

Get out the vote: Jersey County expects record turnout in this year's election

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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JERSEYVILLE - Nearly an eighth of all registered voters in **Jersey County** have already cast their ballots, **Jersey County Clerk Pam Warford** said.

Approximately 1,800 of the nearly 16,000 registered voters in Jersey County have cast their ballots early, Warford said. Of those, nearly 1,500 have voted early at the county clerk's office and 300 have voted by mail. Warford attributes these numbers to the heavily-contested presidential election this year. She said she would not be surprised if voting surpasses the former record of an estimated 10,000 voters this season.

"This year is about as high as I was expecting, but it's trending more than past elections," Warford said.

Warford said around 1,000 voters cast their ballots early during presidential election years. Not very many county positions are contested this election year, however.

"Most of the other county positions are uncontested, except for a position on district one of the county board."

Four people are running for that position, which represents northeastern Jersey County, including portions of Jerseyville, **Fidelity** and **Medora**. Democrats **Mary E. Kirbach** and **Terri L. Taake** are running against Republicans **Benjamin J. Heitzig** and **Roger Newberry**. Voters may choose no more than two of those candidates on their ballots.

A few public questions are also generating some interest in Jersey County, Warford said. Residents of the **Southwestern School District** who live within the newly-annexed areas of the **Brighton Memorial Library District** are being asked if they would like to disconnect from that annex. Residents living within the **Godfrey Fire Protection District** are being asked to approve or vote against a "Rescue Referendum." A similar referendum is being proposed for the nearby **QEM Fire Protection District** as well.

Those not registered to vote in Jersey County who are eligible to vote and would like to cast their ballot for this election may register to vote until Election Day. Unlike **Madison County**, however, Jersey County unregistered voters may not register at their polling places on Election Day. They are required to register at the county clerk's office. Warford said many have already registered this year.

"We are approaching 16,000 registered voters," she said. "We had a lot of new registrants this fall. I would attribute that to this year's presidential race."

The county clerk's office has been working to ensure voters do not have to wait in long lines on Election Day.

"Inevitably there will be some lines," Warford said. "But, we're doing our best to shorten that wait. We have things set up to run pretty smoothly."

To prevent any possible discrepancy and ensure a valid paper trail, Warford said the county utilizes paper ballots in their elections.