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Are vote centers right for Henry County?

Indiana Secretary of State Lawson to explain concept at public meeting
 By DARREL RADFORD

For years, local officials have fielded the same question from residents confused about precinct boundary lines during election time: "Where do I vote?"

Tonight, Henry County residents and local officials will discuss an alternative to traditional precinct elections that could provide a simple answer to that question for years to come.

Indiana Secretary of State Connie Lawson will present Henry County Commissioners with information on vote centers during a 6 p.m. meeting in the old Circuit Court Room. Lawson will highlight how the vote center model can reduce costs of elections while, at the same time, provide voters with the convenience of choosing where they vote.

Simply put, instead of having to wait in a small town hall or fire station's crowded parking lot before voting, a person could conceivably cast their ballot at a grocery store on their way home from work.

In 2006, the Indiana General Assembly established "pilot" vote centers in Tippecanoe, Cass and Wayne counties that allowed voters from any precinct to cast their ballots at common locations in the county.

The Indiana Policy Institute recently did a study on vote centers and found they would produce significant savings for all counties that implemented them, give election officials more flexibility to anticipate voter turnout and deploy staff more effectively.

It also found implementation of vote centers could significantly reduce the number of voting machines necessary to conduct an election. Voting machines typically cost \$4,000 and need to be replaced about every 10 years.

The institutes' report said establishment of more vote centers could significantly reduce the cost of operating more than 5,000 precincts across the state. Each one of those is staffed by a minimum of five poll workers.

Since the three-county pilot program, other counties submitting vote center plans to the Secretary of State's office include Vanderburgh, Fayette, Blackford, Johnson, Switzerland and Floyd counties.

More information on vote centers is available at <http://www.in.gov/sos/elections/3574.htm>.

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