

Denver Elections: Vote By Mail Application

By: John Heap, Account Executive

With the dramatic increase in technologies used in our democratic process of election ballot processing, it is not surprising that our tried and true Rapid Extraction Desk has found a place to assist in this process. The nation is moving to a vote-by-mail system to increase participation in elections, in an attempt to keep pace with the increasing demands of a society on the move. Simply put, voters just don't want to spend their precious time traveling to precincts to cast their ballots.

Traditionally, the vote-by-mail system was designed to ensure that absentee voters, i.e. active military, the infirmed, the elderly, or anyone that simply has limited mobility could still participate the election process. Vote-by-mail is the state of Colorado's response to the national trend towards declining voter participation.

The state's all mail ballot and vote center system is designed to simplify the voting process by allowing voters to review the candidates and initiatives from the comfort of their own homes, and then easily send the completed ballot in the mail to their local polling station. In the Colorado system, the ballots are mailed out 22 days prior to the election and are accepted via return mail or in person up to 7:00 PM on the day of the election.

This process has resulted in a variety of procedural challenges, not the least of which is extracting the return mail ballots from the counties' ballot return envelopes. Traditionally, the system required that

volunteers slice open the ballots and manually extract them for stacking, tabulating, and further processing. However, the dramatic increase in the number of return mail ballots without any increase in the size of the processing area required a unique solution -- enter the OPEX Model 72.

Initial testing of the Model 72 with sample ballots showed that the ballots could be extracted at a rate of over 2,000 ballots per hour, dramatically increasing productivity. Even better, the Model 72 reduced the time required to prep the ballots, ultimately resulting in the county's ability to provide election results in a more timely matter.

So how did this new process turn out? As reported in the November 10, 2014 edition of the Denver Post, "While Colorado's 2014 election was primarily about the candidates and initiatives on the ballot, it was also a test of the state's all-mail

ballot and vote center system. Our Verdict: It was a success." According to the Denver Post, in the 2014 election roughly 2 million voters cast ballots -- an increase of over the 1.8 million from 2010.

Although the OPEX Model 72 front-ended a far more complex system of tabulation and ballot processing, OPEX has again shown that our technologies can provide the most efficient and cost effective methods for processing incoming mail.

Our products remain as timely as ever, reaching across a variety of applications and needs in today's ever-changing world.

