

## Polling Process of the Future

### Background

It is estimated that 750,000 people decided not to vote in 2012 because of long lines at the polls. As a result, the President of the United States called for the formation of a bi-partisan commission to investigate the causes and provide recommendations.

Earlier this year, the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA) presented its unanimous recommendations and set of best practices to the President. Its findings were based upon six months of public hearings, interviews with election officials and academic experts and a national survey of election officials conducted by Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project (VTP).

One of the PCEA's recommendations calls for "state-of-the-art techniques to assure efficient management of polling places" and included a best practice that election officials should take advantage of "resource calculators" hosted by VTP.

With 2014 being an election year, Professor Charles Stewart III, co-director of the VTP and Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Political Science at MIT, took up this call to action and developed a project proposal, Polling Process of the Future. This project expands the knowledge base about the causes of long lines and polling place congestion and then uses that data to both refine existing as well as develop new, practical tools that will help election administrators better allocate resources dedicated to voting. This proposal was successfully funded by the Democracy Fund in July 2014.

### Election Day Research

This research will be conducted at randomly selected polling places in five locations: Bernalillo County, NM; City of Boston, MA; City of Richmond, VA; Fairfax County, VA and Orange County, FL on November 8, 2016. Student researchers will visit polling places to observe and conduct timing studies on the voting process. Data to be recorded include information about the rate at which voters arrive at the polling place as well as how long it takes voters to complete all of the tasks expected.

### Impact

Election administration is a complex task with a myriad of issues to manage and address. The data collected at these various locations on Election Day will be used as evidence to expand the knowledge base of what voters experience at polling places as well as to better inform the models and tools that exist to help election administrators manage their resources.

### Additional Information

Visit: <http://mit.edu/vtp/>

Frequently Asked Questions: <http://web.mit.edu/vtp/FAQ.pdf>

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