OUR ELECTION NEEDS



State Office: Iowa Secretary of State Paul D. Pate

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Title of Program: Recruiting a New Generation of Poll Workers with the Launch of

PollWorker.lowa.Gov

Project lead: Michael Ross, Deputy Secretary and Chief of Staff

Description of the program: In 2020, election officials nationwide were facing a widespread poll worker shortage, as many of the Americans who previously served as poll workers were most at risk and thus unable to serve during the global pandemic. The Office of the lowa Secretary of State launched a new poll worker recruitment initiative that included a website solely dedicated to the recruitment of poll workers, allowing lowans to sign up to express interest, which would then automatically share their information with county auditors.

Subject area of nomination: Elections

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safe and secure elections are a key priority for Secretary of State Paul Pate. Ensuring lowa remains a top ranked state for election administration requires a thoughtful, layered approach to election integrity, including pre-election equipment testing, paper ballots, offline ballot tabulators, cyber and physical security measures, ongoing registration management, post-election audits, and, critically, poll workers.

lowa's thousands of poll workers are our <u>secret weapon</u> to safe and secure elections. They play a critical role in ensuring lowa's elections: they check in voters, make sure correct ballots are distributed, answer questions, and ensure elections are run safely and smoothly in every precinct.

While recruiting adequate numbers of poll workers has long been a challenge for election officials across the country, the shortage reached its height in 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic and a high-profile presidential election. We saw a widespread and unprecedented poll worker shortage, as many older and high-risk lowans were unable to physically work the polls, and election officials scrambled to recruit new poll workers, many of whom had never before worked the polls.

Many election officials expected to see numbers increase back to pre-pandemic levels for the 2022 Midterm Elections and 2024 Primary and General Elections. Unfortunately, states from coast to coast have continued to struggle to recruit and maintain poll workers.

lowa has more than 1,600 precincts for statewide General Elections. Our state's Election Day hours are among the longest in the nation: 7 a.m. - 8 p.m. Thousands of poll workers are needed to staff all of the precincts and finding enough lowans to staff polling places and work shifts of more than 14 hours is an ongoing challenge.

However, using a variety of recruitment methods, we were able to persevere, and conduct elections that saw record-breaking turnout in the 2020 June Primary and November General Elections. The key was finding new and creative ways to attract a new generation of poll workers and recruit from previously untapped demographics.

In response to the expected poll worker shortage in 2020, the lowa Secretary of State launched a statewide recruitment initiative with a variety of tactics aimed at enticing a new demographic of lowans to answer the call and work elections as poll workers. Our primary tactic was to launch a "microsite" – a website affiliated with the lowa Secretary of State's office dedicated solely to recruiting, retaining, and training poll workers – alongside social media campaigns and ads, partnerships, and media outreach.

We created a new, interactive website, Pollworker.lowa.Gov, that was separate from the official lowa Secretary of State website. This would serve as the hub and allow us to easily disseminate information about potential poll workers to the respective county auditors. Iowans who were interested in participating in Iowa's elections process as poll workers were directed to a sign-up form embedded in the website. After signing up,

everyone's information is automatically distributed to their local county auditor, who can then reach out with the next steps.

In its first year, the website helped us identify more than 14,000 lowans interested in serving as poll workers. Since then, the site has helped recruit more than 21,000 new poll workers across all of lowa's 99 counties.

After launching the site, it was important to ensure lowans were aware of the site and direct potential poll workers to the new website. Through a combination of traditional media, social media, grassroots organizing, and partnerships with a variety of agencies and organizations, we were able to pull off a smooth, clean, and record-breaking election year in lowa, thanks to thousands of new poll workers stepping up during a pandemic.

We also promoted the website through social media, digital, and traditional media tactics. An easy-to-follow animated video was created to explain the job and duties of poll workers, as well as encourage lowans to sign up. This visual element greatly enhanced our recruitment abilities. It was shared across social media platforms and provided to lowa media outlets for their stories.

In order to reach every corner of the state, we relied on media outreach. Traditional media is an important component of any public information campaign. Secretary Pate conducted dozens of interviews with TV and radio stations and other media outlets to spread the word. Due to the pandemic, we conducted many interviews with TV and other reporters over video calls. This tactic proved to be very successful, allowing us to meet with the media from all corners of the state within a span of hours. It typically takes hours to travel across the state, which means at most, we can meet with stations and reporters in up to two media markets in a day. This new tactic simplified the process and allowed us to meet with reporters statewide, with a much lower time commitment than was previously required.

We have included a sample of stories resulting from this outreach in the supporting materials section of this document.

Beyond earned media, we employed several paid media tactics as well. Working with the Iowa Broadcasters Association (IBA), we cut audio and video on the Pollworker.Iowa.Gov website down to 30 seconds to utilize in radio and TV ads. IBA gave us a tremendous discount, providing triple the spending value for the price we paid to run more than 11,000 ads in media markets across the state.

In addition to ads on traditional media channels, it was critical to leverage social media ads to reach a younger demographic. According to Hootsuite, a social media management company that conducts digital marketing and social media research, millennials make up almost half of Facebook's audience, and more than 20% of Facebook users are between the ages of 18 and 24. Using targeted ads on Facebook, we were able to direct lowans to the website and encourage them to sign up to serve as

poll workers. The Facebook analytics show that we reached nearly 3 million people, which equals almost the entire population of the state of lowa.

- TOTAL REACH: 2,953,883
 - o Reach indicates the number of people who saw the content.
- TOTAL IMPRESSIONS: 10,544,650
 - o Impressions measure how often ads were on screen for a target audience.
- TOTAL AMOUNT SPENT: \$58,563

Further, by partnering directly with Facebook, we were able to organically reach thousands of lowans at no cost. On September 12-13, 2020, Facebook ran a poll worker recruitment notification at the top of users' news feeds. The lowa Secretary of State's office partnered with Facebook to tailor the message lowans received, and to link it to the poll worker recruitment page, Pollworker.lowa.Gov. lowa received a significant uptick in responses during that time, receiving more than 2,300 website submissions over those two days.

We also employed a more general digital ad campaign to reach lowans on other platforms such as display ads on websites. DataReportal, a company that tracks digital data, insights, and trends globally, reports that 95% of internet users browse on mobile devices at least some of the time, and that time on mobile devices accounts for 57% of online time.

To reach lowans where they are spending time, the Secretary of State's office partnered with two outside vendors, spending a total of \$40,000 on digital ads, with impressive results. We sent each vendor a list of registered voters that fit the ideal profile. One vendor, LS2, used an addressable geofencing tactic, matching 90% of the addresses and creating a virtual fence around each address to deliver digital ads to every connected device in the household. LS2 delivered over 1,375,000 impressions with a solid click-through-rate of .08%. Our other vendor, Data Axel garnered more than two million impressions, with a .08% click-through-rate.

SIGNIFICANCE

In 2020, election officials around the country faced unprecedented obstacles as we conducted the biggest election in our nation's history. Among the foremost issues were retaining and recruiting poll workers during a national health emergency. Many of lowa's regular poll workers were among the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus, so supplementing our ranks was a key priority while preparing for lowa's June primary and November general election. Unfortunately, the rise of mis-, dis-, and mal-information and false claims of election fraud and corresponding threats have added another layer of obstacles for our nation's election officials.

Over the last few years, the poll worker shortage has persisted. It remains critical to election integrity to maintain a strong election workforce. With an estimated 1 million poll workers required to staff polling sites across the country, returning to the pre-pandemic

status quo process of hiring poll workers will not be enough. Recruitment, outreach, and support will be more essential than ever to recruiting new poll workers and maintaining an experienced workforce.

While the increasing prevalence of such challenges may lead to the resignation of many election officials and poll workers, it also underscores the indispensable role that poll workers play in addressing and mitigating these challenges. Poll workers not only assist and support election administration and logistics but can also help bolster trust in America's election systems.

In lowa, poll workers are required to be registered voters of the county in which they are serving and must complete required training. Many poll workers in the state have reported stepping up to work the polls because they are civic-minded and want to serve their communities. Iowa law also requires poll worker teams to be bipartisan. Iowans can rest assured that their votes are counted safely and fairly when they see faces they trust and recognize at the polls on Election Day.

In an age of rampant mis-, dis-, and mal- information, poll workers are also serving as critical, trusted sources of election information. Because of their history and firsthand experience working the polls, they are often able to accurately explain the process with friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues helping to reduce the spread of false claims and counter any doubt in the elections systems.

While these are critical components to both increasing and maintaining confidence in lowa's elections process, they make up just portions of the role that poll workers play before, on, and after Election Day. Poll workers conduct a number of vital functions – including staffing polling sites, handing out ballots, checking in voters, answering questions, assisting with voting equipment, processing votes, and the overall facilitation of a safe, secure, and accessible polling site.

As a key ingredient to an integrated, layered approach to lowa's election integrity, poll workers are indispensable to our elections system and to fostering greater civic engagement within their communities.

Because of the critical role poll workers play in election integrity, an intentional and thoughtful approach is necessary to recruiting and maintaining poll workers. While the official Secretary of State's website contains a large amount of information, having one website dedicated solely to providing information on becoming a poll worker helps simplify the process and minimize the steps required to sign up and express interest.

This is particularly important when considering the statistics about website and browsing habits. Nearly half (47%) of website users will not wait longer than two seconds for a website to load, which emphasizes the importance of a fast load time or risk losing potential leads (Sweor). On average, website users dedicate just 5.59 seconds to reading written content on a site and only 6.44 seconds focused on the main navigation menu (CXL). The average time spent on a single page by a website visitor is 54

seconds (HubSpot). Maintaining an engaging and user-friendly website is significant to overall user experience and to retaining visitors – as almost 9 out of 10 users will not revisit a website after a negative opinion (Sweor).

The official website for the lowa Secretary of State includes a large amount of information, and as such there is a lot of text for users to read through and many options on the navigation bar. A clear, concise, and dedicated page helps us focus on our core message of recruiting poll workers, eliminating the clutter of other messages, that while also important, may not be relevant in recruiting new election workers, and may ultimately result in a loss of potential leads.

This tactic has been replicated with a number of other public information campaigns as well. We currently host a Voter Ready microsite with information on voter registration, a website for our Safe at Home program, and a new website that shares videos and information on Iowa's voting and election processes.

IMPACT/RESULTS

Since the launch of the website, more than 21,000 lowans have signed up to be poll workers or expressed interest in working the polls.

Despite the challenges lowa election officials faced in 2020 and the many predictions that we would face devastating poll worker shortages, we were able to not only meet but exceed expectations during the initiative's inaugural year.

In 2020, we needed an estimated 10,000 poll workers for the November General Election. More than 14,000 lowans stepped up in the middle of the pandemic and expressed interest via the website, and thousands of poll workers were recruited as a result. We reached a total of 3 million lowans through targeted social media ads, and hundreds of thousands of lowans heard or saw our ads on radio and television. Even more received information about the website and the need for poll workers through earned media stories.

Thanks to these efforts, we were able to staff polling places for every precinct and administer a clean, fair, and record-breaking general election. The outreach around recruitment and retention of poll workers was key to this success.

The lowa Secretary of State's office and the offices of lowa's 99 county auditors have continued to promote the site with key stakeholders and leverage the website to recruit new poll workers. When counties identify an expected poll worker shortage, our office partners with them to create and deliver targeted ads that direct Facebook users to the Pollworker.lowa.Gov website and encourage them to sign up. Our office delivers ads that target either the entire county or pull voter files and create custom audiences to help counties tailor their message and reach lowans who are likely to serve as election workers.

As challenges persist around recruiting and retaining poll workers, the Pollworker.lowa.Gov website has proven to be instrumental in continuing to fill necessary positions and meet requirements.

Civic days and months of action are significant opportunities to promote the website on an ongoing basis, and we leverage these opportunities with the media, on social media channels, and with key stakeholders such as county auditors.

In the fall of 2023, we launched a new initiative as part of the PollWorker.lowa.Gov website which included a video storytelling element. Our office reached out to all of lowa's 99 county auditors and asked them to help us identify poll workers in their counties who have stepped up, made a difference, and have compelling stories to tell. We hoped to identify poll workers from all walks of life and all backgrounds, so lowans could see themselves in their stories. We focused on reaching a diverse set of demographics, including seasoned poll workers who have decades of experience, new poll workers who may have stepped up to bridge the gap from retiring election workers, and poll workers of all ages, races, genders, with a variety of careers and backgrounds.

We shared five poll worker videos on our website and via social media channels. We placed ads on Facebook and Instagram and shared the videos with the county auditors and other stakeholders.

We also launched the poll worker website in 2020 with lowa's media, hosting a "media day" to recognize the work of lowa's poll workers and sharing their stories. We scheduled a day to focus on media interviews with broadcast, radio, and print outlets. We met with more than a dozen reporters for in-person, phone, and video call interviews. The media coverage alone helped us reach more than 223,000 lowans through television and print channels, garnering an estimated ad equivalence of more than \$20,000.

The concept of a media day has been replicated many times in the years following this launch and has resulted in dozens of stories.

Since its inception, media efforts around the Pollworker.lowa.Gov website and corresponding initiatives have resulted in more than 100 print stories with an estimated combined readership of 1.2 million and an ad equivalence of more than \$100,000. We have received print coverage in all 99 of lowa's counties.

Despite the predictions of widespread poll worker shortages that could have required the state to close polling sites, we were able to fill all required poll worker positions and conduct a safe, fair, and clean election in 2020 and the years since.

Poll workers have been extremely valuable in our efforts to boost trust in lowa's elections systems during a time where trust in elections is at an all-time low.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Launch Media Coverage

The recruitment effort and launch of the website required a statewide media push. We needed to reach every corner of the state, so Secretary Pate conducted dozens of interviews with TV and radio stations and other media outlets to spread the word. Due to the pandemic, interviews were done over Zoom for TV stations. Below is a sample of some of the media coverage our poll worker recruitment effort received:

Broadcast and Radio

- WHO-TV in Des Moines: <u>lowa Secretary of State urging young people to work</u>
 the polls for upcoming primary
- KCAU-TV in Sioux City: <u>lowa Secretary of State asks young lowans to work at polls for June primary</u>
- Radio lowa: Poll workers needed to help with June primary election
- KCRG-TV in Cedar Rapids: <u>Secretary of State calling for younger lowans during</u> COVID-19 pandemic
- WHO Radio: Iowa Secretary of State seeks new groups of poll workers
- KIOW Radio in Forest City: Area poll worker shortage may affect June primary
- KIMT-TV in Mason City: Recruiting a new generation of poll workers
- KTIV-TV in Sioux City: <u>Secretary Pate asking younger lowans to work during</u> June 2 primary
- WOI-TV in Des Moines: <u>lowa needs young volunteers to help out on Election</u>
 <u>Day</u>
- KTVO-TV in Ottumwa: 6pm news

Print

- Oskaloosa News: <u>Secretary Pate launches statewide poll worker recruitment for June primary</u>
- DM Register: <u>Des Moines Metro briefs: Iowa Secretary of State calls for poll</u> <u>workers</u>
- Iowa Capital Dispatch: <u>lowa seeks young, healthy poll workers</u>
- Marshalltown Times-Republican: <u>Poll worker recruitment for June primary launched</u>
- KIOW Radio in Forest City: <u>Sunday Talk: Secretary Pate on recruiting younger</u> <u>poll workers</u>
- Denver Forum: Younger, healthy lowans asked to work in upcoming primary
- Ft. Madison Daily Democrat: Pate seeks poll workers
- Keokuk Daily Gate City: Pate seeking poll workers
- KBOE Radio in Oskaloosa: Iowa needs poll workers for June primary election
- Sac City Sun: Statewide poll worker recruitment for June primary launched
- South Hamilton Record-News: <u>Secretary Pate launches statewide poll worker</u> recruitment for June primary
- Butler Co. Tribune: Younger lowans asked to serve as poll workers

- Sigourney News-Review: <u>Secretary Pate launches poll worker recruitment for primary</u>
- Keota Eagle: <u>Secretary Pate launches poll worker recruitment for primary</u>
- Parkersburg Eclipse-News-Review: <u>Younger lowans asked to serve as poll</u> workers
- Morning Sun News-Herald: <u>Pate launches poll worker recruitment for June</u> primary
- Clarksville Star: Younger lowans asked to serve as poll workers
- Moville Record: Younger lowans being recruited as poll workers amid pandemic
- New London Journal: <u>Secretary Pate launches statewide poll worker recruitment</u> for June primary
- New Sharon Sun: <u>Secretary Pate launches poll worker recruitment for primary</u>
- Sidney Argus-Herald: Poll workers sought
- Wapello Republican: Pate launches poll worker recruitment for June primary
- Des Moines County News: <u>Secretary Pate launches statewide poll worker</u> recruitment for June primary
- DeWitt Observer: lowa seeks young, healthy poll workers
- Ackley World Journal: <u>Younger lowans asked to serve as poll workers</u>

2023 Video Project Media Day

In 2023 leading up to lowa's City-School Elections, we did a smaller media launch to promote poll worker videos and poll worker recruitment as part of the PollWorker.lowa.Gov initiative. All of these interviews were conducted in a span of 24 hours, in person or via video or phone call. Below is a sample of coverage:

Broadcast and Radio

- WOI-TV in Des Moines: <u>lowa Secretary of State Paul Pate launches campaign</u> to thank poll workers, News at 6, <u>News at 10</u>, <u>Good Morning Iowa at 5am</u>, <u>News Midday</u>
- WHO-TV in Des Moines: News at 4, News at 5, News at 6, Today in Iowa at 5:30am
- KCRG-TV in Cedar Rapids: News at Midday (Live), News at 6
- KGAN-TV in Cedar Rapids: <u>lowa still needs 10,000+ poll workers for upcoming election</u>, <u>News at 6</u>, <u>News at 10</u>, <u>lowa News Now at 5am</u>, <u>lowa News Now at 6am</u>
- KWWL-TV in Rochester/Northern Iowa: <u>lowa Secretary of State Paul Pate gives</u> <u>thanks to local election workers</u>, <u>News at 10</u>, <u>Early Today in Iowa 4am</u>, <u>Today in</u> <u>lowa at 5am</u>, <u>Today in Iowa at 6am</u>, <u>Good Day Siouxland at 7am</u>
- KCAU-TV in Sioux City: News at 6, Good Day Siouxland at 5am, Good Day Siouxland at 6am, Good Day Siouxland at 7am
- KYOU-TV in Ottumwa: News at 9, News at 11
- KCCI-TV in Des Moines: News at 10, News this Morning at 5am

- KDSM-TV in Des Moines: News at 9, News at 7am
- KIOW Radio in Forest City: <u>Sunday Talk: Pate on Cyber Secure Elections</u>
- KMA Land With election on horizon, support for lowa poll workers
- Radio With election on horizon, support for lowa poll workers
- INS/Public News Service With election on horizon support for lowa poll workers

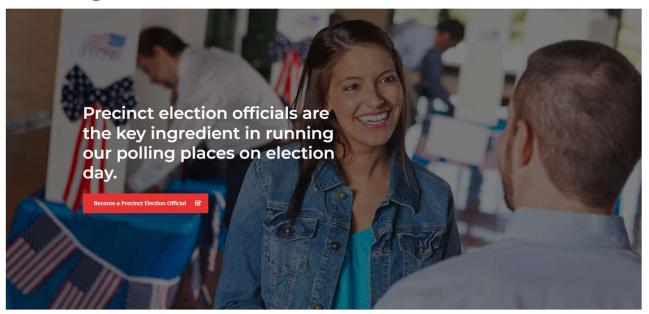
Print

- Red Oak Express: Pate launches campaign to honor lowa poll workers
- Ogden Reporter: <u>Secretary Pate partners with Iowa County Auditors to thank</u>
 <u>Iowa poll workers for their role in election integrity</u>
- Madrid Register-News: <u>Secretary Pate partners with Iowa County Auditors to</u> thank Iowa poll workers for their role in Iowa's election integrity
- Cherokee Chronicle Times <u>Secretary Pate</u>, <u>lowa County Auditors thank lowa</u> <u>poll workers for election integrity</u>

Screenshots of PollWorker.lowa.Gov



Become a Precinct Election Official





Become a Precinct Election Official

So what would you do as a precinct election official?

On Election Day, you would check in voters and issue them ballots. Most counties use a computer to walk precinct election officials through the steps. Designated precinct election officials give instructions on how to use special ballot marking devices for people with disabilities. Voters also may vote their ballots from their cars, so you might be sent outside with another precinct election official to assist with curbside voting. You also may help maintain proper social distancing at the polling place.

Your overall boss would be your County Auditor, who runs local elections. Auditors hire, train and deploy precinct election officials on Election Day. Each polling place has a precinct chair who will assign your specific tasks at the direction of the Auditor.

It's a long day! Polls are open from 7:00 am-9:00 pm, and precinct election officials start setting up at 6:00 am.

It takes commitment and dedication

You would be paid for your training session and for your work on Election Day, Rates vary from county to county.



Would you consider being a precinct election official this year?

Each year, we need approximately 10,000 lowans to step up and make sure our elections run smooth.

Become a Precinct Election Official **☑**







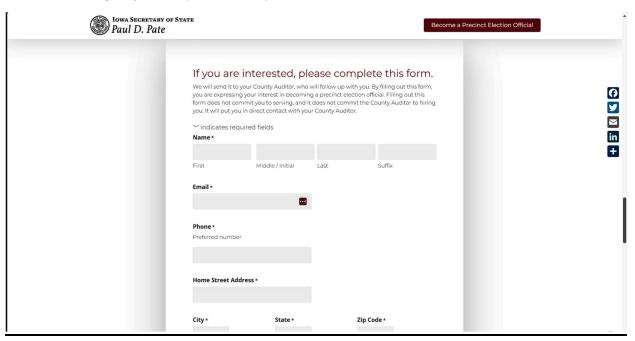
Primary Election

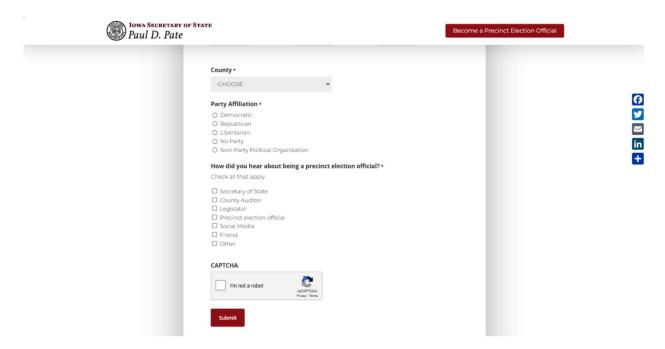
Tuesday, June 4, 2024

Precinct Election Official Requirements. You must:

- Be registered to vote in lowa
 Be at least 17 years old
 Be a resident of the county you serve in
 Complete the required training

Poll Worker sign up form (on website)





Sample Social Media Posts Shared by Iowa Secretary of State



Looking for ways to #HelpAmericaVote this year?

Learn more about becoming a poll worker! America needs more poll workers to ensure safe, secure, and accessible elections throughout 2024. Visit Pollworker.lowa.Gov for more information.





Attention lowans! We need your help. Step up & serve your state and country by becoming a Precinct Election Official on November 3rd. You'll help your community & earn money! Visit pollworker.iowa.gov to learn how.







We need healthy lowans to step up and serve their state and nation on November 3rd. And you get paid for it.



KCCI.COM

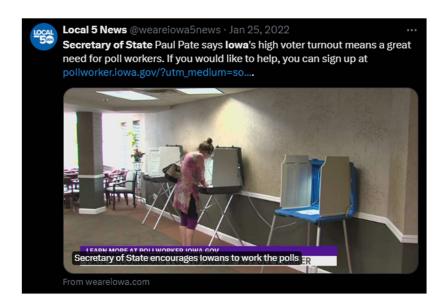
lowa's Secretary of State asks for November poll worker volunteers

"We need to bring in some new faces so that our seniors who have been so dedicated in the p...

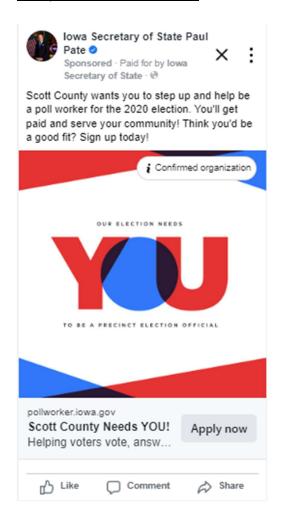
Sample Social Media Posts Shared by Stakeholders







Sample Social Media Ads





Sample Ads for Digital Display



Breakdown of Ads Run for Launch: Radio and TV

Radio

Television

City	<u>Spots</u>	City	<u>Spots</u>
Albia Cedar Rapids Clinton Davenport Des Moines Dubuque Fairfield Grinnell Harlan LeMars Marshalltown Newton Ottumwa Sheldon Sioux City Spencer	150 918 196 426 2,278 656 192 360 128 552 412 360 1,008 332 942 420	Cedar Rapids Davenport Des Moines Marshalltown Mason City Ottumwa Sioux City	160 112 35 73 74 266 318 320 98 120 42 45
Waterloo TOTAL RADIO SPOTS	228 9,442	TOTAL TV SPOTS	1,708

Mailer Sent to Iowans

IOWA SECRETARY OF STATE 321 E. 12TH ST. FL. 1 DES MOINES, IA 50319-9029 NON PROFIT ORG U.S. POSTAGE PAID PERMIT NO. 1195 DES MOINES, IA





իկկրիերկան այլիերկրկրկականին կիկկկակին MARK SAMPLE 123 NORTH STREET DES MOINES, IA 50301



OUR ELECTION NEEDS



TO BE A POLL WORKER

WOULD YOU CONSIDER BEING A PRECINCT ELECTION OFFICIAL THIS YEAR?

HELP YOUR COMMUNITY AND GET PAID!

LEARN MORE AT POLLWORKER.IOWA.GOV