

# Malfunction results in missing votes

- By TIM HORAN Salina Journal
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## *Problem the result of electronic voting machine errors*

A malfunction of electronic voting equipment left 5,207 votes out of the original Nov. 4 Saline County vote total, but no election outcomes were affected, according to the Saline County Clerk's Office.

What was affected was a change in the percent of voter turnout, from 35.47 to 50.47 percent, and the total number of votes, 17,532 out of 34,735 registered voters.

"That's a huge difference," county Chairman Randy Duncan said when notified by the Journal of the error. "That's scary. That makes me wonder about voting machines. Should we go back to paper ballots?"

Saline County Clerk Don Merriman said after the meeting that four of the 34 PEBs, or Personal Electronic Ballots, were not reading correctly on election night, which left the votes out of the original count. The problem has been fixed, he said.

He said the missing votes weren't discovered until after votes were canvassed on Nov. 10. Merriman said he learned of the error during a "triple check" with flash cards from the PEBs.

## **No, that's 50 percent**

The commission learned of the error at its regular meeting Tuesday morning.

Visiting with Jamie Robertson, deputy county clerk, Duncan commented on the low voter turnout in Saline County, which the commission was told was 35.49 percent after the canvass.

Robertson said the voter turnout was more than 50 percent. When commissioners said that wasn't the figure they'd read, she went to the clerk's office and returned with the correct figure and showed it to them.

Later in the day, commissioners were informed by the Salina Journal of the change in the vote total, which explains the change in the percentage of those who voted.

## **Comparing the totals**

Merriman, who was not at Tuesday's meeting and was called later by the Journal, said the malfunction on the night of the election is why the clerk's office didn't have an unofficial total until shortly before midnight.

The error was found the afternoon after votes were canvassed when flash card totals were compared to the printed totals.

“We always pull those flash cards and check those final totals to make sure we are OK,” he said. This is the first time we’ve had the PEBs act up like that. I’m pretty sure it is the programing in the PEBs.”

### **Hadn’t told commissioners**

Merriman was going to tell county commissioners about the error when he completed the paper abstract, which he hasn’t done. His first priority was to get an electronic abstract to the Kansas Secretary of State’s Office before Nov. 18, and that’s been done.

### **Outcome wasn’t affected**

Merriman said that had the extra votes resulted in a change in the outcome of the election, everyone would have been notified immediately.

The problems occurred in machines at four voting locations in the following precincts: 12-13-14; 17-18-19; 20-22; and 15-16.

Votes for Sen. Pat Roberts, Rep. Tim Huelskamp, Gov. Sam Brownback and Kansas Secretary of State Kobach all slightly increased.

Opposition to the jail/justice complex increased from a 953-vote difference to 1,748 votes, or from 53.95 percent to 55.08 percent.