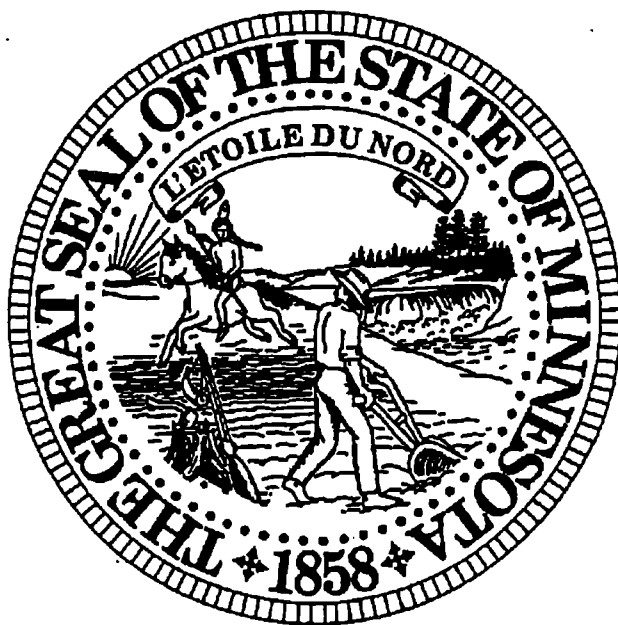


**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**  
**On Issues**  
**RELATED TO POST REDISTRICTING ACTIVITIES**



**JOAN ANDERSON GROWE**

**SECRETARY OF STATE**

**TASK FORCE**

**FEBRUARY 1991**

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## Executive Summary

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 15.014, the Task Force on Post Redistricting Activity was created by Secretary of State Joan Grove to study issues related to the timely performance of local government responsibilities required to be completed as a result of the redistricting of legislative and congressional district boundaries. These activities fall generally into the following categories:

- \* Establishment of new city wards and precincts.
- \* Establishment of new county commissioner districts.
- \* Establishment of new school district election districts.
- \* Reassignment of voter records to the new precinct/ward/county commissioner district/school district election districts/legislative district/congressional district.

The time frames for the completion of these activities fall into a brief period between the approval of legislative redistricting and the production of polling place voter rosters preceding the statewide primary election on September 15, 1992, a length of time of less than five months. During these same months, Minnesota's first Presidential Primary in 36 years will take place. Timely completion of required redistricting duties at the local level is at risk as a result of the combination of new statutory requirements for re-drawing city precincts and county commissioner election districts and the new requirement to conduct school district elections under state voter registration laws during that same period of time.

Further, such time constraints make it impossible to complete reassignment of voters prior to the opening of candidate filings for the 1992 state legislative elections.

The Task Force has attempted to identify:

- 1) changes which could be made by the 1991 legislature to simplify the post-redistricting process at the local level;
- 2) technological opportunities to facilitate post-redistricting activities;
- 3) steps that election officials can take individually and collectively to ensure the successful and timely completion of such duties.

It is clear that additional time would ease some of the burden posed by post-redistricting requirements. The early completion of redistricting activities at the state and local level is the foremost goal of all task force participants and is considered to be most desirable. Recognition that events beyond the control of any of the levels of government involved might eliminate that possibility makes the importance on finding alternatives imperative.

The task force strongly supports the following recommendations for 1991 legislative action:

- \* Provision of additional time to assure successful and timely completion of all tasks associated with reassigning and informing voters of redistricting changes;
- \* Modification of statutory requirements to facilitate the management of post-redistricting responsibilities and timely notification of the public of election district changes;
- \* Exemption from levy limits for the full cost of compliance with state redistricting requirements at the local level, including tasks associated with redrawing local election district lines in conformance with new legislative districts and the adjustment of voter registration records and publication of notices and public information at the local level.

Finally, the task force recommends that the 1991 legislature authorize and appropriate necessary funds to the Office of the Secretary of State to make system enhancements that will make it possible to use technology to reassign voters within the statewide voter registration system. Attached is a consultants report with analysis of this proposal.

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## SECRETARY OF STATE'S TASK FORCE ON POST REDISTRICTING ACTIVITY

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

Secretary of State Joan Growe has appointed a Task Force on Post Redistricting Activity because the current time frame between the completion of redistricting activities and the 1992 election is short. This already tight time frame creates serious administrative obstacles to the timely completion of Post Redistricting responsibilities and responsibilities for conducting elections during the same time period. It is complicated by the new presidential primary in April 1992 and the conduct of school district elections in May 1992, neither of which was a factor in previous post redistricting situations. These factors raise concern about the ability of election administrators to adequately respond to the requirements and lead to the need for significant preplanning to ensure that all steps necessary for the conduct of the 1992 primary election are taken.

The purpose of the Task Force is to review the activities required to be accomplished as a result of the redistricting of legislative and congressional district boundaries following the census of 1990. These activities primarily include: the redrawing of precinct boundaries, ward and special purpose district boundaries, county commissioner district boundaries; district and precinct reassignment of voters and notification of voters once new precinct boundaries are established.

The goal of the review process is to identify problems and recommend solutions to ensure that the post redistricting activities occur in an accurate, efficient, and timely manner.

In addition, because school district boundaries have become increasingly interactive with other jurisdictional boundaries for election purposes, an ancillary goal is to determine if statutory tools can be created to facilitate cooperative efforts on the part of school districts to modify district boundaries to follow visible, clearly recognizable physical features. Such adjustments would minimize problems associated with assignment of voter records to the proper school district.

The primary focus of task force activity will be in the following areas:

1. Identification of all current statutory requirements, activities, timelines and cost impacts.
2. Analysis and recommendations to the Legislature on changes necessary to ensure successful implementation of statutory requirements.
3. Development of methods to facilitate the interaction of the legislative redistricting system and the Secretary of State's statewide voter registration system.
4. Development and distribution of a check list and a guide to procedures and criteria for city and county personnel involved in the redrawing of county commissioner, precinct, ward and special district lines.
5. Analysis and recommendations to the Legislature on how school district boundaries can be voluntarily adjusted to more easily accommodate the drawing of precinct boundaries and the assignment of voters.\*\*\*

\*\*\* The adjustments envisioned are minor and relate to the issues of "visible, clearly recognizable physical features" as required for regular precinct and census tracts.

1992 CALENDAR OF RESPONSIBILITIES TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE REDISTRICTING PROCESS

- FEBRUARY**      18: Voter registration cut-off for Township elections.  
                     25: PRECINCT CAUCUS DAY
- MARCH**        3: Township election rosters completed.  
                     8: Absentee Ballots available for the Presidential Primary Election.  
                     10: TOWNSHIP ELECTIONS  
                     17: Voter registration cut-off for the Presidential Primary Election.  
                         Ballots mailed to voters in mail ballot precincts.  
                     20: Complete 3% random postal verifications for Township Elections.  
                     26: CONGRESSIONAL/LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING PLAN FINALIZED  
                     27: All updating of voter registration records must be completed  
                         to allow the Secretary of State's office time to generate  
                         precinct rosters for the presidential primary.  
                     31: Precinct rosters completed to allow counties time to sort and  
                         provide them on election day.
- APRIL**        7: PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION DAY  
                     13: Counties certify Presidential Primary Election results to state.  
                     17: Complete 3% random postal verifications for Presidential Primary.  
                         Absentee ballots available for School District Elections  
                     21: Complete Township Elections voting history update.  
                     28: Voter registration cut-off for School District Elections.
- MAY**           10: City precinct boundaries finalized.  
                     11: Start manual determination of address ranges within new precinct  
                         boundaries for updating of precinct finders an/or manual changes  
                         to each voter record.  
                     19: Complete Presidential Primary voting history and political party  
                         updates.  
                         SCHOOL DISTRICT ELECTIONS  
                     26: School Districts certify election results.
- JUNE**           1: Proposed County Redistricting Plan filed.  
                     2: Last day to file contest of School District Elections.  
                     3: Start revision of precinct finder and/or voter records in the  
                         state system.  
                     10: Post Notice of new precinct changes.  
                     30: Complete school district election voting history updates...  
                         state update screens must match rosters in "old" precincts.  
                         Deadline for citizen application for revision of county plan.
- JULY**           7: CANDIDATE FILINGS OPEN  
                     10: New precinct boundaries officially in place for all ensuing  
                         elections.  
                     14: Notify all affected voters of precinct boundary changes.  
                         Absentee Ballots available for the State Primary Election.  
                         An updated master list of voters for each precinct must be  
                         available for absentee voting.  
                     25: Voter registration cut-off for the Primary Election.



IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS TO POST-REDISTRICTING ACTIVITY

Recommendation  
Status

1. Costs to all levels of government (municipal, county, state) will be increased to deal with the redrawing of boundaries and the reassignment of voters to districts and precincts.
  - Bill a. Special levy authority.
  - Option b. Direct appropriation from Legislature.
  - Yes c. Coordination of effort between city/county/state to save money.
  - Yes d. Use of technology to simplify tasks.
  - Bill e. Allow polling places up to 3000 feet from precinct.
  - Bill f. Have redistricting completed by Jan 10, 1992 so that time frames are not so tight, allowing work to be handled more cost effectively.
  - Yes g. Develop guidelines for estimating costs on a per voter basis to be used to develop local budget requests to cover the cost of post redistricting activity.
2. Too many elections taking place during the period after the Legislature completes redistricting and the state primary election.
  - Bill a. Have a moratorium on elections (special and bond).
  - Option b. Cooperatively limit the number of elections.
  - Bill c. Postpone effective date of precinct changes.
  - Option d. Uniform Election Day.
3. The adjustment of 2.6 million voter records takes place in the tight time frame after the redistricting, reprecincting, and new county commissioner district assignment and before the filings open July 7th.
  - Bill a. Have legislative redistricting completed by Jan. 10, 1992.
  - Yes b. All counties complete precinct finder and standardize addresses.
  - Bill c. Reprecincting and commissioner districts completed earlier so that more time available to adjust records.
  - Bill d. Use technology to speed up the process of assigning district information and drawing of boundaries.
4. We do not know what impact all of the district and precinct reassignment activity will have on the state voter registration system.
  - Yes a. Stress testing to simulate district reassignment activity and wholesale changes in precinct finders.
  - Yes b. Enhancement of voter registration system to simplify the process of reassignment.

Recommendation  
Status

5. There will be a transition period between the old and the new that will need to be addressed.

Bill a. Have a delayed effective date for the redrawn precincts. \*\*

Bill b. Identify time frames to ensure smooth transition.

\*\* Ensure one person one vote concept not impacted.

6. The timing of the mailing of the notice to the voters of the new precinct assignment must take place at a time when there will be no further elections conducted using those old precinct boundaries yet early enough so voters know their new districts and precincts. The most desirable time for voter awareness would be prior to the opening of filings and the most desirable for the election administrator would be a time closest to the primary election.

Bill a. Give the voters and candidates published notice of the new district and precinct boundaries prior to the mailed notices.

Bill b. Develop additional notice of district assignment prior to filings.

7. Some cities will hold elections on the day of the school district elections and, as mentioned in #5, this would create a transition problem if the new precincts were already assigned.

Bill a. Delay effective date of precinct change.

8. There is a 30 day notice requirement prior to new precincts taking effect and a 90 day notice for county commissioner districts. These notice periods further complicate the process and tighten the time frames.

Bill a. Provide for a one time lifting of requirements for the notice as they apply to the completion of subsequent requirements.

9. Need to notify voters and candidates of district and precinct assignments prior to filings opening.

a. See #6.

10. 30 day appeal process on county commissioner districts under current time frames would run from June 1st to June 30th.

a. Move up date of assignment of new boundaries. (See #8)

11. What happens if there is a court challenge to county/city/legislative redistricting and the courts don't make a final decision until deadlines have passed.

Bill a. Develop emergency rule making authority for the Secretary of State to provide alternative procedures that might be necessary to accomplish necessary tasks.

Recommendation  
Status

12. Many of the current county auditors and city clerks were not in their jobs 10 years ago and have no experience in post redistricting activity.
- Bill & Yes a. Provide written instructions, check lists, time frames and training sessions.
13. Candidates will want lists of voters with their new district assignments as soon as possible. The updating of 2.6 million voter records for new precinct, legislative district, congressional district, and county commissioner district simply takes some time.
- Bill a. Determine if automated methods can be used to accomplish the computer record updates.
14. Not all counties had a voter registration system in 1982 so this process will be completely new to them.
- a. See #12
15. The identification of voter's proper school district and the distribution of proper school district ballots to voters are continuing problems.
- Yes a. Attempt to draw precinct boundaries so that they do not encompass more than one school district whenever possible.
- Bill b. Permit use of school district boundary as precinct boundary even if it does not follow recognizable physical features.
16. Ward boundaries must be drawn on the basis of population so that there are relatively the same number of people in each ward.
- Bill a. Use census tract data and legislative/congressional district assignments in drawing the ward boundaries.

Key to Recommendation Status:

Bill = Included in Bill proposal.

Yes = Can be done without Legislation and should be done.

Option = Identified as an option that might be considered.

**STATE OF MINNESOTA  
OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE**

**USE OF  
LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING OUTPUT  
TO  
UPDATE CENTRAL VOTER REGISTRATION FILE  
PRECINCT BOUNDARIES**

**FEBRUARY 11, 1991**

**By**

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## INTRODUCTION

In January 1991 the Office of the Secretary of State of Minnesota contracted with Office Technology Corporation to provide technical assistance in the determination of whether or not it would be practical and advantageous to use output data from the redistricting of the legislature to update the precinct boundaries maintained in the statewide voter registration system files. The reason the firm was contracted was twofold. First, the Company had prepared the system design for the statewide voter registration system of Minnesota. Second, the firm offered experience in the use of geographic database data for governmental functions.

There are three reasons for considering using the legislative database. First, the geographic and census data offered by the legislative system could enable the Office of the Secretary of State to begin modifying the statewide voter registration system to make it easy to assign voters to new precincts before the redistricting process was completed. Second, the added capability could be of significant value to the localities in meeting local redistricting requirements. Third, the addition of census data could make the statewide voter registration system database a more valuable tool in both improving voter registration in the state and in providing other services to individual localities.

## LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING DATABASE

The Legislative Coordinating Commission of the State of Minnesota has been given the responsibility to provide the necessary computer facilities to draw legislative and congressional redistricting plans. To accomplish this, the Commission purchased and installed separate computer hardware and software. The software, is that provided by ARC/INFO. It is geographic database software that provides the ability to display base maps and to build levels of data that can then be overlaid on the maps by computer. The system provides both visual terminal display and printed display of data.

The Legislative Coordinating Commission also purchased the TIGER/Line Precensus files from the U. S. Bureau of the Census. These files contain the census blocks and tracks for the state that were used to conduct the 1990 census. The files contain 203,000 census blocks. These census blocks comprise 87 counties, about 855 cities and 1,800 towns. There are also 4,100 voting precincts contained in the file.

The TIGER/Line file contains street addresses but only those for the standard metropolitan areas of the state. This basically is the Minneapolis/St Paul area. These street addresses are from the 1980 GBF/DIME file that was used for the 1980 census. This file has not been updated by the Bureau of the Census. It is thus quite out of date and does not include renamed streets, address changes or new developments or streets. The State has paid the cost for the metropolitan area to update and correct the file. Street information for the majority of the remainder of the state is still not in file.

## **INTERFACE WITH VOTER REGISTRATION DATABASE**

The Minnesota statewide voter registration system provides the ability for individual counties to maintain a precinct finder which is used by the system to automatically assign precinct, ward, congressional district, legislative district, commissioner district, school district and special voting districts to registrant records based on the county, municipality and/or street address. The system does this by having the street ranges for each street within that electoral district stored. When a registrant is added or a registrant's address is changed the system compares that address to the precinct finder to assign the proper numbers.

When legislative redistricting is completed, the precinct finder will have to be changed to reflect any changes to current boundaries that also affect the street and address range assignments. This will also have to be done when the same result occurs due to local redistricting.

Under the current system you change the precinct finder by manually entering the appropriate changes for each street range and the new electoral district numbers that apply to the new range. The system is then run and all registration records in the statewide file are compared to the new precinct finder table. The proper precinct and electoral districts are, at this time, entered, by the system into each individual voter record.

The interface of the redistricting database with the voter registration system database would be accomplished through the entry of the appropriate census block ID into each voter registration record and the revision of the precinct finder table so that it is compatible with and can be interfaced with the redistricting software street table. For the portion of the state for which there is a precinct finder file, this should be able to be accomplished by matching the the street files of the two systems. For the remainder of the precincts this will probably have to be manually entered. It may not be necessary, however, to enter every block number of a precinct in order to establish a fully compatible file. It may, for example, only be

necessary to use the center block number or a tract number for that precinct in certain instances.

## **BENEFITS VERSUS COMPLEXITIES**

Taking all factors into consideration there are seven potential benefits that can be identified as relating to the establishment of the capability to interface with the legislative redistricting system file. There are also six potential complexities associated with this. These benefits and complexities are as follows:

### **Potential Benefits**

1. This capability should enable the Office of the Secretary of State and local election offices to automatically assign the new precincts for up to one half of the registered voters in the state.
2. This should reduce the reassignment labor cost by up to two thirds for those localities where precincts can be automatically be reassigned.
3. This could ensure that reassignment can be completed within the legally established deadline.
4. This could provide an effective and practical means to build precinct finder tables for those localities that do not presently have that capability.
5. This would provide the ability to merge general population statistical data with registered voter statistical data to better identify voter registration, voter education and voter turnout requirements.
6. This should provide the ability to produce computer generated and printed precinct boundary maps for each of the local jurisdictions.
7. This may provide the ability to automatically assign ZIP plus 4 and carrier route to each voter registration record.

### **Potential Complexities**

1. It may be necessary to assign each of the 203,000 block numbers to the appropriate individual registered voter records.

2. There may be no easy way to establish and maintain an automated interface between the statewide voter registration system and the legislative redistricting geographic database.
3. There is a potential that certain of the block numbers will be changed in certain areas where population increases or decreases thus making it necessary to also change those numbers in the voter registration system database.
4. The fact that the legislative system street file is not fully current and is not in the same format as that of the statewide voter registration system file will increase the complexity of making the change fully accurate and useful.
5. There is an estimated development and implementation cost of up to \$250,000 to make the systems fully compatible and cross referenceable.
6. The Office of the Secretary of State does not have the staff resources in-house to carry out this effort.

### **OTHER POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

The potential benefits cited above are directly related to the electoral process and the role of the statewide voter registration system file in that process. The integration of the voter registration system precinct finder with that for legislative redistricting provides additional potential applications. This is partially due to the fact that voter registration provides a key source for maintaining and updating any street file. Individuals registering to vote are a key means of ensuring that a file of addresses is maintained in a current, accurate and complete manner.

The voter registration precinct finder combined with the legislative geographic database will make it much easier for those areas that do not currently have a street file to establish one. Once established and combined with the geographic database this information can be used to provide improved dwelling location information for an enhanced 911 service. It can also be used to establish and maintain improved property and parcel information. In short, the geographic capability will be of significant assistance to small communities in establishing and maintaining property information that will improve service to the public.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment of whether or not the Office of the Secretary of State should add the census block and other data to the voter registration system database so as to interface with the legislative redistricting geographic database is a difficult one. The cost can be somewhat high and the process can be a complex one. The potential benefits can also, however, be high. The ability to assign individual voters to new precincts automatically when precinct boundaries are changed in any way is a very valuable and cost effective capability. The ability to begin today setting up the file for the new precinct boundaries rather than waiting until redistricting is completed is also a valuable and cost effective capability.

The cost for this capability is, however, potentially excessive if it is only of value for this one function. While it is somewhat more difficult and time consuming the current system does provide a somewhat automated means of assigning new precincts to registered voter records.

If, however, the legislative redistricting geographic database is going to be available on a permanent basis and is going to be updated and maintained to reflect changes as they occur this could be an excellent opportunity to improve the automation of precinct assignments, provide better statistical information that is used to improve the voter registration process, make it easier for counties without a precinct finder capability to establish one and provide added service capabilities for the local governments. The decision is one based on the establishment or lack of establishment of a long range geographic database maintenance and use commitment.