



# Safe at Home

## MINNESOTA SECRETARY OF STATE

Steve Simon

### **Safe at Home Biennial Voting Report April 2015**

Voting Activity January 1, 2013 - December 31, 2014

#### **Cost of Report Preparation**

The total cost for the Office of the Secretary of State to prepare this report was approximately \$2,141.00. Most of these costs involved staff time in analyzing data and preparing the written report. Incidental costs include paper, copying, and other office supplies.

Estimated costs are provided in accordance with *Minnesota Statutes*, Section 3.197, requiring the cost for preparing a report to be provided at the beginning of a report to the legislature.

#### **Safe at Home Program Overview**

The Safe at Home address confidentiality program is managed by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State (OSS). The program, which began September 1, 2007, is open to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and those who otherwise fear for their safety. Participants in Safe at Home are assigned a designated address (a P.O. Box in St. Paul) that can be used for all of their interactions with others. The designated address allows the participant to go about their daily life without disclosing their actual home, employment or school address. All private and public entities in the state of Minnesota must accept the Safe at Home address as a participant's actual address. Safe at Home receives participants' mail, forwards all of their First Class Mail to them and assists them with their interactions with third parties should problems arise when giving the Safe at Home address to others. Staff also works with third party stakeholders to ensure legal compliance and that their business practices accommodate the safety needs of Safe at Home participants.

#### **Safe at Home Voting Process Overview**

Safe at Home participants vote by absentee ballot through the Safe at Home office. As of December 31, 2014, there were 483 program participants registered as absentee voters through Safe at Home. The voting process is governed by *Minnesota Statutes*, section 5B.06 and *Minnesota Rules*, section 8290.1300. The voting experience under Safe at Home is time-

consuming and somewhat cumbersome. It is, however, the only way participants can vote safely, without the need to share their name and address with others.

The current process works as follows:

- Upon enrollment each applicant is given the opportunity to register as an ongoing absentee voter through Safe at Home. (Should an applicant decline registration at that time, Safe at Home extends other opportunities for registration during their participation in the program.)
- At least 60 days before an election or within two business days after the scheduling of a special election, all registered Safe at Home absentee voters are identified by Safe at Home staff.
- OSS communicates to the appropriate election administrator of the jurisdiction the number of ballots needed for program participant voters whose records are not challenged. This communication is made without disclosing names or specific addresses of program participants.
- The ballots are mailed to the Safe at Home office.
- When Safe at Home receives a blank ballot, it is sent to the voter along with voting instructions, a tan ballot envelope, an absentee ballot return envelope and a postage-paid return envelope addressed to Safe at Home.
- The voter returns the completed ballot to Safe at Home in the envelopes provided.
- When the ballot is received, Safe at Home staff perform name, signature and identification number matches and determine whether the certificate on the absentee ballot signature envelope was properly completed.
- The signature envelope with the voter's name and address is separated from the tan ballot envelope containing the absentee ballot.
- The tan ballot envelope, which remains sealed at all times, is placed in an envelope containing a certification by staff that the ballot was cast by a Safe at Home participant, and whether the certificate on the absentee ballot signature envelope was properly completed. The certification envelope does not contain the participant voter's name or actual address, but it does contain the voter's local jurisdiction information.
- The completed certification envelope is sent to the appropriate county auditor, who sends the ballot to the appropriate absentee ballot board. Election judges on the absentee ballot board are required to accept the ballot if the certification indicates the return envelope was properly completed.

### **Annual Review**

Pursuant to *Minnesota Rules*, section 8290.1300, subpart 11, by March 31<sup>st</sup> of every year Safe at Home is required to determine whether any program participant that cast an absentee ballot also has a record in the statewide voter registration system as having cast a ballot in that same election, thereby indicating they voted twice. This annual check is

performed manually by Safe at Home staff. If a Safe at Home participant is found to have voted twice, the appropriate county attorney must be notified.

Checks performed for March 31, 2013 and March 31, 2014 indicated that that none of the Safe at Home participants who had cast absentee ballots in any election during the preceding 12 months were also recorded in the statewide voter registration system as having voted using the traditional, non-Safe at Home voting process in that same election.

### **Voting Activity**

The following pages show tables of Safe at Home voting activity from January 1, 2013 through December 31, 2014. The activities are separated into two tables reflecting a legislative change allowing Safe at Home participants to submit a one-time request to receive all ballots by mail. This procedural change was effective for the 2014 State Primary and subsequent elections.

## Safe at Home Voting Activity

### 2013 Elections and 2014 Elections Prior to the 2014 State Primary

Table 1

<b>SPECIAL ELECTIONS 2013</b>			
Number of Voters Who Requested a Ballot	Number of Ballots Returned On or Before Election Day	Ballots That Arrived Late	Ballots Forwarded to County
3	1	0	1
<b>PRIMARY ELECTIONS 2013</b>			
Number of Voters Who Requested a Ballot	Number of Ballots Returned On or Before Election Day	Ballots That Arrived Late From County	Ballots Forwarded to County
1	0	1	0
<b>GENERAL 2013 (INCLUDING TOWNSHIP ELECTIONS)</b>			
Number of Voters Who Requested a Ballot	Number of Ballots Returned On or Before Election Day	Ballots That Arrived Late	Ballots Forwarded to County
50	21	0	21
<b>SPECIAL ELECTIONS 2014 (INCLUDING SPECIAL PRIMARY ELECTIONS)</b>			
Number of Voters Who Requested a Ballot	Number of Ballots Returned On or Before Election Day	Ballots That Arrived Late From Participant	Ballots Forwarded to County
8	0	2	2
<b>TOWNSHIP ELECTIONS 2014</b>			
Number of Voters Who Requested a Ballot	Number of Ballots Returned On or Before Election Day	Ballots That Arrived Late	Ballots Forwarded to County
2	0	0	0

## Safe at Home Voting Activity

### 2014 State Primary and 2014 General Election

Table 2

<b>STATE PRIMARY 2014</b>			
Number of Voters Who Received a Ballot	Number of Ballots Returned On or Before Election Day	Ballots That Arrived Late From Participant	Ballots Forwarded to County
486	40	2	42
<b>STATE GENERAL ELECTION 2014</b>			
Number of Voters Who Received a Ballot	Number of Ballots Returned On or Before Election Day	Ballots That Arrived Late	Ballots Forwarded to County
494	42	5	47