

June 1, 2011

Dr. Brenda Snipes
Broward County Supervisor of Elections
115 S. Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

Dear Dr. Snipes:

This is to document our meeting of May 12, 2011 which Mayor Gunzburger hosted at which our staff was in attendance. I'd like to thank you for that meeting, for your commitment to study the concerns discussed, and look forward to our follow up meeting in July as you agreed. I wish to thank you for your leadership in our community and the good service your office provides to our residents. The purpose of our meeting was to review the two specific concerns outlined below.

First, the City of Pembroke Pines transmitted to your office a resolution of the City Commission asking that elections costs be paid for with county tax dollars. My city believes that, under our form of government in Broward County, elections are countywide functions that should be paid for with countywide taxes. Your office is currently charged with administering all elections including those of cities. State law permits the cost of all city elections to be billed countywide or separately. We believe it better policy to have those costs paid through the county tax bill, and we have communicated that preference to you. I also shared my observation that there does not seem to be a consistent way to analyze costs charged to cities. For example, consider the table below:

<u>City</u>	<u>Registered Voters</u>	<u># of Precincts</u>	<u># of Voting Locations</u>	<u>Most Recent SOE Cost Estimates for Citywide Elections</u>
P Pines	est. 97,000	68	31	\$250,000
Miramar	est. 65,000	32	22	\$132,000
Plantation	est. 55,000	39	23	\$120,000

Note: Information provided by City Clerks of the respective cities listed.

Pembroke Pines has 1/3 more registered voters than Miramar but more than twice the number of precincts. Both cities have one voting location for every 3,000 registered voters but in Plantation they have one for every 2,400 registered voters. Pembroke Pines has nearly twice the number of registered voters as Plantation yet Plantation has only 30% fewer voting locations than Pembroke Pines. Officials of all three cities say a significant number of those voting locations significantly and consistently under-perform in terms of total votes cast there. There is no correlation that I could draw between these numbers and election cost estimates. However, an opportunity exists to combine voting locations at reduced cost.

Page Two
Dr. Brenda Snipes
June 1, 2011

When a voting location generates very few votes during most election cycles, it is hard to cost justify keeping them open when the alternative, consolidating them with a neighboring, more productive sites, is available with little to no inconvenience to voters or impact to higher turnout elections. This would reduce the cost of elections. At the present level of costs charged, cities are almost forced to analyze whether they should conduct city elections themselves, as the law permits, at reduced cost. This should be avoided. But even if the cost were not reduced to cities, then the dollars should be put to more productive use in terms of building up Broward's notoriously low voter turnout. That is our second point.

Your office could use a portion of the savings generated by closing unproductive voting locations to send an absentee ballot request form with information to every registered voter. There might be enough savings to pay for return postage on all absentee ballots requested. The result would be many more Broward voters actually casting a vote than is currently the case. Your office has done great things to further encourage bringing out the vote. It would be unfair of anyone to suggest otherwise and you in particular should be proud of your efforts to help more voters cast a vote in Broward County. Yet despite these valuable efforts, voter turnout in Broward remains disappointingly low especially for municipal elections. We note a trend in most cities, including mine, among voters to cast their vote by absentee ballot. This should be further encouraged through direct outreach to their homes. That effort is an appropriate task for your office to perform, and it can be paid for with the savings generated from the closure and consolidation of so many unproductive voting locations countywide. I am thankful for your commitment to study that prospect in time for our follow-up meeting in early July.

Since our meeting, residents have encouraged me strongly to continue this discussion, and I know a number of them have indicated the same to your office. Obviously, at this difficult financial time but also at all times we should work together to maximize the number of votes cast at every election. You made a number of helpful suggestions about ways that Pembroke Pines and all cities could augment your voter outreach efforts by more widely telling residents how they can get absentee ballots sent to them. My City Commission was open to implementing those ideas but less hopeful, as is understandable, that our efforts could ever be as successful as yours in generating more voters.

Thank you again for our discussion. I will be contacting your office soon to schedule our follow-up meeting in early July.

Sincerely,



Angelo Castillo,
Commissioner

c: Mayor Sue Gunzburger
Broward County Commission
Pembroke Pines City Commission
Sam Goren, City Attorney
Mitch Ceasar, Broward Democratic Party
Richard DiNapoli, Broward GOP
Rico Petrocelli, Broward GOP