

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **County considering election changes**

Grant County Clerk Pam Harris has convened a bi-partisan commission to explore the transition in Grant County from precinct-based elections to vote centers.

Vote centers provide added flexibility and efficiency to the voting process. In addition, early voting options are expanded as part of vote centers. Nearly half of Indiana's counties used vote centers in the 2019 election cycle. In the precinct-based model used currently in Grant County, a voter is assigned to one precinct polling site and on Election Day can only cast their ballot there. Under the vote center model, any registered and eligible voter can cast their ballot at any vote center in the county.

The Indiana Secretary of State's Election Division has recommended forming a commission to assist with the process of exploring a move to vote centers. In line with that recommendation, Harris has asked the election advisory commission to help investigate and evaluate the options for vote centers in future elections, possibly as soon as Fall 2020. The commission is helping to review logistics, policies, technology, and other aspects of a potential transition to vote centers.

Vote centers can provide a cost savings to the county for election administration, and may also improve voting times and vote counting. Studies show that in counties where vote centers have been implemented, it has not hurt voter turnout. In fact, in some cases voter turnout has increased due in part to increased availability of early voting. More information about vote centers is available on the Indiana Secretary of State's website: <https://www.in.gov/sos/elections/4529.htm>

The election advisory commission is co-chaired by Darren Reese, Grant County Republican Party chairperson, and Terry Stodghill, Grant County Democratic Party chairperson. The commission also includes Mark Bardsley, Grant County Commissioner; Deborah Cain, Marion City Council President; Patricia Gibson, Vice Chair of the Grant County Democratic Party; Lori Goss-Reaves, former Oak Hill School Board member; Jonathan Perez, Grant County Council member; Mike Roorbach, Grant County Council member; Paul Thompson Jr., former Marion City Council member; Joselyn Whitticker, former Marion City Council member; and Torri Williams, Secretary of the Grant County Democratic Party. Steve Shamo from MicroVote, supplier of the voting machines the county currently uses, is providing his expertise to the

commission as well. Grant County Election Board Attorney Marty Harker is serving as an adviser to the commission.

Anticipated next steps include:

- Communication with the Grant County Council and the Grant County Commissioners to convey the findings of the commission and make any needed requests regarding budget allocation.
- A review of potential voting center sites, taking into consideration population, traffic, parking, and voter access needs.
- A public outreach program to help inform the voters of Grant County when and where they will be able to cast their ballot.

More information will be provided as the exploration process continues.

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