

CAMBER

Citizens for Accurate Mail Ballot Election Results

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NEWS RELEASE *For Immediate Release*

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Mail-in ballots do not increase turnout

October 14, 2003 - Mail-in ballots do not increase voter turnout despite claims by Boulder County election officials.

A new study of Boulder County election data shows that voter turnout is not related to mail ballot voting. The apparent rise in 2001 voter turnout is misleading and caused by the inconsistent purging of voter registration records.

Boulder County calculated voter turnout by dividing the number of ballots cast by the number of registered voters. For the same number of ballots cast, turnout percentage appears to go down if there are more and up if there are fewer registered voters.

Because of inconsistent record keeping by Boulder County the number of registered voters jumped in 1999 and plummeted in 2001. Curiously, the number of registered voters in 1997 and 1999 exceeded the voting age population.

When voter registration was used to calculate turnout, it gave the erroneous impression that participation was 31.5 percent, 24.9 percent, and 45.6 percent for the years 1997, 1999, and 2001. Boulder County continues to claim that the 20.7 percent difference in turnout percentage, between the 1999 traditional election and the 2001 mail ballot only election, proves that mail ballot elections *caused* increased turnout.

However, when all eligible voters are included in the turnout calculation it is clear that voter turnout is independent of the method that voters use to cast their ballot.

Election Year	Ballots Cast	Registered		Eligible	
		Voters	Turnout	Voters	Turnout
1997	60,894	193,463	31.5%	192,264	31.7%
1999	51,812	208,164	24.9%	200,709	25.8%
2001	75,944	166,480	45.6%	203,801	37.3%

By not including voters who meet eligibility requirements (age, residence and citizenship) but aren't registered, Boulder County has misleadingly calculated turnout.

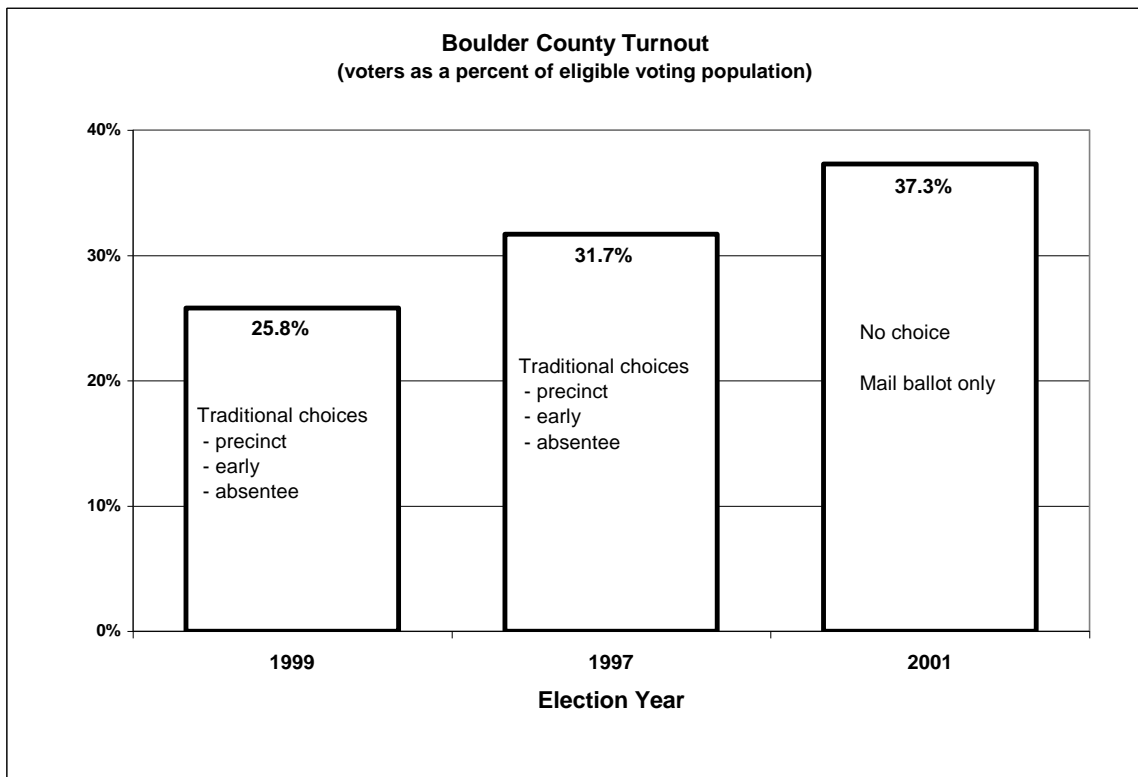
When eligible voting population is used to calculate turnout, participation is actually 31.7 percent, 25.8 percent, and 37.3 percent for the years 1997, 1999, and 2001.

Boulder County's claim that a difference in turnout is *caused* by mail ballot voting is obviously not true. The 1997 and 1999 elections were both conducted using traditional voting choices (precinct, early and absentee). Their 5.9 percent turnout difference is absolutely not caused by mail ballot voting since neither was a mail ballot election.

The 5.6 percent turnout difference between the 2001 mail ballot only election and the 1997 traditional election is not significantly different than the 1997-1999 turnout difference. As a matter of fact it is smaller. There is no support for a claim that the 5.6 percent difference was caused by mandatory mail ballot voting.

Last September, a member of the editorial board of The Wall Street Journal, John Fund wrote, "We've been down this road before. Motor voter laws allow people to register to vote at the department of motor vehicles. Liberal absentee voter laws let people cast ballots while on vacation or from remote locations. And some states allow for early voting--casting a ballot before Election Day. All of these provisions have failed to increase voter turnout. It's about time that someone step forward and admit that the root cause of low turnout isn't restrictive voting laws, but voter apathy. People are fed up with mediocre candidates, gerrymandered districts and uncompetitive elections."

The report is published on the CAMBER website at: www.users.qwest.net/~alkolwicz



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CAMBER is a dedicated group of volunteers who are working to ensure that every voter gets to vote once, every vote is counted once, and that every ballot is anonymous.

REFERENCE DATA:

Boulder County Voter Registration Figures – even numbered years

<http://www.co.boulder.co.us/clerk/elections/estats.html>

Eligible voter figures were extrapolated from this table as follows:

$$1997 = ((1998 - 1996) / 2) + 1996 = 192,264$$

$$1999 = ((2000 - 1998) / 2) + 1998 = 200,709$$

$$2001 = ((2002 - 2000) / 2) + 2000 = 203,801$$

1997 Boulder County Coordinated Election Results

<http://www.co.boulder.co.us/clerk/elect/gen971.htm>

Voter Registration	193,463
Ballots Cast	60,894

1999 Boulder County Coordinated Election Results

<http://www.co.boulder.co.us/clerk/elect/cor991.htm>

Voter Registration	208,164
Ballots Cast	51,812

2001 Boulder County Coordinated Election Results

<http://www.co.boulder.co.us/clerk/elect/cor01.htm>

Voter Registration	166,480
Ballots Cast	75,944

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