



SATELLITE VOTING: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is early voting?

Early voting is one of three absentee voting methods made available to voters by Indiana state law. The other two methods are vote by mail and by traveling board (a bi-partisan team that assists voters who are confined to their home).

What is the difference between voting by mail and early voting?

To vote by mail, you must submit an application to the Election Board indicating a reason why you cannot go to your polling location on Election Day. You do not have to submit a copy of your government issued photo ID to vote by mail. Once the application is approved, the Election Board mails a ballot to you. You complete the ballot, seal it in a security envelope, sign it and return in by mail in the postage paid envelope. The ballot is then delivered to your precinct on Election Day.

Any voter can choose to vote early. While you are required to complete an absentee application on site, you do not need to provide a reason why you are voting early. You must also provide a government issued photo ID. The ballot is completed on-site and sealed in an envelope that is signed before a bi-partisan team. The ballot is then delivered to your precinct on Election Day.

When does early voting start?

State law requires early voting in the general, primary and municipal elections to begin in the Clerk's office 29 days before the election. Early voting ends promptly at noon the Monday before the election. For the November 2, 2010 general election, early voting will begin on Monday, October 4 and end at noon on Monday, November 1.

What is satellite voting?

It's the same as early voting, but held at sites unanimously selected by the Election Board - in addition to the Clerk's office. In Marion County, the satellite locations have traditionally opened the last ten days before an election to give voters more convenient and flexible voting options.

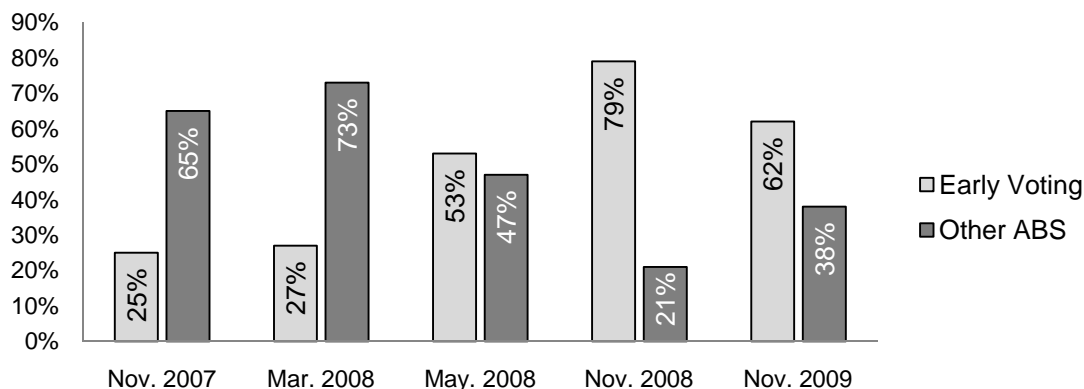
Why can't the county clerk open satellite sites on her own?

State law is very clear: satellite early voting locations must be unanimously selected by the bi-partisan Election Board. The clerk cannot unilaterally open locations outside of her office.

BACKGROUND

Early voting has grown in popularity in Marion County since the November 2007 municipal election, where 25% of absentee voters chose to vote early (figure 1).

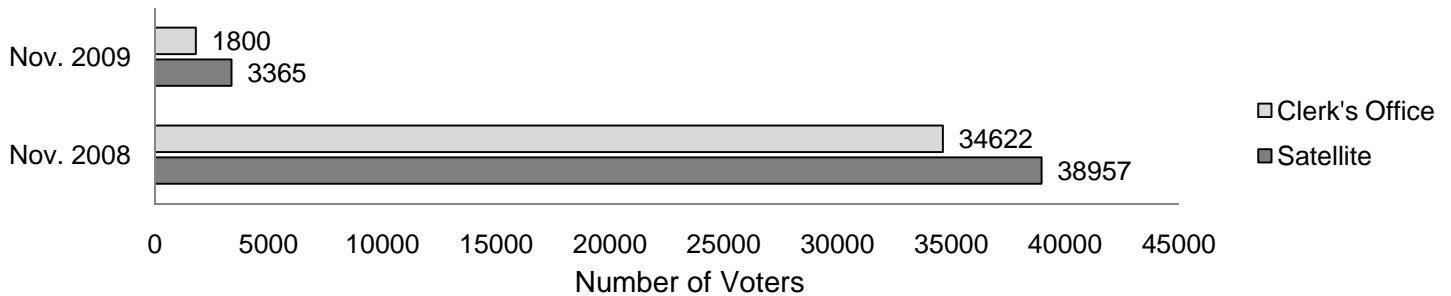
**Figure 1:
Increased Popularity in Early Voting**



To build on the community's early voting enthusiasm, the Marion County Election Board adopted a resolution in December 2007 to form a 'Satellite Voting Advisory Committee' (SVAC). The bi-partisan committee consisted of two Democratic and two Republican members. Over the summer of 2008, MCEB staff used the SVAC plan to fully develop a staffing plan in an effort to open two satellite early voting sites for the 2008 presidential election. On September 17, 2008, the MCEB unanimously approved a plan to open two sites – the J. Everett Light Career Center and the Southport Community Center. Although only open for 11 days, both sites proved popular as 53% of all early voters visited one of these two satellite sites (figure 2).

Due to the popularity of satellite locations, the Marion County Election Board expanded the program and opened three satellite locations in the 2009 special election. The sites were located on the near west side at the HealthPlex, the northeast side at Devington Plaza and the south side at the Beech Grove Community Center. In both instances, more early voters visited a satellite location than the Clerk's office (figure 2).

Figure 2: Comparison of Early Voting at Satellite Locations vs. Clerk's Office



Marion County's satellite voting effort took a step back in the May 2010 primary election, as the Election Board could not reach an agreement on opening satellite locations. Two of the three suggested sites were used previously (Devington Plaza and the Beech Grove Community Center) and the third site was to open on Indianapolis' northwest side at the Pike Township Trustee's office. After the first failed vote, the Board's chairman whittled the list down to the two sites used before (Devington and Beech Grove). The Board failed again to reach unanimous consensus, as it did when the proposal was amended to include only one satellite location. Despite the Clerk's effort to expand office hours and to open for two full weekends, only 40% of absentee voters opted to vote early at the Clerk's office.

SATELLITE VOTING TIMELINE

- Dec. 17, 2007: Bi-Partisan Satellite Voting Advisory Committee established
- Sept. 17, 2008: MCEB approves satellite voting plan for presidential election
- Oct. 23, 2008: Two satellite voting sites open (J. Everett Light & Southport Community Center)
- Sept. 16, 2009: MCEB approves satellite voting plan for special referendum election
- Oct. 24, 2009: Three satellite voting sites open (Beech Grove, Devington Plaza & HealthPlex)
- Mar. 31, 2010: MCEB fails to reach consensus on satellite voting plan for primary election

Have additional questions? Please feel free to contact the staff at the Marion County Election Board at (317) 327-5100 or send an email to elections@indy.gov.

Do you support opening satellite early voting sites for the November 2, 2010 general election? Show your support by signing our online petition at www.indy.gov/election.