



U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

WINNER'S CIRCLE COMMUNICATIONS, LLC Study of First-Time Voters Who Register to Vote by Mail

Focus Group Script and Questions

Background

Introduction

Thank you for joining us today and agreeing to participate in this focus group discussion of your experiences as first-time voters who registered to vote by mail. My name is Meredith Imwalle and I'll be your facilitator, which means it's my job to keep today's session on track by asking a series of open-ended questions, and some more specific ones, intended to stimulate discussion. My colleague, Adam Bourne, will serve as a co-facilitator.

We've organized this focus group as part of a study our company, Winner's Circle Communications, is conducting on behalf of the United States Election Assistance Commission, a federal government agency created to provide guidance to states implementing election reforms that are required by the federal Help America Vote Act, often referred to as HAVA. Since HAVA requires that every state implement certain minimum identification, or ID, requirements for first-time voters like you, we've been asked to find out what your experiences were with registering to vote and voting this year. We hope to use your input to help us determine what state practices are working and how states can best communicate ID requirements to voters.

First let's go over a few ground rules for today:

- Your participation in this focus group is voluntary, and you may stop at any time.
- We hope to gather information about your voting experiences. There are no wrong answers today; please let everyone speak and respect everyone's opinion, even if it is different from your own.
- We will make an audio recording of this session, so that we can be sure not to miss any of your important comments today. The recording will not be released publicly, and it will not be shared with anyone outside of our company.

Voters' Level of Understanding of New Requirements

Before we start our discussion today, we'd like to get a sense of how well each of you understand [STATE'S] voter ID requirements for first-time voters. Adam is handing out a quick quiz that we will give you 15 minutes to complete.

By testing your knowledge of [STATE'S] ID requirements, we are hoping to gauge how effectively your state's elections officials communicated the requirements to you, the voters. So please answer the questions as best you can and don't worry if you don't have all of the answers.

Distribute quizzes; allow participants 15 minutes to complete.

Voters' Experiences Registering to Vote by Mail

Introduction

Now that we've collected your completed quizzes, let's talk about your experiences registering to vote by mail.

Questions

1. We'd like to ask each of you to describe the process of filling out your voter registration application. Please provide an estimate of how long it took you to complete the application and tell us whether you thought the form's instructions for submitting the required identification information (your driver's license number, Social Security Number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number) were easy to understand.
2. If you didn't include your driver's license number, Social Security Number or the last four digits of your Social Security Number with your application, why not?

Prompts

Were the instructions unclear? Do you have a driver's license or Social Security Number? Did you hesitate to include one of these numbers due to privacy or security concerns?

3. If you included a copy of your utility bill or some other document that includes your name and address with your application, why did you choose to do so?

Prompts

Did you believe you were required to include such information with your voter registration application? Were you hoping to save time at the polls by including the information with your application?

Voters' Experiences at the Polls on Election Day

Introduction

Now we'd like to move on and discuss your experiences at the polling place on Election Day.

Questions

4. Were you required to show ID at the polls before you could vote? What kind of ID were you asked to present?
5. Did a poll worker or election official clearly explain what kinds of ID would be accepted?
6. Did you know before you arrived at the polling place that you would be required to show ID? Did you know what kinds of ID would be accepted?
7. Were you able to present an acceptable form of ID at the polling place?
8. Which statement best represents your feelings about being required to present ID and why:
 - "I felt comfortable showing my ID to the poll worker."
 - "I felt singled out or intimidated when I was asked to present ID at the polling place."

Fifteen Minute Break: Let's take a short break and reconvene here in 15 minutes.

Voters' Overall Perceptions of Voter ID Requirements

Introduction

Let's discuss your overall perceptions of [STATE'S] voter ID requirements. Remember, we're interested in your opinions so there are no right or wrong answers. Any feedback you can offer may help the state improve upon current procedures.

Questions

9. Did you find it to be easy or difficult to understand and comply with [STATE'S] voter ID requirements? Why?
10. Do you think [STATE'S] ID requirements for first-time voters are too strict, not strict enough or appropriate?
11. Do you think the requirements made registering to vote more complicated than it should be, less complicated, or do you believe they had no noticeable effect?

12. How about the requirement to show ID at the polling place? Do you think it contributed to a longer wait time at your polling place? Did showing ID make voting more complicated than it would have been if you had not been required to show ID?

13. Do you feel ID requirements are necessary to prevent voters from attempting to commit fraud?

Prompts

Instances of voter fraud may include an individual impersonating a registered voter in order to vote in his or her name or an individual voting in more than one precinct.

14. How effectively do you think your state and local election officials communicated the ID requirements to first-time voters?

Prompts

What were the most effective or memorable techniques used? Television and radio spots? Mailers? Other voter education materials?

15. What are the advantages of requiring first-time voters who registered to vote by mail to show ID at the polls? What are your concerns or reservations about the requirement?

Voters' Perceptions of the General Advisability of Unique ID

Introduction

Now we'd like to get your impressions of whether or not it's a good idea for states to require voters to present ID at the polls.

Questions

16. Do you support requiring every voter to provide his or her driver's license number, Social Security Number or the last four digits of his or her Social Security Number as part of his or her application to register to vote?

Prompts

Are you concerned about privacy or security issues? Do you believe the requirement helps prevent voter fraud?

17. Do you support requiring first-time voters who registered to vote by mail to provide ID at the polling place?

18. Should **all** voters be required to show ID at the polls, or just first-time voters?

Prompts

Are you concerned that some voters may not have the ID they need or may be intimidated by ID requirements? Do you believe that ID requirements could help prevent voter fraud?

19. Would you find it useful to have access to some form of special ID, provided by the state, that you could show at the polls in order to vote? Do you think such an ID should be provided free of charge to voters, or should voters pay to obtain this ID?

Final Solicitation

20. Do you have any other thoughts about your experiences registering to vote and casting a ballot for the first time this year that we haven't covered?

21. What recommendations do you have for states working to educate first-time voters about ID requirements?

Prompt

What methods did your state use to educate voters about ID requirements? Were they effective? What did you like or dislike about them?

Conclusion

That concludes our focus group discussion. Thank you all for participating. The input you provided today will be studied and compiled into a report that we are preparing on behalf of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. We expect it to be released some time in June 2007. To learn more about the EAC, visit their website: www.eac.gov.