, accountability, and legitimacy (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008; Shklar, 1991), there is a cautionary message to those interested in vote by mail as a way to increase voter participation and save money. Even though most of the research does positively influence voter turnout and save scarce tax dollars, it should not be used as a panacea in response to falling voter turnout numbers and budgetary shortfalls (Gronke, et al, 2003; Gronke, 2008; Southwell, 2010).

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

This research is unique in its focus on the little studied Washington State vote by mail election process and is meant to contribute to the body of knowledge for utilization by other state and local governments interested in the effects of vote by mail. While research on Oregon's vote by mail system, the only other state without polling sites, has been extensive, only two peer-reviewed studies exist on vote by mail in Washington State. One dealt with the effects of the ethics and politics behind election reform initiatives in the state (Wang, 2006) and the other focused on county level transition to vote by mail in Washington (Gerber, et al, 2013). The major sections in this chapter include a review of the research design and rationale, the methodology, and threats to validity.

### **Research Design and Rational**

The nature of this study is quantitative. Quantitative research is a consistent method of analyzing a large amount of archival-based numerical data from a variety of sources, especially concerning election results (Kousser,1980). For this analysis, the implementation of vote by mail is the independent variable and voter turnout, the cost per ballot, and ballot completion rates, the dependent variables.

A time-series model explored aggregate county and state-level data. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) recommended using time-series design when analyzing voter statistics in quantitative research. Time series design can best track voter behavior over time differentiating between effects observed for the first time and successive

experiences of it (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004). The use of time-series design is ideal “to uncover a statistical relationship between a reform or set of reforms and voter turnout” (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008, p. 6). Fitzgerald (2003) recommends time-series as the most appropriate in her work on the study of structural/legal theory of voter participation to explain state and local voting trends. Most significant is the almost universal use of time-series design by those who studied the impact of Oregon’s transition to vote by mail on voter turnout and election costs (Bergman & Yates, 2011; Gerber, et al, 2013; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, et al, 2008; Karp & Banducci, 2000; Loyal, 2007; Richey, 2008). The broad use of time-series design in analyzing the impact of the implementation of vote by mail on turnout, election costs, and ballot completion is consistent with research designs needed to advance knowledge of election reform in general and Washington’s implementation of all vote by mail elections in particular.

While any research design has time and research constraints, readily available archival data simplifies gathering and analyzing election and budget data instead of undertaking hundreds of interviews to obtain the same information. Even though millions of votes over 20 years of elections are included, each is a complete aggregate of individual election turnout numbers. Data on election costs are constant and easily retrievable. Since the early 1980s, the Washington State Secretary of State’s office requires uniform reporting of election costs. The same reporting requirements are available for undervoting data. The data and analysis took place over a three-month period.

### Methodology and Data Analysis

The target population for analyzing voter information and ballot completion statistics are voters in Washington State general elections from 1992 through 2012. The 39 county Auditor office electoral budget data was used to analyze budgetary data. The following table lists the number of registered voters for each election that that is part of this research.

Table 1

*Voter Registration Totals 1992 – 2012*

Year	Registered Voters
1996	3,078,208
1998	3,119,562
2000	3,335,714
2002	3,209,648
2004	3,508,208
2006	3,264,511
2008	3,630,118
2010	3,601,268
2012	3,904,959

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

For this research, there was no use of sampling procedures or data. Voter registration, turnout, budgetary, and ballot completion data are aggregate numbers available from the Washington State Secretary of State's office and county election and budget offices. Because of the use of total numbers, sampling frame, power analysis, alpha level, and calculating tools were not needed. With the gathering of archival data, there was no participant recruiting process needed. All the data was readily available online. A pilot study was not be undertaken nor was there a need to conduct a treatment or experimental intervention.

### **Archival Data Gathering**

For statewide data concerning voter turnout, the Washington State Secretary of State's Office Election Division maintains an exhaustive list of voter turnout data online without the need for access codes or permission (Washington Secretary of State's Office, 2013). The Secretary of State and county auditors are the legal representatives that are designated in state and local law to certify all public election outcomes. Each entity that was part of this study produced and published their election data and results online in a uniform and easily retrievable format. Data verification comes from official elections abstracts produced by state and local election offices and verified by legal certification. Most of the data in this research, with the exception of budget data, came from the Washington Secretary of State's Elections Division website. Each of the 39 counties in the state of Washington maintains records on the cost of elections and ballot completion. State law, enacted in the 1980s, requires that data on election costs and ballot completion

be uniform and readily available to anyone who requests it. All 39 Washington State counties have the election data available online without the need for an access code or permission. None of the data is in the form of published instruments.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The use of Excel software program to download, analyze, and produce result tables is integral to the data analysis. Challenges with homogeneity, heteroscedasticity, or autocorrelation inherent in the cross-sectional and time-series data could have been countered by the use of least squares with dummy variables or fixed-effects model (Fitzgerald, 2003), but in the end there was no need to utilize either statistical model. In order to account for different levels of voter turnout between presidential and nonpresidential general elections, each was separated when conducting research and analysis (McDonald & Popkin, 2001).

### **Threats to Validity**

#### **External Validity**

As Page (2008) notes, “External validity refers to whether the results of a laboratory experiment can be extended to a real world situation” (p. 56). There was no laboratory experiment needed since the archival data is aggregate, public and “real world”. The validation of the data was done by parties not connected with the research and legally verified through lawfully certified election and budgetary data.

#### **Internal Validity**

Internal validity, or the properly demonstrated causal relation between two variables (Manheim, et al, 2008), was demonstrated using time-series design. In this case,

the cause preceded the effect in temporal precedence; the cause and effect are related and no other plausible alternative explanation for observed covariation or nonspuriousness was necessary (Brewer, 2000). The use of aggregate numbers for election turnout, cost of elections, and ballot completion went a long way to counter threats to internal validity. The sheer number of elections observed (10) and the number of registered voters being 2.8 and 3.9 million over 20 years (see table 1), yielded a large number of comparisons that have high immunity to invalidation of data results. Philosopher Edmund Burke noted, “The greater the number of comparisons we make, the more general and the more certain our knowledge is likely to prove” (Burke, 2001, p. 54). Lastly, the threat of bias was always a concern, but countered. As the researcher for this dissertation, I am closely involved with the implementation of vote by mail in the state of Washington. By not using a sample or picking and choosing, which data to use that may or may not validate a bias or predesignated outcome was important to maintaining a clean, upfront analysis of the data.

### **Ethical Concerns and Data Confidentiality**

Using aggregate data and the confidential nature of voting contributed greatly to the high level of confidence that no individual voter or set of voters identify with a particular ballot had their confidentiality compromised. There was no recruitment of human participants nor was permission necessary to gather the publically available election and budgetary data.



## **Summary**

Quantitative methodology included a time-series design laid out in Excel software. The data was archival-based election and budgetary information for elections from 1992 – 2012 and was publically available and legally certified from the Washington State Secretary of State's office and the 39 Washington State County Auditors who manage and fund the electoral process throughout the state. The data collection was ample enough to answer the research questions of this research for the timeframe and elections considered.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this quantitative time-series design study was to examine the effect of vote by mail on voter turnout, election costs, and ballot completion for general elections held in the state of Washington from 1992 through 2012. The timeframe spanned eleven statewide general elections in which 26,417,971 registered voters took part in the electoral process. The study was guided by the following research questions: What impact does vote by mail have on voter turnout in Washington State elections compared to poll site voting; Does vote by mail impact electoral costs compared to poll site voting in the state of Washington; and Does voting by mail in Washington State affect the rate at which a voter completes his or her ballot compared to poll site voting?

This study utilized electoral and budgetary data to examine voter turnout, electoral budgets, and ballot completion. Budget data was supplied by the individual county auditors and electoral data came from the Washington Secretary of State's office. Final electoral results are verified by the county auditor, certified by the county commissions of each county, and forwarded to the Secretary of State who provided final certification and publishing. Budgetary data obtained from each county auditor was certified as part of his or her report to the county commission at the completion of each election cycle. That data was used to perform analysis of electoral costs coupled with the number of registered voters. Voter registration totals are part of the certified county auditor electoral results forwarded to the Secretary of State at the completion of each election cycle.

### **Research Question vs. Hypothesis**

Creswell (2009) notes, for most quantitative research projects there is either a question or hypothesis. However, in some cases, developing and testing a hypothesis is not feasible, as is the case with this study. As Creswell (2009) comments, using quantitative research questions, one seeks to understand the relationship among variables. This method is used most frequently in social science research to include voting trends and election statistics, especially when no data sampling is used, as is the case with this research (Manheim, et al, 2008).

On the other hand, quantitative hypothesis consist of researcher predictions made in advance concerning relations among variables (Creswell, 2009). For Creswell (2009), the quantitative hypothesis are “numeric estimates of population values based on data samples” (p. 132) mostly used to compare population groups. In the case of this research, two distinct populations are not being compared, only one group of registered voters who, overtime, are modifying their voting patterns in response to the implementation of vote by mail. He notes that a research project either has research questions or hypothesis, but not both.

Another challenge with utilizing time-series based quantitative hypothesis is the size and characteristic of the independent variable (vote by mail) and the dependent variables (voter turnout, cost of election, and ballot completion).

Instead of the independent variable being a single point in time, as in Oregon, Washington gradually switched to vote by mail until poll sites ceased to exist. It makes assuming that testing normal significance distribution nearly impossible.

The outcome would be to render a *t* test or even a paired *t* test untenable because there is no single point but a gradual transition to vote by mail.

The majority of research on vote by mail does not utilize a hypothesis, but only presents questions and analyzes outcome. That research, like this paper, is an exploratory study using aggregate data. It is not an effort to test a hypothesis based on a sample, but to discover trends on whole data over time. The use of aggregate data negates the need for sampling and hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2009; Giammo & Brox, 2010; Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008). In this case, the research is seeking answers to questions without the need of a hypothesis (Southwell & Burchett, 2000).

### **Chapter Organization**

Chapter 4 of this study includes three distinct sections, data collection, results, and summary. Data collection is comprised of an overview of the collection timeframe, outline of discrepancies with the data collection plan in Chapter 3, and demographic characteristics of the data. Since there was no sampling for this research, sampling, sample proportionality, treatments, and interventions was not considered. There are also no treatment or interventions with the data. Results of the data, including tables and figures, make up the rest of Chapter 4. The summary section includes a synopsis of key findings with a transition into Chapter 5.

### **Time Frame for Data Collection**

Data collection for this study began on January 29, 2014, the day the study proposal earned approval by Walden University's Institutional Review board (IRB). For the next two months, Washington state Secretary of State and 39 state county web sites

were culled for election data. Budget data was obtained by e-mail to each county auditor. In addition, as soon as the data collection completed, a follow-up e-mail went out to all 39 county auditors to verify the budget data. The verification process lasted three weeks, from March 1 through March 23, 2014.

The data for this study covered Washington State general elections from November 1992 through November 2012. The data set, separated into two parts with one set of results containing information on presidential election years (1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012) and non-presidential election years (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010). Presidential election years have a higher voter turn-out and a greater number of one-time or only presidential year voters than non-presidential general elections (Berinsky, et al, 2001; Gerber, et al, 2013; Kousser & Mullin, 2007; Southwell, 2009) and the data in this study demonstrates that fact.

### **Discrepancies from Plan Collection**

Data collection went as outlined in Chapter 3 with only one exception. While all the counties responded to the budget information request, only Asotin County was unable to produce election costs and three counties (Benton, Island, and Skagit) could not produce budgetary data prior to 2002. There were also additions to the data collection list not included in chapter 3. Those consisted of population data for the state of Washington from 1992 to 2012 and consumer price or inflation rates for that time.

### **Data Collection and Demographics**

Data for this study included electoral turnout and voting figures for voters who took part in the General Elections from 1992 – 2012. Partial data sampling was not part

of this report. Election turnout and ballot completion statistics reflect complete numbers as provided by each of Washington's 39 county election boards to the Secretary of State's web site. Budget data comes directly from the each County Auditor and covers only the election in question. Additional data utilized for population statistics and inflation. Population statistics and inflation rates obtained for this study did not utilize sampling of any sort but consist of exact data supplied by the U.S. Census Bureau through the Washington State Office of Financial management and consumer price data from the United States Department of Labor.

Data demographics were equally straightforward. No sampling was needed with the numbers reflecting complete voter data for the elections in question. Election data consists of registered voters for each county, and the number of voters who voted during a given election. Demographic characteristics do not come into play nor were they considered. Registered voters and those who participate in elections do not provide such demographic information. The qualifications to vote in the state of Washington are as follows: a registered voter must be a United States citizen, 18 year of age, not serving time in a state correctional facility as a convicted felon, and be a resident of Washington State for no less than six months (Secretary of State, 2014). There are no other qualifications to vote in the state.

## **Results**

The data results for this research are broken down into three categories: Voter turnout, election budgetary data, and voter drop-off statistics concerning ballot completion. It is further broken down into two distinct sets, presidential and non-

presidential elections. This is necessary due to the drop off of voters between presidential and non-presidential elections. Voter participation declines in non-presidential election years from 350,000 in 1998 to 770,000 in 2006 (Washington Secretary of State's Office, 2013).

Voter turnout and ballot completion are analyzed using time-series design for each election. Budgetary data uses a formula to show the cost of elections divided by the number of voters registered for that election. The use of consumer price index or inflation rates to election costs were included to provide a clearer picture of the projected cost of elections with inflation factored in.

### **Voter Turnout**

Washington gradually introduced vote by mail on a county-by-county basis (Gerber, et al, 2013). This is reflected in the research outcome as outlined in Table 4. Table 1 illustrates election data from 1992 – 2012 for the elections covered in this research. Table 2 illustrates the transition to vote by mail by county sorted by year. Table 3 includes the year and percentage of voters voting by mail with a line chart. Appendix A and B contain complete voter totals for presidential and non-presidential elections respectively.

Table 2

*Registration and Voter Turnout in Washington State 1992 - 2012 General Elections*

Year	Reg. Voters	Turnout	% Turnout	Election Type
1992	2,814,980	2,324,907	82.59%	Presidential
1994	2,899,519	1,733,471	59.78%	Non-Presidential
1996	3,078,128	2,293,895	74.52%	Presidential
1998	3,119,562	1,939,421	62.17%	Non-Presidential
2000	3,335,714	2,517,028	75.46%	Presidential
2002	3,209,648	1,808,720	56.35%	Non-Presidential
2004	3,508,208	2,883,499	82.19%	Presidential
2006	3,264,511	2,107,370	64.55%	Non-Presidential
2008	3,630,118	3,071,587	84.61%	Presidential
2010	3,601,268	2,565,589	71.24%	Non-Presidential
2012	3,768,897	3,172,484	84.18%	Presidential
Total	36,230,553	26,417,971	72.92%	AVG

(Washington Secretary of State's Office, 2013)



Table 3

*Transitioned to Vote by Mail by Year and County*

Year Transitioned to all VBM	COUNTY	Year Transitioned to all VBM	COUNTY
1996	Ferry	2005	Pacific
2002	Clallam	2005	San Juan
2003	Pend Oreille	2005	Skagit
2003	Skamania	2005	Stevens
2004	Okanogan	2005	Thurston
2005	Adams	2005	Wahkiakum
2005	Asotin	2005	Whatcom
2005	Benton	2005	Yakima
2005	Clark	2006	Chelan
2005	Columbia	2006	Lincoln
2005	Cowlitz	2006	Snohomish
2005	Douglas	2006	Spokane
2005	Franklin	2006	Walla Walla
2005	Garfield	2006	Whitman
2005	Grant	2007	Island
2005	Grays Harbor	2007	Klickitat
2005	Jefferson	2008	Kittitas
2005	Kitsap	2009	King
2005	Lewis	2011	Pierce
2005	Mason		

Table 4

*Percent of Voters Voting by Mail*

Year	% VBM
1992	17.5%
1994	22.6%
1996	34.0%
1998	44.4%
2000	52.7%
2002	61.0%
2004	69.6%
2006	96.9%
2008	98.4%
2010	99.6%

2012      99.9%<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1

*Percent of Voters Voting by Mail*

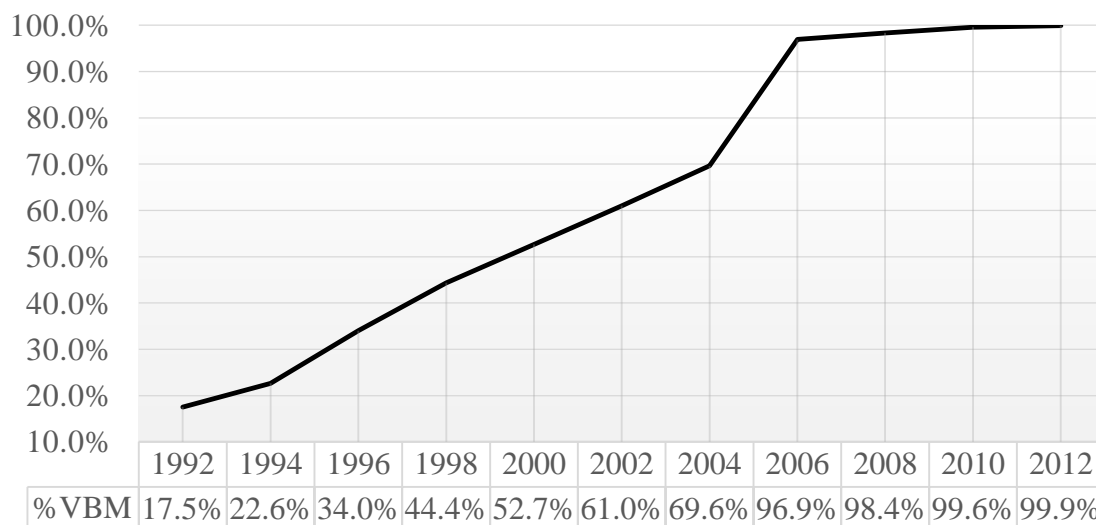


Table 4 and 5 demonstrate the transition to vote by mail and voter turnout. Both tables demonstrate higher voter turnouts for presidential year over non-presidential years. For the most part, as counties transitioned to all vote by mail elections, turnout increased as well, especially in non-presidential year general elections. For presidential election years, namely 1996 and 2012, the drop is due to an incumbent president running for a second time. The only exception is the second term for President George Bush in 2004. A very hard fought and close governor's race was a factor in the increase of voters taking part in that election.

<sup>3</sup> .01% of the population vote at specially designated machines for disabled voters located at the county courthouses.

Table 5

*Vote by Mail Statistics, Presidential Election Years*

Year	Registered	Votes Cast	Votes Cast by Mail	Voters Voting	Vote by Mail %
1992	2,814,680	2,324,907	406,859	82.60%	17.50%
1996	3,078,208	2,293,895	791,394	74.52%	34.50%
2000	3,335,714	2,517,028	1,298,786	75.46%	51.60%
2004	3,508,208	2,884,783	1,981,846	82.23%	68.70%
2008	3,630,118	3,071,587	3,019,370	84.61%	98.30%
2012	3,904,959	3,172,930	3,169,757	81.25%	99.90%

Figure 2

*Voter Turnout by Presidential Election Years*

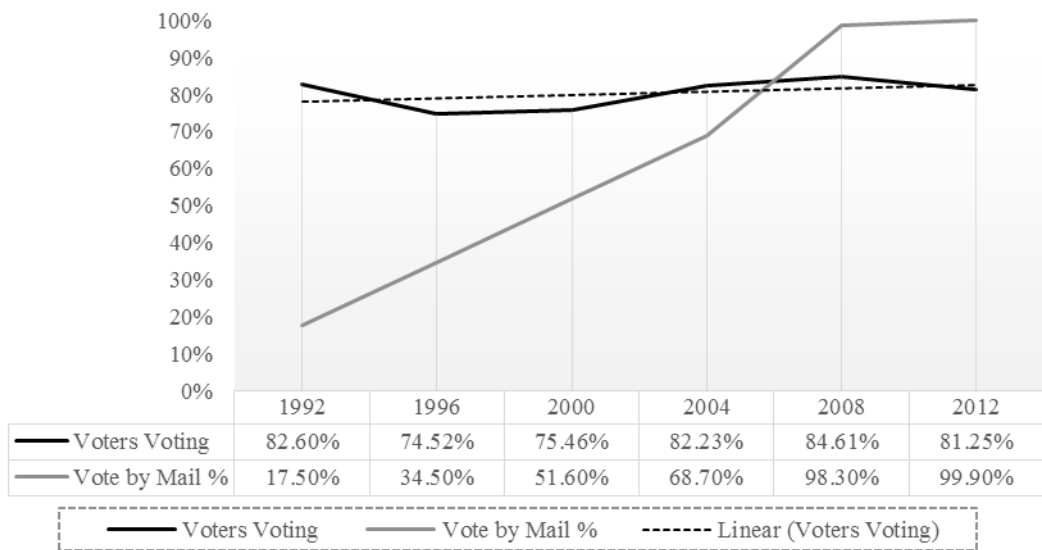
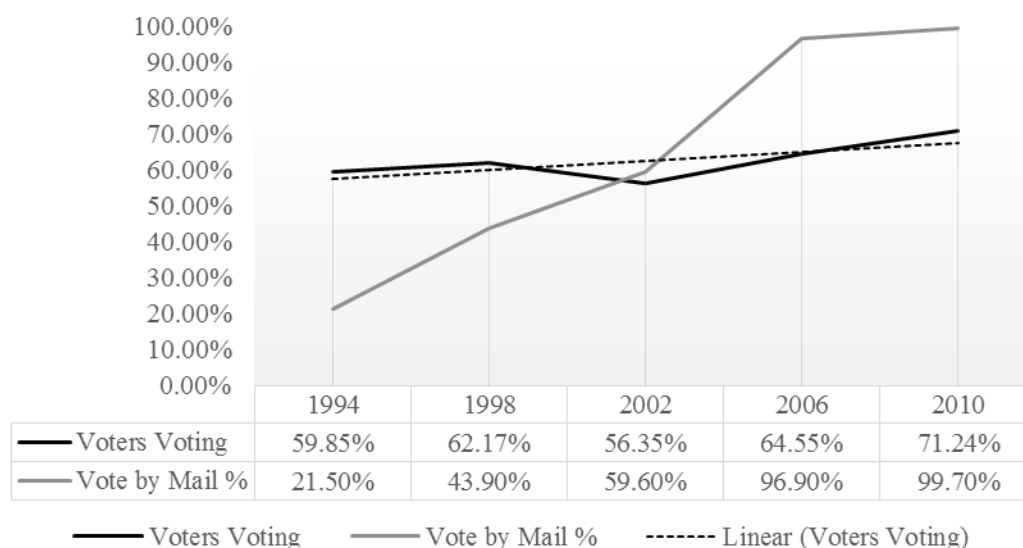


Table 6

*Vote by Mail Statistics, Non-Presidential Election Years*

Year	Registered	Votes Cast	Votes Cast by Mail	Voters Voting	Vote by Mail %
1994	2,896,519	1,733,471	372,696	59.85%	21.50%
1998	3,119,562	1,939,421	851,406	62.17%	43.90%
2002	3,209,648	1,808,720	1,077,997	56.35%	59.60%
2006	3,264,511	2,107,370	2,042,042	64.55%	96.90%
2010	3,601,268	2,565,589	2,557,892	71.24%	99.70%

Figure 3

*Voter Turnout by non-Presidential Election Years*

It is important to note that while more than a million voters were added to the voter rolls between 1992 and 2012, the state's population grew at the exact same average as demonstrated in table 5. Both the state population and voter registration rolls increased by 25.3%. One difference is in the rate of growth patterns. State population grew at a steadier pace than voter registration. Clear spikes in voter registration happened during

presidential election years. There were also drops in voter registration rolls during this period due to election reforms in the state. Those reforms were undertaken in response to the 2000 presidential and 2004 Washington State gubernatorial elections. After the 2000 election, Congress directed the states to standardize voting procedures (Hamilton, 2008). In 2004, the closest Governor's Race in U.S. history (Callaghan, 2004) took place in Washington State. After three recounts, Democrat Christine Gregoire prevailed with a lead of 132 votes out of 3.2 million. The results of close governor's race and months of subsequent litigation, put Washington's outdated and decentralized voter registration system under a microscope. Double voting, ineligible felons voting, and a small handful of deceased voters taking part spurred a move to consolidate the state's voter rolls into a single state managed system. The newly merged voter registration database was compared to Social Security and local death registers, incarceration records, and address files. More than 250,000 ineligible registrations, purged from the database, resulted in the drop in voter registrations between 2004 and 2006. Another review of the records took part in preparation for the 2008 elections resulting in another drop in registrations of about 29,000. The majority of registrations removed which were duplicate registrations (Washington Secretary of State's Office, 2013).

Another important point in the research concerns the growth of Washington's population compared to the increase in voter registrations in the state. Whereas population and voter registration growth from 1992 through 2012 are identical at 25.3% for presidential election years, the growth in turnout is slightly higher at 26.7%. The most telling statistic concerns non-presidential election years during the same period. While

the increase in population outpaced voter registration growth 21.5% to 19.5%, the rate of turnout increased 32.4% for the same period.

The significance of comparing population increases with voter registration growth is to demonstrate that the rate of growth is not a factor when calculating increased voter turnout. In their research on Oregon's vote by mail experience, Gronke and Miller (2012) cited the fact that voter registrations outpaced population growth. They attribute the increase in turnout to the increase in population, not to the switch to vote by mail. This is not the case in Washington. Table 6 outlines the growth in population and voter registration between 1992 and 2012. It demonstrates that the percentage of increase in population and voter registration is identical thus negating the possibility that voter registration plays a role in increased voter turnout.

Table 7

*Population and Voter Registration Growth 1992 – 2012*

Year	Pop Increase	VR Increase	Pop	VR
1992	Baseline	Baseline	5,091,100	2,814,980
1994	3.79%	2.93%	5,291,600	2,899,519
1996	3.49%	5.80%	5,483,100	3,078,128
1998	6.93%	7.05%	5,685,800	3,119,562
2000	3.53%	6.48%	5,894,121	3,335,714
2002	6.16%	-2.81%	6,059,300	3,209,648
2004	2.40%	8.51%	6,208,500	3,508,208
2006	5.62%	-1.68%	6,420,300	3,264,511
2008	2.84%	10.07%	6,608,200	3,630,118
2010	4.52%	9.35%	6,742,500	3,601,268
2012	1.37%	4.45%	6,817,800	3,768,897
Difference			1,726,700	953,917
% Change			25.3%	25.3%

Figure 4

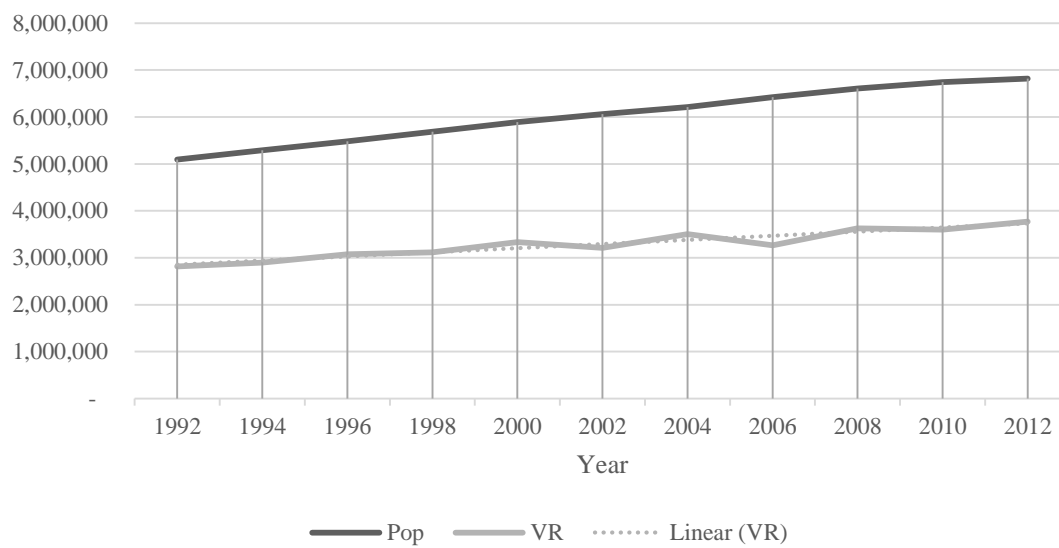
*Growth in Population and Voter Registration*

Table 8

*Growth in Population, Registration and Turnout in Presidential Election Years*

Year	Pop Increase	VR Increase	Pop	VR	Turnout
1992	Baseline	Baseline	5,091,100	2,814,980	2,324,907
1996	3.49%	5.80%	5,483,100	3,078,128	2,293,895
2000	3.53%	6.48%	5,894,121	3,335,714	2,517,028
2004	2.40%	8.51%	6,208,500	3,508,208	2,883,499
2008	2.84%	10.07%	6,608,200	3,630,118	3,071,587
2012	1.37%	4.45%	6,817,800	3,768,897	3,172,484
Average	2.73%	7.06%	1,726,700	953,917	847,577
			25.3%	25.3%	26.7%

Figure 5

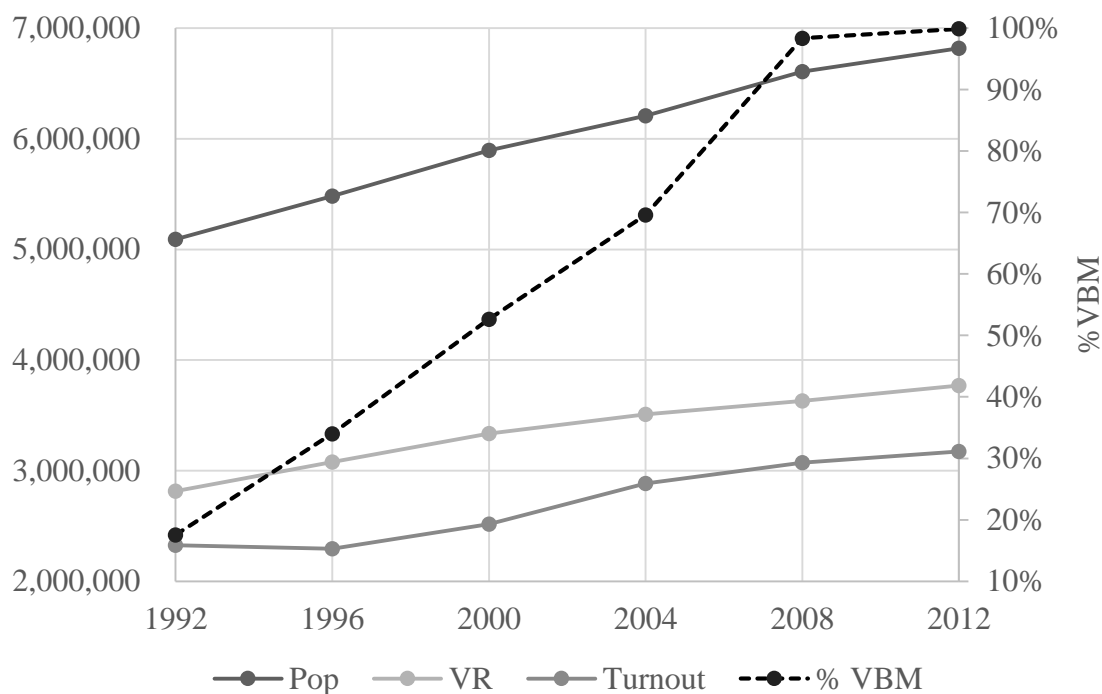
*Growth in Population, Voter Registration and Turnout in Presidential Election Years*

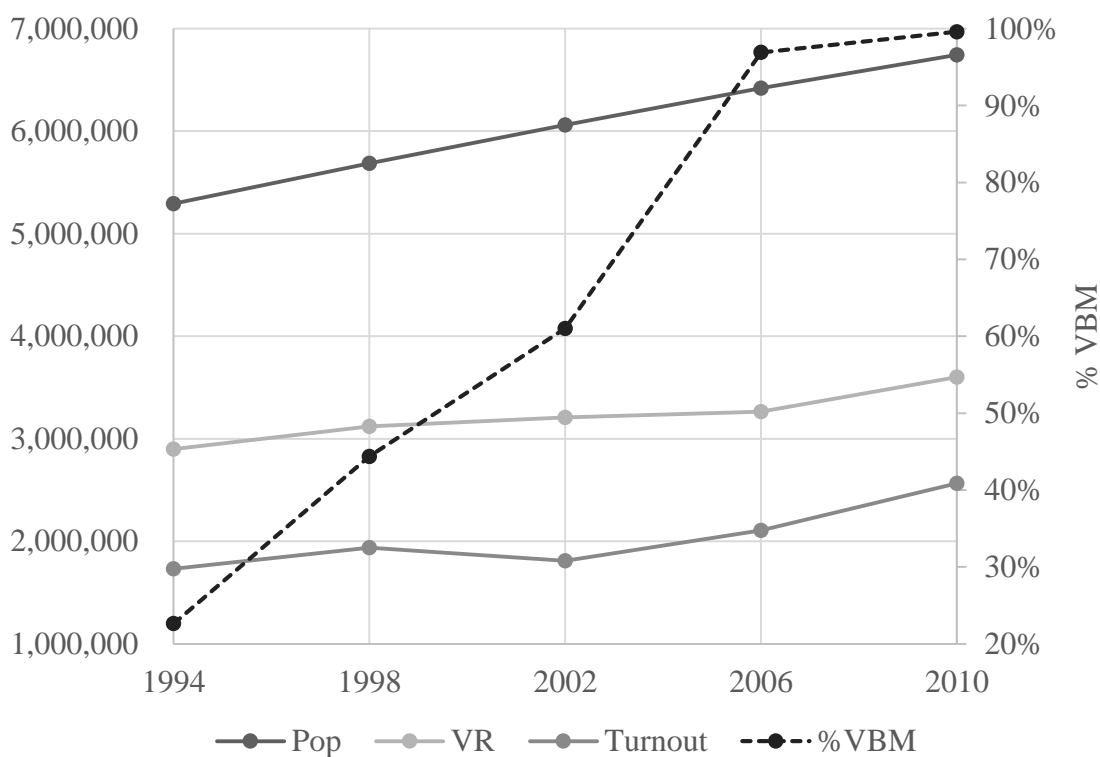


Table 9

*Growth in Population, Registration and Turnout in non-Presidential Election Years*

Year	Pop Increase	VR Increase	Pop	VR	Turnout
1994	3.79%	2.93%	5,291,600	2,899,519	1,733,471
1998	6.93%	7.05%	5,685,800	3,119,562	1,939,421
2002	6.16%	-2.81%	6,059,300	3,209,648	1,808,720
2006	5.62%	-1.68%	6,420,300	3,264,511	2,107,370
2010	4.52%	9.35%	6,742,500	3,601,268	2,565,589
Average	5.40%	2.97%	1,450,900	701,749	832,118
			21.5%	19.5%	32.4%

Figure 6

*Growth in Population, Voter and Turnout in non-Presidential Election Years*

## **Cost of Elections**

Previous research on the impact of vote by mail on election cost has demonstrated a clear downward trend (Fitzgerald, 2005; Gronke & Miller, 2012; Qvortrup, 2006; Southwell, 2011). Data on Washington's electoral costs are based on reported costs by each county divided by the number of registered voters (See Appendix C). An important element calculating the rate of inflation in election costs. Without such a calculation, the cost per ballot rapidly increases election to election, but with the inflation rate included, the cost per ballot is significantly lower from 1992 to 2012. The growth in the rate of inflation outpaces the growth in the cost of elections as noted in table 9. It is difficult to pinpoint that occurrence directly to adoption of vote by mail since the system was gradually introduced over the period of several years, but there are county-based factors that help connect the adoption of vote by mail with lower election costs. One important factor concerns hybrid electoral systems where elections were conducted using both vote by mail and poll site voting.

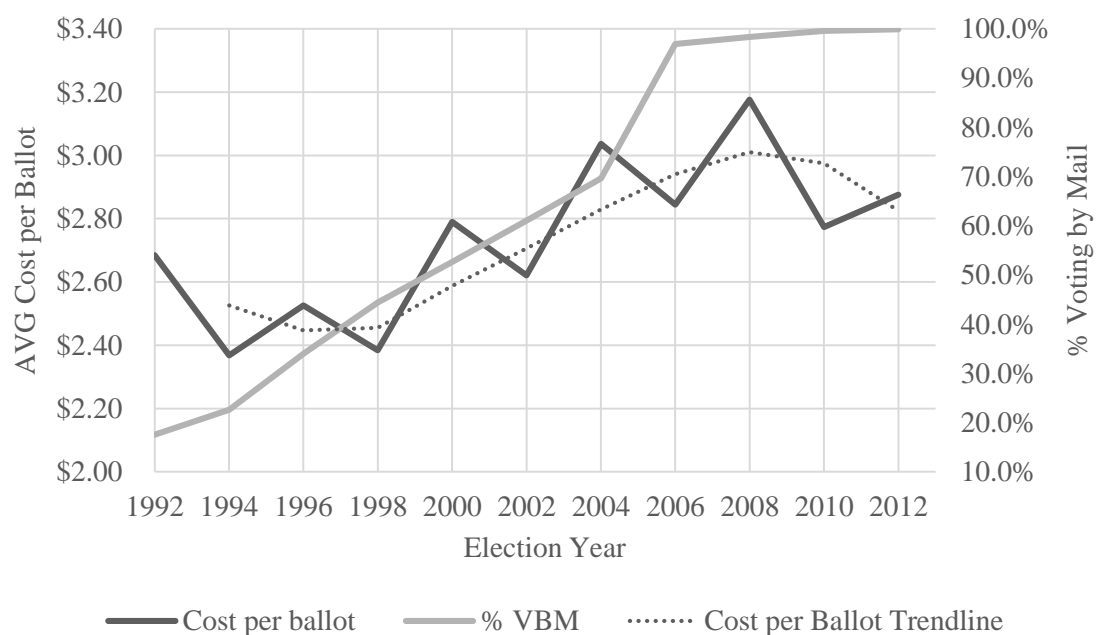
As counties transitioned to vote by mail, each took on additional costs of adopting a new system while moving away from the old (Gerber, et al, 2013). The transition between the two created an expensive hybrid electoral system that dramatically increased the cost of elections. Those increased costs continued until 2011 when all the counties fully transitioned to vote by mail and costs began to drop.

Table 10

*Cost per Ballot with and without Inflation*

Year	Index: 1982- 84=100	Inflation Rate	AVG Ballot+INF	AVG Ballot w/o INF	Yearly change in county cost	% VBM
1992	139.0	Base	\$ 2.87	\$ 2.87		17.5%
1994	147.8	6.3%	\$ 3.05	\$ 2.55	-11.15%	22.6%
1996	157.5	6.6%	\$ 3.25	\$ 2.69	5.49%	34.0%
1998	167.7	6.5%	\$ 3.46	\$ 2.57	-4.46%	44.4%
2000	179.2	6.9%	\$ 3.70	\$ 3.00	16.73%	52.7%
2002	189.3	5.6%	\$ 3.91	\$ 2.83	-5.67%	61.0%
2004	194.7	2.9%	\$ 4.02	\$ 3.27	15.55%	69.6%
2006	207.6	6.6%	\$ 4.29	\$ 3.04	-7.03%	96.9%
2008	224.7	8.2%	\$ 4.64	\$ 3.41	12.17%	98.4%
2010	226.7	0.9%	\$ 4.68	\$ 2.98	-12.61%	99.6%
2012	238.7	5.3%	\$ 4.93	\$ 3.24	8.72%	99.9%
	AVG	5.6%	\$ 3.99	\$ 2.96	1.8%	

Figure 7

*Cost per Ballot and Trend line*

## **Ballot Completion**

While a number of reasons exist as to why voters do not complete their ballots, previous research demonstrates that if given more time and information, voters are more likely to vote their complete ballot (Hanmer & Traugott, 2004; Saltman, 2008; Southwell, 2009). Gauging the effects of vote by mail on ballot completion is not a precise undertaking. Deciding on which type of election to use and how to present it is challenging with any research. Southwell (2010) and Sled (2007) recommend utilizing statewide ballot issues over candidate races. This is especially important in Washington State where statewide races tend to be decided, for the most part, in the primary. State Supreme Court races have an even greater chance at ending up with only one candidate in the general election since Washington state electoral law allows judicial candidates to move to the general election unopposed if they garner more than 50% of the vote in the primary (Washington State Division of Elections, 2011). For this dissertation, utilizing ballot initiatives and referendum provided the best picture of ballot completion rates.

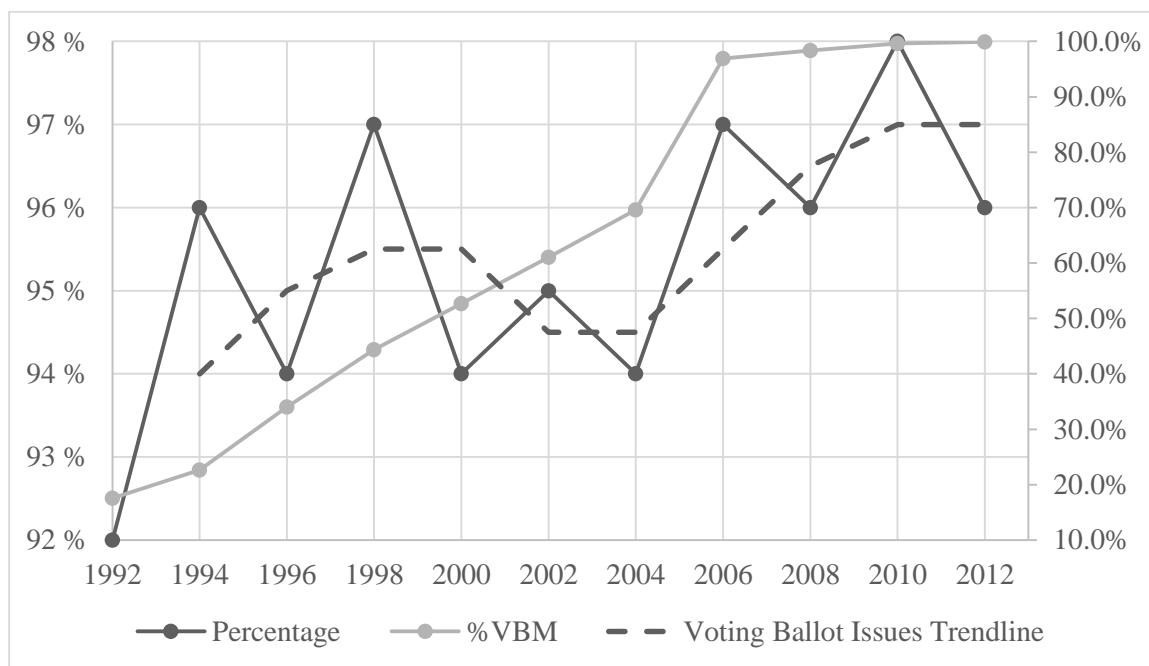
Washington State is one of the first states to implement an initiative and referendum process (Washington Secretary of State, 2013). Since 1914, there have been no fewer than two and no more than ten initiatives and referendum on each general election ballot. From 1992 through 2012, averages of five statewide ballot contests were considered by the electorate for each election.

Like Oregon, Washington voters tend to vote their whole ballot at a greater rate than the average state (Southwell 2012) so any increase in ballot completion tends to be in the single digits, but still significant. Since the introduction of vote by mail in 1996

there has been very little drop off between ballot items in Oregon, regardless of their order or placement on the ballot or the type of measure (initiative or referendum) and Washington is no different.

The data demonstrates a steady yet discernable increase in voters completing their ballots in elections held from 1992 through 2012 mirroring the implementation of vote by mail across the state. The data also demonstrates a narrowing of participation percentage between ballot initiatives. The spread between initiatives with the highest and lowest voter turnout was 90.88% to 96.04% of voters participating in the 1996 general election. By 2010, the spread was 94.43% to 98.36%. What is important to note is the steady increase in the average percentage of voters participating in statewide elections, especially since 2006 when all vote by mail elections were adopted by 2/3rds of Washington counties. A complete list of initiative and referendum covered by this research is in appendix D.

Figure 8

*Ballot Completion Rates on Statewide Measures***Summary**

Washington's experience, while different from its neighbor to the south, Oregon, has some similarities, namely high voter rates, low ballot drop off, and elections run locally with oversight from their respective Secretary of State's offices. In considering election turnout, even-year general elections from 1992 through 2012 were utilized. The data, taken from certified election results provided by the Washington Secretary of State's office, is comprehensive and total. More than 26 million votes were cast over 20 years. The data was further subdivided between presidential and non-presidential elections to bring clarity to voting trends. Voter participation declines in presidential vs non-presidential elections from low of 350,000 in 1998 to a high of 770,000 in 2006. By separating the two election cycles provide for clearer charts and graphs to track elections.

Separating the two results prevents chart lines from varying widely from election to election and is highly recommended by electoral researchers (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Hanmer & Traugott, 2004; Gronke, et al, 2007;).

To understand the impact on election cost, data was gathered from 38 counties covering a 20-year period. Only one county was unable to provide data, but the number of registered voters in that county compared to the statewide total amounts to less than .5% of the overall state total. The number provided for an election year was divided by the number of registered voters for that year. That resulted in the per ballot cost. An average per ballot cost arrived upon by taking per ballot cost and dividing it by 38 to get the average per ballot cost per year. This is a common practice by those who study election costs over time (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Funk, 2005; Giammo & Brox, 2010; Montjoy, 2010).

Tracking ballot completion is a challenging process. Most counties do not track ballot completion and those that do use widely different formulas to track that information. In analyzing Oregon's ballot completion rates before and after the introduction of vote by mail, Gronke, et al (2007) focused mainly on voter participation in statewide ballot initiative and referenda. Since Washington and Oregon have similar initiative and referendum histories, this made utilizing such data a logical choice. Each election was analyzed for voter participation in statewide ballot issues and compared to the number of voters who voted in that election overall. Like Oregon, Washington voters tend to vote at high numbers to include statewide ballot issues. Still, the transition to vote by mail in Washington clearly demonstrates a marked increase in voter participation on

ballot issues and the timing of that participation correlates with the rapid acceptance of vote by mail statewide.

The data demonstrates clearly that vote by mail has a positive impact on turnout in elections, especially non-presidential year elections. Voter turnout increases more than 12% when vote by mail was fully implemented in Washington State. The researched showed that election costs under vote by mail increased with Washington's gradual introduction of vote by mail. As counties transitioned out of poll site voting, the cost of running two separate systems became very expensive. With the full implementation of vote by mail election costs began to drop off. Further study of election costs over the next decade is necessary to see if election costs per ballot will continue to drop. Lastly, ballot completion using statewide ballot measures as an indicator shows a clear increase with the full implementation of vote by mail. Voters are more inclined to complete their ballots when given a longer time to do so as compared to poll site voting.

The results of this research can have far-reaching effects on state and local government considering replacing their poll site elections with vote by mail. Local election official struggle to mitigate poll site challenges such as long lines at polling places, voters showing up at the wrong poll site, inconvenient one-day only elections, insufficient ballot supplies, and uneven poll worker training (Page & Pitts, 2008). Vote by mail may offer a remedy to this as well as increase voter participation, ballot completion and decreased election costs. Government lives off of and gains its authority from the electoral process (Dworkin, 2000; Keyssar, 2000). The effort to make voting more convenient, increase voter participation, and provide a better-educated electorate is



crucial to the future of democracy. The following chapter will focus on the findings and implications for future research and social change based on the data presented in this chapter.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose and nature of this quantitative time series based study was to consider the effect of vote by mail on election turnout, cost of elections, and voter turnout in Washington State general elections from 1992 to 2012. Democracies have their basis in the electoral process. For many, elections are the only avenue to impact policy and decisions of a government (Chand, 1997). Since the early 1990s vote by mail elections have gained stronger and more profound acceptance by the voting public. The 2012 election witnessed the highest vote by mail election participation in United States history (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013).

Election administrators are turning to vote by mail elections as a way to counter some of the challenges of poll site elections such as long lines, lack of ballots, and, in some cases, unscrupulous or ignorant election workers. With vote by mail, ballots are handled by highly trained professional staff and mailed to a voters registered address. This provides voters with up to three weeks to complete their ballot. This study analyzed the effect of the gradual implementation of vote by mail elections on voter turnout, elections costs, and ballot completion.

### **Key Findings**

The results of this research confirm that vote by mail does have a positive impact on voter turnout and ballot completion. Washington already experiences some of the highest voter turnout statistics in the nation. While the transition to vote by mail did not dramatically increase voter turnout in presidential election years, it did have a strong

impact on non-presidential elections. It is significant to note that previous research did confirm that in off year, local elections, and vote by mail increased voter turnout by as much as 15% (Southwell, 2009).

When measuring the impact of vote by mail on the cost of elections, the research uncovered a number of factors not considered in previous research. Most notable is the effect of hybrid elections on county election budgets. Unlike Oregon where there was a clean and swift break between poll site voting and all vote by mail elections, Washington's experience was gradual, over a 15-year period. As voters decided, in growing numbers, to become permanent absentee voters, counties were faced with running two types of electoral systems, poll site and vote by mail. The added costs were substantial. Data in this research shows a dramatic growth in election costs as vote by mail participation increased and finally overtook poll site voting. While a majority of counties switched to vote by mail by 2006 it was not until 2010 when all counties had finally switched over, the rising cost of elections trend line is beginning to fall.

Lastly, using statewide ballot initiatives and referendum as a gauge, a common practice by election researchers, the introduction of vote by mail marked a higher and sustained level of voters participating in statewide initiatives. Prior research demonstrated that utilizing statewide ballot measure turnout reflected on the decision of the voter to complete their ballot in a more thorough manner (Gronke, 2008; Richey, 2008; Southwell, 2009). This backs up Southwell's (2009) contention that "vote by mail has served to decrease the amount of roll-off voting for ballot measures that occur near the end of the ballot and to reduce the overall volatility in roll-off voting" (p. 195). She and

others note that since vote by mail ballots are received by the voter up to three weeks before the election, they have a longer time to gather information and completely fill out their ballot. This is in stark contrast to the short time and lack of access to information one has when voting at a poll site.

This research confirms that vote by mail elections do positively impact voter turnout and ballot completion, especially in non-presidential year elections. Election costs data is inconclusive even though it is trending downward. Previous data supports this inquiry, but Washington's gradual transition to vote by mail, in comparison to Oregon, provides future researchers with a firm foundation for further study.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

While prior research on vote by mail are confirmed by the findings in this dissertation concerning voter turnout and ballot completion, electoral costs still need further analysis over the next decade to see if the downward trend in election costs are sustained. For those seeking a more convenient way for people to vote, there is no doubt receiving a ballot at one's home is far more convenient than driving to a poll site on election day, waiting in line, and being rushed through the process (Alvarez et al, 2011; Burgan, 2013; Dyck & Gimpel, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2005; Gronke & Galanes-Rosenbaum, 2008; Monroe & Sylvester, 2011).

While Southwell (2011) and Gronke and Miller (2012) may disagree on the benefits of vote by mail, they are of the same mind that presidential year elections are basically unaffected but non-presidential year, special elections, and primaries are marked by a substantial growth in participation with vote by mail. This study backs up

that assertion. With the implementation of vote by mail, there has been a very slight uptick in the percentage of people voting during presidential election years, but during non-presidential years, it is substantial. The data in this research concludes that in non-presidential elections there is an 11% growth in voter turnout while the growth in population and voter registration has been almost identical. For the election official seeking to bring more people into the process, Berinsky, et al (2001) recommend the focus of vote by mail start with special and non-presidential year elections if increased voter participation is the goal. The majority of prior research undertaken on the issue echoes what the authors note. The research in this dissertation validates previous research.

The research clearly demonstrated that when a gradual transition away from poll site voting to vote by mail, added costs of such a hybrid system dramatically increase the costs of running elections. Once vote by mail was fully implemented, election costs began to drop, but further research over time is needed to see if that is a trend or an anomaly. With that said prior research by Southwell (2009) Giammo and Brox (2010), Montjoy (2010), and Stewart (2011) all point to lower election costs as vote by mail is applied. What is important to note, and this research bears out, is the way vote by mail is implemented and its impact on electoral costs. In Oregon, the process was sudden. There was no lengthy transition as there was in Washington. Elections in Texas, California, and Georgia reflect the same challenge in Washington. If voters are given a choice of how to vote on Election Day, that becomes an expensive choice. As noted before, running a hybrid or poll site with vote by mail means executing two separate elections on one day,

and the costs can be substantial (Arceneaux, et al, 2011; Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Funk, 2005; Gronke, 2005; Spencer & Markovits, 2010).

Another budgetary effect, not noted in previous research, is the switch in staffing priorities. With poll site elections, much of the work in the county auditor's offices happens prior to the election while temporary and permanent staff prepares poll sites and hire hundreds of election workers to staff the polls. With vote by mail, you still have intensive staff work happening a month before the election, but there is no need to hire poll workers for Election Day. What was unforeseen is the switch to post election ballot processing that comes with vote by mail. Since both Washington and Oregon require all signatures to be checked before a ballot can be processed, signature checking continues well beyond Election Day. Instead of merely dropping the ballots in the counter after 8:00 p.m. on election night and counting the ballots, staff must continue to verify signatures, process legal ballots, follow up on bad signatures, and count ballots well beyond Election Day (Pirch, 2012). One interesting trend is that as voters settle in to vote by mail, they are voting earlier in the process rather than waiting until the last minute to send in their ballot (Qvortrup, 2006). That, in the long run, should take the pressure off post-election staffing requirements.

Higher ballot completion rates signify, to some who have done the research, that the voter is better informed (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Southwell, 2009). Prior research has also demonstrated that when given the opportunity to vote by mail, with the ballot sitting on a table for up to three weeks, the voter is given a greater chance to do research and gather information to make an informed choice (Gerber, et al, 2013; Luechinger, et al,

2007). This is compared to those who vote at poll sites and are given a very limited opportunity to complete their whole ballot and little opportunity to research choices inside the poll booth (Page & Pitts, 2008).

Clearly, there are those who decry the loss of the polling site elections. Considered a community-gathering site, a place for civic ritual, and a significant American tradition, opponents to vote by mail see the process as a further eroding of the voter to the process of democracy (Cooper, 1999; Gronke, 2008; Taylor, 2011; VonSpakovsky, 2010). While this may be the case, when given the choice, the voter votes with their feet as demonstrated in Washington State. Election officials witnessed dramatic movement away from polling sites to vote by mail in just a few years. Pierce County went from less than 15% voting by mail in 1998 to 91% just 12 years later. Other counties experienced the same voluntary transition to vote by mail that made changing to total vote by mail elections much easier (Gerber, et al, 2013). It also eased the voter into the process and increased voter acceptance in a way not experienced in Oregon (Southwell, 2011). The only way opponents can counter vote by mail is by a legal authority, such as a county commission or state legislature, from not authorizing it. Otherwise, in every state where vote by mail has been made a choice, with no qualifications, it has gained steady approval by the electorate (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Rosenfield, 1994; Spencer & Markovits, 2010).

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study incorporated aggregate results from general elections held between 1992 and 2012 in the state of Washington. No sampling or partial results were used. As

outlined in chapter one, the study was limited to general elections in even numbered years. The analysis of the elections was further separated between presidential and non-presidential election. It is a procedure in general use by election researchers such as Southwell (2012), Gronke (2013), and Fitzgerald (2003). Since this research is quantitative based, no voter surveys were utilized to gauge personal feelings toward vote by mail. The report is limited to archival and budgetary data readily available. The data may be narrow in content, but gives a clear picture of the impact of vote by mail on general elections in Washington State.

Data from election costs were generated by the counties individually then combined in a table format. The budget number for a given county in a set election year was divided by the number of registered voters to arrive on a per ballot cost. There are numerous ways that could be used to demonstrate the impact of vote by mail on election costs, but in reviewing prior research and taking into account the need to standardize 38 different county budget information, the cost per ballot is the most balanced approach to the issue. Still, the fact that one county was not able to gather election data and four only partial data limited the overall effect of the research on the issue, but not in such a way as to render the analysis invalid. The number of registered voters in all five counties amounts to less than 1% of the overall state total for the years of missing data.

Another limitation concerns the type of election considered. Even though the research in this study analyzed only general election held in even number years between 1992 and 2012, there are numerous other avenues for research on this issue. Primary elections, local elections, and special election could be considered to name a few. Further



research does not only have to be horizontal, that is focusing only on statewide general election results, but also vertical as well. Considering local, special, and off year elections provide more than ample data sources to analyze. To keep the research focused, it was important to maintain the original intent of the dissertation and provide future researchers with a number of other avenues to explore this vital and important issue.

Lastly, this research is limited in its scope by taking in only Washington State's experience with vote by mail. California and Colorado are rapidly reaching full vote by mail (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011). While data from neither of those or other states was part of this research, both states provide excellent opportunities for further research.

### **Recommendations**

Vote by mail is changing the face of elections in America and abroad. There is no doubt that when given the choice to vote by mail, voters have demonstrated a propensity to embrace it willingly and in large numbers (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Rosenfield, 1994; Spencer & Markovits, 2010). Just as elections are an ongoing and foundational aspect of democratic society, their study is important and never ending. There are many directions for future analysis to progress on this subject, but for this research, to continue analyzing voter turnout, cost of elections and ballot completion further into the future will present a broader and more complete understanding of the effect of vote by mail on the electoral system. Since full transition to vote by mail happened gradually and complete vote by mail only within the last six years, taking the data out another decade is vital to understanding the overall impact of the process on the electoral system. If provided the resources, time, and access to voter information, future qualitative research could delve

into reasons why voters chose vote by mail when given the opportunity, and what promoted them to vote their ballot either partially or totally. Lastly, any future research into vote by mail must be accompanied by understanding why election officials are looking into the process. If it is to make elections less expensive, increase voter participation, or add to a more educated electorate, those are laudable reasons. While vote by mail may not impact all three considerations equally, it clearly does provide a voter with a more convenient way to vote. This can only be understood through asking the voter rather than just analyzing election data. Election data trends provide the data that demonstrates the impact of vote by mail, but qualitative analysis may best provide the long-term

Policy makers and even opponents are realizing that vote by mail is here to stay (Gronke, et al, 2003). To make implementation successful, a robust voter education program is necessary (Southwell, 2009; Giammo & Brox, 2010). Officials must plan for the impact of higher budgets if a gradual transition to vote by mail is undertaken. As noted in this research, running hybrid elections increase electoral costs substantially. Still, transitioning to vote by mail abruptly also carries challenges. Instead of gradually easing the voter into a new system, they may be caught off guard. Will they be expecting an open poll site come election day and toss their ballot? This should be a major concern when transitioning quickly.

Finally, insuring voters receive timely candidate and issue information through government-sponsored voters' pamphlets is crucial. Providing voters with three weeks to fill out their ballot is laudable, but without a voters' guide, the citizens are left to fend for

themselves as they dig through one-sided and sometimes grossly misleading campaign material. This has the potential to defeat one of the strong arguments for vote by mail, a better-informed electorate (Cuciti & Wallis, 2011; Southwell, 2009).

### **Implications**

Elections are the lifeblood of democracy (Chand, 1997). Providing voters with a more convenient way to vote over a longer period of time and from the comfort of their home can only serve to strengthen the electoral system and, in turn, governance as a whole. The process, while not perfect, is the one of the only ways that the majority of the population interacts and effects decisions made by their elected leaders (Rogers, et al, 2012; Shafritz, 1993). As noted by the United Nation's Center on Democracy and Elections (United Nations Development Program, 2013), "The spread of democracy around the world has been a significant achievement of our times. Elections sit at the heart of this, making possible the act of self-determination..."(p. 1).

While positive social change can happen even with the smallest act of generosity with someone who has the vision to see a different, better future, change on a more global scale happens through government and private institutions. Elected government is the catalyst for social change for much of society, and it is those policymakers on all levels who are entrusted to improve living conditions and solve problems in the community they represent (Senge, et al, 2010). These policies take legal, regulatory, program, and incentives that have a wide array of possibilities for social and political change. Even in parts of the world where hope is in short supply and fear trumps vision, people walk

miles at risk of great harm, to fill out a simple ballot and make a statement. For them, elections provide the only hope outside of war and revolt to make their society better.

Providing voters with a more convenient safer way to vote, that allows them adequate time to study the issues and candidates, and provides them a voice in the shaping of governmental and national policy is central to the cause of social change in modern society. The more people take part in the electoral process, the more they are invested in it and their government. For most, their vote is the only way in which they voice their opinion, hope, and expectations to those who govern them. Improving access to the ballot box, countering the challenges of single day poll site voting, and insuring those who have the right to vote will be given the opportunity to do so can only strengthen democracy and representative government.

It is a means and an end in the quest for social change. People use it as a vehicle to promote leaders and policies that will improve their lives and society while, on the other hand, other use it to stop unpopular policies that, in many cases, suppress and marginalize. While it can be a two edged sword, a well-educated electorate, understanding of the issues and candidates, can foster change at a far more rapid rate than anything available to the citizens today (Keyssar, 2000).

Creating an environment where government officials make the electoral process more convenient to voters through lessening barriers and restrictions to voting is key to the structural-legal-institutional theory of voting reform (Fitzgerald, 2005; Oliver, 1996; Rusk, 1974). Downs (1957) economic theory of voter participation notes that the collective benefit of voting is enhanced based on the ease, proximity, and convenience to

the voter of taking part in the process. Rusk (1974) and Timpone (1998), providing a ballot hand delivered to someone's place of residence is the most convenient access to voting any voter can have outside of Internet voting.

While Internet voting may be considered the easiest way to vote in the future, it is fraught with challenges. Most research and public sentiment is very concerned with security and safety of the internet (United States House of Representatives, 2007). Unless internet security is guaranteed, there is little chance that internet voting will go beyond the experimental stage anytime soon (Alvarez, et al, 2011; Loyal, 2007).

In the end, vote by mail is here to stay. Even opponents acknowledge that the issue is not if vote by mail continues, but how best to implement it and maintain voter confidence (Gronke, et al, 2003). As a counter to long lines, lack of ballots, ill-trained poll workers, and allegations of voter suppression by election workers (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987; Keyssar, 2000; Wilentz, 2005), vote-by-mail elections may mitigate those challenges providing a more convenient and cost effective way to vote (Southwell, 2011). Continued study and understanding of the process, giving voters a choice to vote by mail, and providing all voters with the convenience of voting from home can only strengthen the democratic system and contribute to a better, more responsive and responsible government.

### **Conclusion**

Democracy is built on a foundation of free, fair, and transparent electoral process. Providing voters with a more convenient way to vote, more time to make their decision, and do so in a safe environment can only strengthen our democracy. Around the world

people flock to polling places to make their voices heard, even in the most trying of times and in the most dangerous parts of the globe. They do so with the hope that the future will be better than the present. For them, as well as most voters, elections are the only way they can impact the course of government policies and decisions of elected leaders.

This research concluded that vote by mail does as it is supposed to do when it comes to voter turnout and ballot completion. It positively impacts voter turnout, clearly demonstrates that voters with more time and resources available to them will vote more of their ballot than those who vote at poll sites. While the impact of election costs needs more study and time, prior research is mostly unanimous that vote by mail is a major cost savings to cash strapped governments.

This research may have been limited to ten general elections over 20 years, but it provides future researchers with the opportunity to expand both in time and with the level of election. There is so much data available to research, especially in a nation with more than 238 years of electoral history. There are also thousands of governmental entities in world that rely on elections to give them leaders, representatives, and most importantly, legitimacy for them to do their work and make decisions that impact the lives of millions of people. The opportunity to study vote by mail is vast in breadth and depth. This study only provides a snapshot in time on a particular electoral process in a state whose voter have embraced vote by mail by their own choice. While this research adds to the body of knowledge on vote by mail elections, it does fill a gap in the literature that, in many ways still exists for the future researcher to exploit. This research was not an end, but just a continuation of the process of understanding of a system that is gaining steam with every

election. Vote by mail is here to stay, it is up to all who care about democracy, and free elections, to best utilize it for an electorate demanding change and expecting a more responsive government. We owe it to those who came before us and to those who gave their lives for the cause of free and fair elections.

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### Appendix A. Voter Turnout – Presidential Elections

COUNTY	1992 Reg. Voters	1992 Turnout	1996 Reg. Voters	1996 Turnout	2000 Reg. Voters	2000 Turnout	2004 Reg. Voters	2004 Turnout	2008 Reg. Voters	2008 Turnout	2012 Reg. Voters	2012 Turnout
Adams	5,886	4,712	6,307	4,700	6,591	5,056	6,477	5,200	6,191	4,936	6,457	4,892
Asotin	9,729	7,725	12,206	7,540	13,228	8,166	11,805	8,961	12,012	9,941	13,632	10,074
Benton	65,475	53,261	78,840	54,608	79,583	60,607	85,586	67,687	87,059	73,813	97,849	80,880
Chelan	28,505	23,690	34,210	24,150	32,665	26,837	37,395	29,617	38,650	32,392	40,293	32,809
Clallam	34,667	29,044	41,922	30,508	40,285	33,013	43,520	37,362	45,766	39,161	47,157	38,737
Clark	129,869	107,863	158,080	114,392	183,249	137,339	207,611	172,265	216,508	184,698	243,155	193,502
Columbia	2,452	1,953	2,746	1,997	2,594	2,133	2,542	2,144	2,585	2,287	2,661	2,312
Cowlitz	42,360	34,936	46,836	33,930	50,737	37,347	53,914	42,823	55,331	45,793	58,555	45,506
Douglas	13,561	11,220	15,114	11,073	17,762	12,225	16,994	13,483	18,936	15,390	19,140	15,268
Ferry	3,313	2,592	3,809	2,874	4,015	3,084	4,088	3,385	4,259	3,575	4,476	3,546
Franklin	15,783	12,398	17,401	12,654	17,805	14,305	21,235	16,428	23,530	20,001	26,760	23,095
Garfield	1,572	1,326	1,675	1,301	1,699	1,351	1,524	1,331	1,564	1,396	1,531	1,295
Grant	26,805	22,192	29,622	22,168	30,922	24,084	32,760	26,220	32,910	27,876	36,499	28,098
Grays Harbor	33,060	27,800	37,712	26,790	35,434	26,583	36,647	28,256	36,702	29,709	38,307	29,263
Island	33,014	27,884	39,406	29,040	39,863	33,550	43,688	39,070	47,629	42,597	50,389	42,662
Jefferson	15,136	13,050	18,087	14,271	18,891	15,976	21,165	18,772	22,160	20,225	22,756	20,104
King	943,396	788,511	976,656	750,755	1,073,280	799,163	1,082,406	898,238	1,108,128	930,038	1,170,638	978,377
Kitsap	108,470	89,755	124,714	93,315	131,950	104,235	138,956	119,458	144,690	125,881	152,681	125,351
Kittitas	15,366	12,586	18,555	12,742	18,491	14,223	19,817	16,220	20,631	18,087	22,068	18,479
Klickitat	8,843	6,996	10,405	7,152	11,753	8,255	12,163	9,309	12,171	10,333	13,093	10,505
Lewis	33,696	27,646	39,240	28,166	42,308	30,596	38,007	32,945	41,635	35,225	44,287	34,743
Lincoln	5,891	5,051	6,507	5,168	6,614	5,361	6,642	5,900	6,899	6,058	7,059	5,973
Mason	23,613	20,093	26,272	21,192	28,777	22,923	31,083	25,836	32,828	28,698	35,268	28,713
Okanogan	16,720	13,256	17,407	13,351	19,500	15,066	20,066	16,614	20,562	17,134	21,344	17,177
Pacific	11,248	9,488	12,418	9,349	12,711	9,708	13,195	10,620	13,052	11,145	13,431	10,774
Pend Oreille	5,986	4,804	6,948	5,083	7,095	5,482	7,486	6,262	7,799	6,652	8,264	6,832
Pierce	314,777	243,492	316,555	241,604	360,463	270,898	405,023	317,002	411,103	333,824	442,985	349,476
San Juan	7,932	7,050	8,798	7,432	9,730	8,475	11,246	10,149	11,624	10,635	12,019	10,744
Skagit	48,737	41,280	53,358	41,849	59,756	45,835	63,185	52,577	65,129	56,632	67,769	56,262
Skamania	4,626	3,733	5,535	3,846	5,997	4,328	6,305	5,193	6,650	5,567	6,944	5,582
Snohomish	272,621	227,721	295,768	225,026	338,163	253,423	352,238	296,968	372,636	324,179	422,442	334,664
Spokane	207,167	171,134	228,449	162,781	230,244	175,041	251,184	203,871	258,952	222,126	282,442	227,292
Stevens	18,309	15,102	24,133	16,984	26,803	18,376	28,414	20,606	26,875	22,756	28,362	22,766
Thurston	95,998	85,479	122,297	88,566	126,680	98,644	137,742	113,989	148,911	128,006	160,302	128,652
Wahkiakum	2,220	1,815	2,396	1,867	2,553	2,013	2,592	2,255	2,733	2,343	2,829	2,346
Walla Walla	25,062	20,149	28,770	19,855	29,883	21,642	29,279	23,271	31,606	25,062	31,844	25,612
Whatcom	79,501	64,463	95,665	65,518	98,352	74,671	106,094	91,497	115,314	101,399	125,485	104,272
Whitman	23,424	17,832	26,179	16,134	26,280	16,408	21,082	18,068	20,542	17,826	21,272	17,429
Yakima	80,190	65,825	87,130	64,164	93,008	70,606	97,052	73,647	97,856	78,191	106,452	78,420
Registered Voters	2,814,980	2,324,907	3,078,128	2,293,895	3,335,714	2,517,028	3,508,208	2,883,499	3,630,118	3,071,587	3,768,897	3,172,484
Population	5,091,100		5,483,100		5,894,121		6,208,500		6,608,200		6,817,800	
Election Turnout		82.59%		74.52%		75.46%		82.19%		84.61%		84.18%
% of Pop. Voting		45.67%		41.84%		42.70%		46.44%		46.48%		46.53%

## Appendix B. Voter Turnout – Non-Presidential Elections

COUNTY	1994 Reg. Voters	1994 Turnout	1998 Reg. Voters	1998 Turnout	2002 Reg. Voters	2002 Turnout	2006 Reg. Voters	2006 Turnout	2010 Reg. Voters	2010 Turnout
Adams	5,726	4,142	6,443	3,767	6,088	3,651	5,930	3,714	5,998	3,925
Asotin	10,911	6,490	13,413	6,061	11,907	6,247	11,375	7,533	12,270	8,677
Benton	70,570	44,256	72,173	44,085	77,043	41,345	76,910	50,276	88,498	64,030
Chelan	30,786	19,548	34,709	21,246	32,703	20,378	35,314	23,518	37,972	28,071
Clallam	37,310	24,589	38,309	28,230	39,383	27,956	43,483	30,884	45,611	34,079
Clark	142,448	79,625	168,294	98,357	174,687	93,975	189,269	116,505	219,616	149,045
Columbia	2,484	1,873	2,573	1,765	2,473	1,851	2,453	1,989	2,590	2,196
Cowlitz	46,159	26,375	47,863	29,469	49,860	27,576	52,299	31,643	55,265	37,783
Douglas	14,784	9,191	16,141	9,251	16,354	9,227	17,425	11,295	18,172	13,458
Ferry	3,516	2,702	3,740	2,818	3,878	2,765	3,977	2,867	4,280	3,300
Franklin	16,224	10,652	17,439	10,823	18,100	10,228	19,896	13,034	25,349	17,557
Garfield	1,563	1,239	1,706	1,314	1,505	1,012	1,470	1,236	1,537	1,210
Grant	27,677	18,364	28,717	18,134	32,121	18,401	30,050	20,146	33,532	24,425
Grays Harbor	35,077	21,116	35,317	21,956	31,725	18,842	34,164	22,296	35,791	26,050
Island	34,153	24,268	36,881	25,606	39,992	26,086	44,065	30,503	47,782	36,513
Jefferson	15,970	11,270	17,247	12,900	18,561	13,746	20,973	16,259	21,746	17,738
King	926,335	539,396	1,005,074	619,104	1,031,348	548,353	974,340	635,753	1,069,791	766,477
Kitsap	113,118	68,446	122,900	83,958	125,344	79,011	133,484	91,073	143,796	105,747
Kittitas	15,938	10,138	15,962	11,047	16,636	10,182	18,246	12,490	20,193	15,466
Klickitat	9,123	5,889	11,044	6,441	11,006	6,492	11,109	7,547	12,415	8,905
Lewis	35,983	23,291	39,999	25,213	41,543	23,924	38,852	25,652	41,972	31,414
Lincoln	5,879	4,846	6,636	4,644	6,227	4,389	6,415	4,898	6,983	5,536
Mason	24,791	16,464	27,766	18,921	27,231	17,253	30,571	21,504	33,344	25,347
Okanogan	16,349	11,233	18,034	11,951	19,165	11,985	19,521	13,193	20,510	15,043
Pacific	11,862	7,531	12,410	8,108	12,375	7,781	12,387	8,861	12,988	9,981
Pend Oreille	9,158	4,384	6,807	4,876	7,025	4,769	7,383	5,297	7,824	6,007
Pierce	325,704	171,560	338,116	209,340	347,702	192,734	373,909	216,574	410,081	272,587
San Juan	8,643	6,429	9,152	7,086	9,721	7,064	10,656	8,304	11,606	9,382
Skagit	50,566	34,427	54,982	35,621	59,156	33,681	59,949	41,641	64,138	48,960
Skamania	4,951	3,259	5,383	3,389	5,607	3,531	6,301	4,160	6,570	4,666
Snohomish	285,151	157,838	304,541	189,230	318,170	181,075	334,369	208,243	377,739	270,662
Spokane	215,806	147,219	219,266	129,552	226,493	132,843	235,535	157,335	261,250	186,250
Stevens	20,322	14,309	24,908	13,900	26,587	14,644	25,439	17,383	26,931	20,091
Thurston	106,412	67,323	119,604	79,202	130,689	73,859	134,907	85,011	149,024	107,344
Wahkiakum	2,272	1,752	2,415	1,908	2,484	1,892	2,655	1,871	2,644	2,096
Walla Walla	25,448	17,358	26,833	15,959	26,062	15,438	26,921	18,302	30,183	21,598
Whatcom	85,670	48,749	90,258	57,090	91,656	55,066	102,819	69,782	116,581	86,993
Whitman	23,776	14,016	26,038	13,141	21,414	10,931	17,968	13,214	19,128	13,817
Yakima	80,904	51,914	90,469	53,958	89,627	48,537	91,722	55,584	99,568	63,163
Registered Voters	2,899,519	1,733,471	3,119,562	1,939,421	3,209,648	1,808,720	3,264,511	2,107,370	3,601,268	2,565,589
Population	5,291,600		5,685,800		6,059,300		6,420,300		6,724,500	
Election Turnout		59.78%		62.17%		56.35%		64.55%		71.24%
% of Pop. Voting		32.76%		34.11%		29.85%		32.82%		38.15%

Appendix C. Election Costs and Budget Data

COUNTY	1992 Reg. Voters	1992 Elect Cost	1992 Cost per ballot	1994 Reg. Voters	1994 Elect Cost	1994 Cost per ballot	1996 Reg. Voters	1996 Elect Cost	1996 Cost per ballot	1998 Reg. Voters	1998 Elect Cost	1998 Cost per ballot	2000 Reg. Voters	2000 Elect Cost	2000 Cost per ballot	2002 Reg. Voters	2002 Elect Cost	2002 Cost per ballot	2004 Reg. Voters	2004 Elect Cost	2004 Cost per ballot	2006 Reg. Voters	2006 Elect Cost	2006 Cost per ballot	2008 Reg. Voters	2008 Elect Cost	2008 Cost per ballot	2010 Reg. Voters	2010 Elect Cost	2010 Cost per ballot	2012 Reg. Voters	2012 Elect Cost	2012 Cost per ballot	COUNTY
Adams	5,886	\$ 11,738.43	\$ 1.99	5,726	\$ 12,038.43	\$ 2.10	6,307	\$ 16,161.73	\$ 2.56	6,443	\$ 15,012.80	\$ 2.33	6,591	\$ 16,940.80	\$ 2.57	6,088	\$ 22,992.90	\$ 3.78	6,477	\$ 24,105.97	\$ 3.72	5,930	\$ 19,671.83	\$ 3.32	6,191	\$ 25,279.18	\$ 4.08	5,998	\$ 24,464.65	\$ 4.08	6,457	\$ 24,001.21	\$ 3.72	Adams
Asotin	9,729	\$ -	\$ -	10,911	\$ -	\$ -	12,206	\$ -	\$ -	13,413	\$ -	\$ -	13,228	\$ -	\$ -	11,907	\$ -	\$ -	11,805	\$ -	\$ -	11,375	\$ -	\$ -	12,012	\$ -	\$ -	12,270	\$ -	\$ -	13,632	\$ -	\$ -	Asotin
Benton	65,475	\$ -	\$ -	70,570	\$ -	\$ -	78,840	\$ -	\$ -	72,173	\$ -	\$ -	79,583	\$ -	\$ -	77,043	\$ -	\$ -	85,586	\$ 175,534.33	\$ 2.05	76,910	\$ 135,941.89	\$ 1.77	87,059	\$ 171,050.72	\$ 1.96	88,498	\$ 155,498.82	\$ 1.76	97,849	\$ 140,120.29	\$ 1.43	Benton
Chelan	28,505	\$ 55,681.79	\$ 1.95	30,786	\$ 64,030.54	\$ 2.08	34,210	\$ 59,123.41	\$ 1.73	34,709	\$ 58,864.89	\$ 1.70	32,665	\$ 62,757.43	\$ 1.92	32,703	\$ 79,199.43	\$ 2.42	37,395	\$ 96,895.32	\$ 2.59	35,314	\$ 87,695.66	\$ 2.48	38,650	\$ 106,822.58	\$ 2.76	37,972	\$ 105,036.21	\$ 2.77	40,293	\$ 118,117.01	\$ 2.93	Chelan
Clallam	34,667	\$ 80,623.47	\$ 2.33	37,310	\$ 83,168.19	\$ 2.23	41,922	\$ 84,753.39	\$ 2.02	38,309	\$ 87,701.75	\$ 2.29	40,285	\$ 87,912.38	\$ 2.18	39,383	\$ 73,599.94	\$ 1.87	43,520	\$ 59,648.52	\$ 1.37	43,483	\$ 86,183.97	\$ 1.98	45,766	\$ 123,752.38	\$ 2.70	45,611	\$ 133,123.82	\$ 2.92	47,157	\$ 135,734.52	\$ 2.88	Clallam
Clark	129,869	\$ 288,454.21	\$ 2.22	142,448	\$ 229,109.89	\$ 1.61	158,080	\$ 310,885.35	\$ 1.97	168,294	\$ 259,468.66	\$ 1.54	183,249	\$ 401,032.05	\$ 2.19	174,687	\$ 294,788.60	\$ 1.69	207,611	\$ 577,284.74	\$ 2.78	189,269	\$ 399,799.67	\$ 2.11	216,508	\$ 665,879.00	\$ 3.08	219,616	\$ 445,665.00	\$ 2.03	243,155	\$ 672,528.00	\$ 2.77	Clark
Columbia	2,452	\$ 8,207.00	\$ 3.35	2,484	\$ 6,107.00	\$ 2.46	2,746	\$ 8,873.00	\$ 3.23	2,573	\$ 6,821.00	\$ 2.65	2,594	\$ 8,923.00	\$ 3.44	2,473	\$ 7,127.00	\$ 2.88	2,542	\$ 9,506.00	\$ 3.74	2,453	\$ 2,258.00	\$ 0.92	2,585	\$ 2,878.00	\$ 1.11	2,590	\$ 2,582.00	\$ 1.00	2,661	\$ 2,525.00	\$ 0.95	Columbia
Cowitz	42,360	\$ 89,914.79	\$ 2.12	46,159	\$ 81,212.23	\$ 1.76	46,836	\$ 110,252.32	\$ 2.35	47,863	\$ 82,869.69	\$ 1.73	50,737	\$ 116,331.52	\$ 2.29	49,860	\$ 87,524.57	\$ 1.76	53,914	\$ 130,331.26	\$ 2.42	52,299	\$ 114,514.66	\$ 2.19	55,331	\$ 144,804.13	\$ 2.62	55,265	\$ 122,560.43	\$ 2.22	58,555	\$ 136,773.89	\$ 2.34	Cowitz
Douglas	13,561	\$ 42,551.55	\$ 3.14	14,784	\$ 44,212.25	\$ 2.99	15,114	\$ 43,592.46	\$ 2.88	16,141	\$ 43,525.50	\$ 2.70	17,762	\$ 56,785.69	\$ 3.20	16,354	\$ 45,695.25	\$ 2.79	16,994	\$ 58,430.53	\$ 3.44	17,425	\$ 61,278.38	\$ 3.52	18,936	\$ 75,154.12	\$ 3.97	18,172	\$ 74,041.61	\$ 4.07	19,140	\$ 81,564.24	\$ 4.26	Douglas
Ferry	3,313	\$ 10,211.00	\$ 3.08	3,516	\$ 8,489.00	\$ 2.41	3,809	\$ 9,649.00	\$ 2.53	3,740	\$ 12,726.16	\$ 3.40	4,015	\$ 17,962.66	\$ 4.47	3,878	\$ 16,643.29	\$ 4.29	4,088	\$ 16,643.29	\$ 4.07	3,977	\$ 10,644.78	\$ 2.68	4,259	\$ 9,584.35	\$ 2.25	4,280	\$ 10,433.78	\$ 2.44	4,476	\$ 8,050.86	\$ 1.80	Ferry
Franklin	15,783	\$ 54,539.95	\$ 3.46	16,224	\$ 43,763.42	\$ 2.70	17,401	\$ 48,247.10	\$ 2.77	17,439	\$ 40,747.21	\$ 2.34	17,805	\$ 52,032.65	\$ 2.92	18,100	\$ 56,791.02	\$ 3.14	21,235	\$ 84,769.62	\$ 3.99	19,896	\$ 109,242.00	\$ 5.49	23,530	\$ 116,736.84	\$ 4.96	25,349	\$ 98,713.13	\$ 3.89	26,760	\$ 137,821.88	\$ 5.15	Franklin
Garfield	1,572	\$ 5,764.83	\$ 3.67	1,563	\$ 5,927.14	\$ 3.79	1,675	\$ 5,940.72	\$ 3.55	1,706	\$ 6,163.93	\$ 3.61	1,699	\$ 6,421.36	\$ 3.78	1,505	\$ 6,707.59	\$ 4.46	1,524	\$ 7,042.88	\$ 4.62	1,470	\$ 3,021.71	\$ 2.06	1,564	\$ 2,765.94	\$ 1.77	1,537	\$ 2,780.75	\$ 1.81	1,531	\$ 2,821.14	\$ 1.84	Garfield
Grant	26,805	\$ 69,433.11	\$ 2.59	27,677	\$ 66,121.45	\$ 2.39	29,622	\$ 71,454.00	\$ 2.41	28,717	\$ 68,174.22	\$ 2.37	30,922	\$ 66,243.11	\$ 2.14	32,121	\$ 72,825.88	\$ 2.27	32,760	\$ 67,225.21	\$ 2.05	30,050	\$ 64,351.59	\$ 2.14	32,910	\$ 68,723.80	\$ 2.09	33,532	\$ 32,793.82	\$ 0.98	36,499	\$ 49,950.62	\$ 1.37	Grant
Grays Harbor	33,060	\$ 67,458.00	\$ 2.04	35,077	\$ 69,103.00	\$ 1.97	37,712	\$ 79,900.00	\$ 2.12	35,317	\$ 82,664.00	\$ 2.34	35,434	\$ 118,402.00	\$ 3.34	31,725	\$ 68,559.00	\$ 2.16	36,647	\$ 93,095.00	\$ 2.54	34,164	\$ 68,560.00	\$ 2.01	36,702	\$ 106,958.00	\$ 2.91	35,791	\$ 90,809.00	\$ 2.54	38,307	\$ 71,695.00	\$ 1.87	Grays Harbor
Island	33,014	\$ -	\$ -	34,153	\$ -	\$ -	39,406	\$ -	\$ -	36,881	\$ -	\$ -	39,863	\$ -	\$ -	39,992	\$ 102,112.23	\$ 2.55	43,688	\$ 128,454.22	\$ 2.94	44,065	\$ 108,233.12	\$ 2.46	47,629	\$ 145,532.88	\$ 3.06	47,782	\$ 109,379.10	\$ 2.29	50,389	\$ 142,050.89	\$ 2.82	Island
Jefferson	15,136	\$ 52,417.92	\$ 3.46	15,970	\$ 56,776.78	\$ 3.56	18,087	\$ 53,288.88	\$ 2.95	17,247	\$ 49,742.62	\$ 2.88	18,891	\$ 59,890.65	\$ 3.17	18,561	\$ 46,030.31	\$ 2.48	21,165	\$ 53,372.13	\$ 2.52	20,973	\$ 55,017.23	\$ 2.62	22,160	\$ 57,066.89	\$ 2.58	21,746	\$ 49,788.58	\$ 2.29	22,756	\$ 52,682.27	\$ 2.32	Jefferson
King	943,396	\$ 1,519,122.00	\$ 1.61	926,335	\$ 1,577,953.00	\$ 1.70	976,656	\$ 1,815,935.00	\$ 1.86	1,005,074	\$ 2,576,190.00	\$ 2.56	1,073,280	\$ 3,089,641.00	\$ 2.88	1,031,348	\$ 2,650,389.00	\$ 2.57	1,082,406	\$ 4,107,041.00	\$ 3.79	974,340	\$ 4,650,465.00	\$ 4.77	1,108,128	\$ 7,834,195.00	\$ 7.07	1,069,791	\$ 5,006,021.00	\$ 4.68	1,170,638	\$ 6,927,178.00	\$ 5.92	King
Kitsap	108,470	\$ 238,525.14	\$ 2.20	113,118	\$ 156,940.17	\$ 1.39	124,714	\$ 228,538.32	\$ 1.83	122,900	\$ 225,549.71	\$ 1.84	131,950	\$ 296,212.86	\$ 2.24	125,344	\$ 338,086.61	\$ 2.70	138,956	\$ 446,636.59	\$ 3.21	133,484	\$ 421,891.21	\$ 3.16	144,690	\$ 442,329.73	\$ 3.06	143,796	\$ 536,302.95	\$ 3.73	152,681	\$ 501,559.98	\$ 3.29	Kitsap
Kittitas	15,366	\$ 49,213.11	\$ 3.20	15,938	\$ 40,132.11	\$ 2.52	18,555	\$ 52,348.44	\$ 2.82	15,962	\$ 43,202.11	\$ 2.71	18,491	\$ 56,735.45	\$ 3.07	16,636	\$ 42,485.33	\$ 2.55	19,817	\$ 65,201.22	\$ 3.29	18,246	\$ 46,483.34	\$ 2.55	20,631	\$ 51,297.02	\$ 2.49	20,193	\$ 43,761.04	\$ 2.17	22,068	\$ 50,629.31	\$ 2.29	Kittitas
Klickitat	8,843	\$ 27,220.12	\$ 3.08	9,123	\$ 19,935.17	\$ 2.19	10,405	\$ 30,673.11	\$ 2.95	11,044	\$ 22,814.42	\$ 2.07	11,753	\$ 29,330.16	\$ 2.50	11,006	\$ 27,445.34	\$ 2.49	12,163	\$ 30,553.17	\$ 2.51	11,109	\$ 36,477.92	\$ 3.28	12,171	\$ 35,934.37	\$ 2.95	12,415	\$ 26,003.41	\$ 2.09	13,093	\$ 30,105.93	\$ 2.30	Klickitat
Lewis	33,696	\$ 63,755.06	\$ 1.89	35,983	\$ 66,965.53	\$ 1.86	39,240	\$ 70,176.00	\$ 1.79	39,999	\$ 73,386.47	\$ 1.83	42,308	\$ 76,904.68	\$ 1.82	41,543	\$ 79,624.19	\$ 1.92	38,007	\$ 68,512.22	\$ 1.80	38,852	\$ 58,922.61	\$ 1.52	41,635	\$ 73,668.14	\$ 1.77	41,972	\$ 75,090.21	\$ 1.79	44,287	\$ 74,274.64	\$ 1.68	Lewis
Lincoln	5,891	\$ 12,827.00	\$ 2.18	5,879	\$ 15,380.00	\$ 2.62	6,507	\$ 18,505.00	\$ 2.84	6,636	\$ 21,744.00	\$ 3.28	6,614	\$ 24,238.00	\$ 3.66	6,227	\$ 26,425.00	\$ 4.24	6,642	\$ 29,320.00	\$ 4.41	6,415	\$ 30,211.00	\$ 4.71	6,899	\$ 31,019.00	\$ 4.50	6,983	\$ 25,284.00	\$ 3.62	7,059	\$ 35,546.00	\$ 5.04	Lincoln
Mason	23,613	\$ 26,112.00	\$ 1.11	24,791	\$ 44,231.00	\$ 1.78	26,272	\$ 27,541.00	\$ 1.05	27,766	\$ 46,493.00	\$ 1.67	28,777	\$ 66,301.95	\$ 2.30	27,231	\$ 37,803.25	\$ 1.39	31,083	\$ 97,909.30	\$ 3.15	30,571	\$ 81,711.65	\$ 2.67	32,828	\$ 85,085.19	\$ 2.59	33,344	\$ 76,836.54	\$ 2.30	35,268	\$ 85,380.66	\$ 2.42	Mason
Okanogan	16,720	\$ 32,444.85	\$ 1.94	16,349	\$ 30,918.29	\$ 1.89	17,407	\$ 39,109.34	\$ 2.25	18,034	\$ 35,072.36	\$ 1.94	19,500	\$ 44,320.43	\$ 2.27	19,165	\$ 45,981.28	\$ 2.40	20,066	\$ 42,861.29	\$ 2.14	19,521	\$ 36,096.09	\$ 1.85	20,562	\$ 43,284.30	\$ 2.11	20,510	\$ 41,382.93	\$ 2.02	21,344	\$ 42,863.11	\$ 2.01	Okanogan
Pacific	11,248	\$ 34,097.60	\$ 3.03	11,862	\$ 31,641.56	\$ 2.67	12,418	\$ 33,377.74	\$ 2.69	12,410	\$ 28,245.83	\$ 2.28	12,711	\$ 36,543.87	\$ 2.87	12,375	\$ 40,296.54	\$ 3.26	13,195	\$ 33,121.22	\$ 2.51	12,387	\$ 26,459.86	\$ 2.14	13,052	\$ 50,839.43	\$ 3.90	12,988	\$ 32,339.74	\$ 2.49	13,431	\$ 43,975.79	\$ 3.27	Pacific
Pend Oreille	5,986	\$ 25,041.23	\$ 4.18	9,158	\$ 21,634.01	\$ 2.36	6,948	\$ 26,383.95	\$ 3.80	6,807	\$ 22,682.97	\$ 3.33	7,095	\$ 20,371.67	\$ 2.87	7,025	\$ 18,505.24	\$ 2.63	7,486	\$ 23,887.19	\$ 3.19	7,383	\$ 26,778.80	\$ 3.63	7,799	\$ 27,987.38	\$ 3.59	7,824	\$ 30,505.41	\$ 3.90	8,264	\$ 35,310.27	\$ 4.27	Pend Oreille
Pierce	314,777	\$ 799,112.00	\$ 2.54	325,704	\$ 740,211.00	\$ 2.27	316,555	\$ 812,421.00	\$ 2.57	338,116	\$ 758,051.00	\$ 2.24	360,463	\$ 900,625.00	\$ 2.50	347,702	\$ 704,701.00	\$ 2.03	405,023	\$ 1,099,399.00	\$ 2.71	373,909	\$ 949,268											

## Appendix D. Statewide Ballot Initiatives and Referendum Data

2012 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	Ballots Cast and % Voter Participating	AVG %
I 1240 Charter Schools	Yes	1,525,807	3,172,930	94.86%
	No	1,484,125		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>3,009,932</b>		
R74 Same Sex Marriage	Yes	1,659,915	3,091,200	97.42%
	No	1,431,285		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>3,091,200</b>		
I 502 Marijuana Legalization	Yes	1,724,209	3,095,444	97.56%
	No	1,371,235		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>3,095,444</b>		<b>96%</b>
<hr/>				
2010 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	2,565,589	
I 1053 Tax and Fee Limitations	Yes	1,575,655	2,471,488	96.33%
	No	895,833		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,471,488</b>		
I 1098 State Income Tax	Yes	903,319	2,519,592	98.21%
	No	1,616,273		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,519,592</b>		
I 1100 Closure of State Liquor Stores	Yes	1,175,302	2,523,515	98.36%
	No	1,348,213		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,523,515</b>		
I 1105 Concerning liquor (beer, wine and spirits).	Yes	878,687	2,513,203	97.96%
	No	1,634,516		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,513,203</b>		
I 1107 State Tax Law Revision	Yes	1,522,658	2,519,419	98.20%
	No	996,761		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,519,419</b>		<b>98%</b>
<hr/>				
2008 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	3,071,587	
I 985 Transportation Funding	Yes	1,163,216	2,907,372	94.65%
	No	1,744,156		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,907,372</b>		
I 1000 Physician Assisted Suicide	Yes	1,715,219	2,966,474	96.58%
	No	1,251,255		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,966,474</b>		
I 1029 Elder Care	Yes	2,113,773	2,914,506	94.89%
	No	800,733		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,914,506</b>		<b>96%</b>
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2006 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	2,107,370	
I 920 Estate Tax Repeal	Yes	778,247	2,036,357	96.63%
	No	1,258,110		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,036,357</b>		
I 933 Repeal Land Use Regulations	Yes	839,992	2,039,671	96.79%
	No	1,199,679		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,039,671</b>		
I 937 Energy Conservation Programs	Yes	1,042,679	2,015,426	95.64%
	No	972,747		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,015,426</b>		<b>97%</b>
<hr/>				
2004 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	2,884,783	
I 873 Top Two Primary	Yes	1,632,225	2,727,415	94.54%
	No	1,095,190		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,727,415</b>		
I 884 School Funding	Yes	1,102,996	2,757,108	95.57%
	No	1,654,112		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,757,108</b>		
I 892 Gambling Expanded	Yes	1,069,414	2,781,199	96.41%
	No	1,711,785		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,781,199</b>		
R 55 Charter Schools	Yes	1,122,964	2,695,167	93.43%
	No	1,572,203		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,695,167</b>		
I 297 Radioactive Waste	Yes	1,812,581	2,623,376	90.94%
	No	810,795		
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>2,623,376</b>		<b>94%</b>

Table Continues

2002 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	Ballots Cast and % Voter Participating	AVG %
			1,808,720	
I 776 \$30 License Tabs	Yes	901,478		
	No	849,986		
Total Votes		<b>1,751,464</b>	96.83%	
I 790 Firefighters Pension	Yes	903,113		
	No	800,105		
Total Votes		<b>1,703,218</b>	94.17%	
R 53 Unemployment Insurance	Yes	665,760		
	No	966,901		
Total Votes		<b>1,632,661</b>	90.27%	
R 51 Transportation Taxes	Yes	674,724		
	No	1,081,580		
Total Votes		<b>1,756,304</b>	97.10%	<b>95%</b>
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2006 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	2,517,028	
I 713 Trapping Prohibition	Yes	1,315,903		
	No	1,093,587		
Total Votes		<b>2,409,490</b>	95.73%	
I 722 Property Tax Increases	Yes	1,295,391		
	No	1,022,349		
Total Votes		<b>2,317,740</b>	92.08%	
I 728 School Construction Funding	Yes	1,714,485		
	No	675,635		
Total Votes		<b>2,390,120</b>	94.96%	
I 729 Charter Schools	Yes	1,125,766		
	No	1,211,390		
Total Votes		<b>2,337,156</b>	92.85%	
I 732 Educator COLA	Yes	1,501,261		
	No	893,601		
Total Votes		<b>2,394,862</b>	95.15%	
I 745 Transportation Funding	Yes	955,329		
	No	1,394,387		
Total Votes		<b>2,349,716</b>	93.35%	<b>94%</b>
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1998 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	1,939,421	
I 200 Prohibiting Discrimination	Yes	1,099,410		
	No	788,930		
Total Votes		<b>1,888,340</b>	97.37%	
I 688 Minimum Wage Increase	Yes	1,259,470		
	No	644,764		
Total Votes		<b>1,904,234</b>	98.19%	
I 692 Medical Marijuana	Yes	1,121,851		
	No	780,631		
Total Votes		<b>1,902,482</b>	98.10%	
I 694 Abortion Felony	Yes	802,376		
	No	1,070,360		
Total Votes		<b>1,872,736</b>	96.56%	
R 49 Motor Vehicle Taxes	Yes	1,056,786		
	No	792,783		
Total Votes		<b>1,849,569</b>	95.37%	<b>97%</b>
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1996 Ballot Issues	Y/N	Votes	2,293,895	
I 173 Private School Vouchers	Yes	775,281		
	No	1,406,433		
Total Votes		<b>2,181,714</b>	95.11%	
I 177 Independent Schools	Yes	762,367		
	No	1,380,816		
Total Votes		<b>2,143,183</b>	93.43%	
I 655 Dog Hunting	Yes	1,387,577		
	No	815,385		
Total Votes		<b>2,202,962</b>	96.04%	
I 670 Term Limits	Yes	937,873		
	No	1,146,865		
Total Votes		<b>2,084,738</b>	90.88%	
I 671 Tribal Gaming	Yes	934,344		
	No	1,222,492		
Total Votes		<b>2,156,836</b>	94.03%	<b>94%</b>

Table Continues

1994 Ballot Issues		Y/N	1,733,471	
I 607 Denturists	Yes		955,960	
	No		703,619	
Total Votes			<b>1,659,579</b>	95.74%
R 43 Sales Tax for Anti Drug Programs	Yes		947,847	
	No		712,575	
Total Votes			<b>1,660,422</b>	95.79% <b>96%</b>
1992 Ballot Issues		Y/N	2,324,907	
I 134 Campaign Funding Limitations	Yes		1,549,297	
	No		576,161	
Total Votes			<b>2,125,458</b>	91.42%
I 573 Term Limits	Yes		1,119,985	
	No		1,018,260	
Total Votes			<b>2,138,245</b>	91.97% <b>92%</b>

## Curriculum Vitae

**Patrick J. McDonald**

*Email: patrick.mcdonald@waldenu.edu*

### Professional Profile

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- Accomplished career demonstrating success and growth in the area of state government, international trade, and state and overseas election assistance and oversight.
- Seasoned in building programs and projects from the ground up through proven competencies in event and program management, protocol, and facilities management.
- Extensive worldwide travel experience including set up and management of high-level trade missions, assessment, and management of civil affairs projects in war torn regions, and cultural, historical, and linguistic training and comprehension.
- Effective communicator with strong organizational, planning, and organizational skills, especially in the area of consensus and goal establishment and project or situational leadership.

### Education

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- **Ph.D. Student, Public Policy, and Administration**, Walden University, Minneapolis, MN, 2014 – Present. DISSERTATION: An Analysis of the Affects of Vote by Mail on Voter Turnout, Cost of Elections, and Ballot Completion in the State of Washington
- **M.P.A., Masters in Public Administration**, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA, 1997
- **B.A., Political Science, American History, and Religious Studies**, Saint Martin's University, Lacey, WA, 1984

### Highlights of Professional Experience

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**Facilities Director**, Office of the Secretary of State, State of Washington, 2000 to Present

- Manage agency facilities and janitorial and mail room staff
- Oversaw the post-earthquake move of the Secretary of State's Executive offices, and managed the renovation of both the temporary building and Legislative Building;
- Manage protocol, security, and events organization in the capital building office
- Represent the office on the Legislative Building Tenant Committee.
- Assist with constituent relations and outreach to military bases



### **Command Sergeant Major, United States Army Reserve, 1994 – Present**

- **July 2013 – 2014:** Attended the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, TX.
- **April 2005 – June 2006 and August 2008 – August 2009:** Deployed to Iraq as part of Multi-national Forces Iraq Civil Military Operations – Elections Branch and assisted with the set-up and execution of the Iraqi Constitutional Referendum, Council of Representatives elections, and provincial elections. Set up programs that provided for 200,000+ Iraqi Army and Police forces and 17,000+ detained individuals to vote. Assisted the command of the operation with election procedure advice and taught the Iraqi Army command about civil-military operations (refugee resettlement, humanitarian assistance, and peacekeeping operations).
- **September 2003 – April 2004:** Lead administrative and personnel manager for a company level (48 personnel) deployed Civil Affairs Battalion in Kosovo. Assisted with refugee resettlement programs, civil military outreach, and peacekeeping operations as part of a larger NATO force.
- **December 1995 - July 1996:** Assisted the Commander of U.S. Army Civil Affairs with administrative and personnel planning during Operation Joint Endeavor in the Former Yugoslavia. Assisted NATO and the Bosnian government with elections planning and execution, governmental rebuilding, and refugee resettlement.
- **January to July 1995:** Served with the 448th Civil Affairs Battalion in the Republic of Haiti providing the U.S. Special Operations Commander with administrative assistance and assisting the Haitian government with elections planning, government restructuring and refugee resettlement.

### **Early Career**

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- **Campaign Manager, Sam Reed for Secretary of State Committee, Olympia, WA, 1999-2000**
- **Staff Assistant, Clinical Resource and Quality Management Departments, St. Peter Hospital, Olympia, WA, 1991-1994, 1996-1998**
- **Legislative Assistant/Consultant, Department of Social and Health Services, Olympia, Washington, 1989-1991**
- **Administrative/Legislative Assistant, Washington State House of Representatives, Olympia, Washington, 1987 – 1989**
- **Executive Assistant/Information Officer, Washington Public Ports Association, Olympia, Washington, 1986**
- **Legislative Aid/Staff Liaison, Washington State Senate, Olympia, Washington, 1985**
- **Legislative Intern/Office Assistant, Office of the Governor, Olympia, Washington, 1983-1985**

## **Presentations**

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- McDonald, Patrick J. (2006), “An Overview of Implementing Civilian Elections in a Warzone.” Presented at the National Association of Secretary of State’s summer conference, Santa Fe, NM.
- McDonald, Patrick J. (2009), “Creating a Presidential Archives from Scratch: Setting up Saddam Hussein’s Archives in Baghdad, 2005.” National Association of Archivists, Fall National Conference, Seattle, WA
- McDonald, Patrick J. (2012), “Setting up and Executing a Successful Trade Mission.” National Association of Secretaries of State, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

## **Professional Affiliations**

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- National Board Member, Civil Affairs Association, 2006 – Present
- Member, American Political Science Association, 2011 – Present
- Member, World Trade Center – Tacoma, 2001 - Present
- Member, Washington State Historical Society, 1996 - Present

## **Conferences**

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- National Secretary of State’s (NASS) Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA (2003); Santa Fe, NM( 2006); Portland, OR (2009); San Juan, PR (2012).

## **Community Service**

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- Board Member, Olympia City Arts Commission, 1999 - 2001
- Member, Washington State Centennial Celebration, 1989
- Board Member, Washington Territorial Sesquicentennial Commission, 2002-03
- Committee Member, Governor’s Inaugural Ball Committee, 2000, 2004, and 2012
- Member, Association of the U.S. Army, Fort Lewis Chapter, 2001 - Present
- Member, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 318, 1996 – Present
- Member, Veteran’s Legislative Coalition (Vice-Chair 1998-99), 1997 – 2001
- Member, Olympia World Affairs Council (Vice-President 1997-99), 1994 – 2001
- Member, Thurston County Better Government League (Secretary 1988), 1984 - 2000