

State & Regional

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Voter registration backlog causing headaches

by Steve Biddle

WPSU-PRCN (2008-04-04) State and county elections officials are swamped with voter registration applications which must be processed in time for Pennsylvania's April 22nd primary.

Because of increased interest and the state's rare significance in the presidential nominating process, voters are registering in record numbers -- and many who were already registered are switching parties.

Doug Hill, the executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, says some counties are seeing backlogs of unprocessed applications numbering in the tens of thousands.

"The system is at or over capacity right now," Hill told Public Radio Capitol News, "Our counties are reporting to us that it's taking a minimum of three days for any change or any new registration to turn around in the system, to run through its checks. That's the minimum. It can often go longer than that."

Part of the problem, according to Hill, is that the statewide voter registration computer system is not designed to handle an influx as large as it is receiving.

Officials at the state level say the worst problem is at the federal Social Security Administration, which shuts down its system nightly for maintenance.

Under federal law, states must verify the social security numbers of new applicants.

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