

Democracy 2019: Reflecting on Dismal Turnouts

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Madison County voters provided a dismal turnout during Tuesday's elections.

Madison County Clerk Debra Ming-Mendoza said the entire election saw only 11.8 percent of Madison County voters take to the polls. When asked why turnout was so low, a frustrated Ming-Mendoza said people told her there was not anything that important on the ballot – something she vehemently said was incorrect. Despite the lack of state or federal races on the ballot, several contested races – including trustees, school board members, tax referendums and mayoral competitions were on there.

“In my opinion, the candidates on the ballot yesterday were some of the most important choices people can make,” she said. “Their decisions touch us every day. I know it's not like a presidential election. It's a disappointment, it's disheartening.”

Ming-Mendoza said the county makes it as easy for voters as it possibly can. She said they allow early voting as well as vote-by-mail. She even commented Tuesday was a nice day, so the weather was not preventing people from coming to the polls.

“We work so hard to put on the elections and make ballots open to everyone,” she said. “I heard a voter yesterday say they were not aware of the election, and she had to hear about it from her neighbor. I don't know what the answer is for these local elections.”

Within the broad blanket of poor showing, there were a few isolated pockets of voters, she said. Places like Godfrey, Granite City, Collinsville, Edwardsville and Glen Carbon had turnouts better than the overall average this time, but Ming-Mendoza said those did little to tick the numbers beyond that 11.8 percent.

Results from Tuesday's elections are somewhat close in some areas, and they will not be finalized until April 23, Ming-Mendoza said. Ballots postmarked as late as Tuesday must still be received and counted.

While she is frustrated with this election's voter turnout, Ming-Mendoza said she is already working toward the March 2020 primaries leading to the undoubtedly massive November 2020 presidential election.

“Next year for the presidential election, watch, we'll probably have at least 70 percent turnout.”