



April 10, 2018

For immediate release:

A National Vote at Home Coalition (NVAHC) analysis shows significant increases in voter turnout in Minnesota and North Dakota jurisdictions where 100% of voters receive mailed-out ballots

NVAHC is a national organization that promotes making mailed-out ballots more accessible and creating full-fledged “Vote at Home” (VAH) election systems where all active registered voters are mailed their ballots several weeks before each election. Three states – Oregon, Colorado, and Washington state—currently have such statewide VAH systems.

NVAHC today released an analysis of publically available data from two states – Minnesota and North Dakota – that allow full VAH elections in special circumstances. “To our knowledge, this is the first time this “hidden in plain sight” data has even been analyzed and reported on,” noted NVAHC chair Phil Keisling. (Keisling served as Oregon Secretary of State from 1991-99 and led that state’s 1998 effort to become the nation’s first state to adopt a VAH election system.) “What’s revealed strongly suggests that perhaps the best way to boost voter turnout – especially in midterm and primary elections – is deceptively simple. Abolish the traditional polling place and let voters return their mailed-out ballots however they choose to do so.”

Minnesota law allows certain precincts with fewer than 400 registered voters to conduct their elections entirely via mailed-out ballots. About 17% of the state’s precincts used this “Vote at Home” approach in the 2016 presidential race; their overall turnout was 3% higher than in non-VAH precincts. “While this difference may seem small at first glance, 90,000 more votes would have been cast had the rest of Minnesota matched this rate,” Keisling noted. In 2016, just 44,000 votes in Minnesota separated Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

The NVAHC analysis revealed far more dramatic results for Minnesota’s 2014 midterm election, where VAH precinct turnout was 72%, compared to just 60% in non-VAH precincts. That would have translated to about 300,000 more votes statewide. In the September 2016 primary election, VAH-precinct turnout was higher still in comparison. For example, in Beltrami county, it was more than triple the rate viz. non-VAH precincts: 20% vs 6%.

Similar patterns are revealed in neighboring North Dakota, based on county-by-county data. According to North Dakota’s Secretary of State’s office, 31 of the state’s 53 counties now have VAH election systems, covering about a quarter of the state’s eligible voters. For the last four primary and general elections, here’s how VAH and non-VAH counties compared in terms of turnout of eligible voters (which in North Dakota’s case, is all eligible citizens);

2016 Presidential: 63% VAH turnout vs. 60% in Non-VAH

2014 midterms: 53% vs. 45%

2016 June primary: 35% vs. 22%

2014 primary: 30% vs. 14%

“This is the same pattern – modest turnout increases in the highest-profile presidential race, far bigger increases in midterms, and even more dramatic boosts in primary elections – that is revealed when



looking at voter turnout in the nation's 3 full Vote at Home states," Keisling noted. In 2016, NVAHC analysis of data from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) show that turnout averaged 82% of reported active registered voters in the 3 VAH states, vs 72% in all other states. In the 2014 midterms, the differences were 65% vs a 47% average. "With their Vote at Home election systems, Colorado (72%) and Oregon (71%) in the 2014 midterms had active registered turnout that matched the national average for the 2016 presidential election," Keisling noted. "And Oregon wasn't even a battleground state that year."

"We recognize that elections are complicated, and that a deeper analysis of all this data, based on complete voting files and looking at other variables, would be needed to 'prove' that Vote at Home is the primary underlying cause of these turnout increases," Keisling noted. "But such data should be sufficient – if not downright compelling – to suggest that there may be no better election reform on the landscape for getting more registered voters to actually cast their ballots in key elections."

In addition to the three 100% VAH states, 27 of Utah's 29 counties are using this system in 2018 (covering over 98% of their voters), as are 5 California counties. In April, Anchorage Alaska held its first-ever VAH municipal election; in a record-setting turnout, city voters elected a new mayor and narrowly defeated an anti-transgender bathroom bill. And a bill that's already passed one chamber of Hawaii's legislature would make that state the nation's 4th all Vote at Home state.

More information, including a recent study of how predicted voter turnout increased significantly in Colorado's first-ever VAH midterm election in 2014, can be found at www.voteathome.org