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The close of the first quarter in 2009 finds us at the outset of yet another election. Municipal elections in five cities, New Port Richey, Port Richey, San Antonio, St. Leo and Zephyrhills will be held April 14 for voters residing within these city limits.

Municipal elections are funded by the individual cities with my office serving as facilitator. City candidates work through city halls to file qualifying paperwork and establish their candidacy. City Clerks serve as their liaison to the Division of Elections as well as the city's council in coordinating efforts to bring referenda and amendments to the ballot. In the meantime, we have already begun the arduous task of election preparation. These elections may be small, but are no less important. In typical Pasco County fashion, we will fulfill our obligation with extreme attention to detail and accuracy.

Once the candidates and issues are established, my office begins ballot preparation. This seemingly simple task involves not only the appearance and layout of the paper ballot, but also the software programming used by the optical scanners and tabulation equipment. The first step is to establish an "election definition" which directs the

operation of the optical scanners and tabulation equipment. It establishes the precincts and contests involved, designates the physical coordinates within the paper ballot where votes will be located, and specifies the interpretation of what a vote cast within that location means.

The layout of the paper ballot is governed by a "Uniform Ballot Rule" which establishes statutory requirements as it relates to appearance, pointsize, headings, titles and ballot placement order. As a cost saving measure, the ballots for this small election will be printed in-house using 18 high-speed laser printers. The equipment is dependent upon meticulous printing in order to "read" the timing track, take direction from the code channel and to precisely locate votes on the ballot as defined in the election definition. A customized ballot must be prepared for each city and put through the rigors of testing.

Meanwhile, other staff will begin staging the optical scanners, tabulators, Electronic Voter Identification Devices (EVIDs), and the audio touchscreen voting machines used by those with disabilities. All machines must be cleared and tested, prepped and cleaned, and put through test runs to insure they

are functioning properly and are able to modem results. All Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS) or battery backups will be charged. All supplies, materials and signage sent in totes for the pollworkers will be inventoried, replenished and readied for delivery to the polling places.

The state mandates that pollworkers be trained prior to each election. Pollworkers must be assigned and notified, training classes must be scheduled, and training manuals and materials must be prepared. Voter registration staff prepare absentee ballots daily upon request and insure the voter registration roles are current and up-to-date. Voter outreach/education staff ensure the public is notified of the election dates, bookclosing dates, and requirements.

All of this has been happening at my office in tandem with post-election meetings and focus groups in which we reflect upon last election cycle and strategize for the future. The staff keeps a close eye on impending legislation as the session is currently meeting and keeps a constant "ear to the ground" for developments in the field. Proudly, we achieve all of this with a staff of 24 in dedicated service to Pasco County.