To: The Honorable Chair and Members  
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator

Re: Cost to Pima County of “Federal Only” Ballots

Date: October 14, 2014

You may recall that Arizona has a bifurcated voter registration system due to differences between federal and state voter registration laws. The National Voter Registration Act allows voters to register for federal elections by using a federal registration form, which requires registrants to attest under penalty of perjury that they meet eligibility requirements, including US citizenship. Voters do not have to provide proof of citizenship for the federal form.

As a result of Proposition 200, passed by Arizona voters in 2004, a person registering to vote in Arizona must provide acceptable proof of citizenship. In 2013, following litigation that went all the way to the US Supreme Court, the federal courts ruled that a voter in Arizona who registered using the federal form and did not provide proof of citizenship would still be eligible to vote in elections held in Arizona for federal offices.

As a result of these court rulings and a subsequent Arizona Attorney General opinion requiring the bifurcated system, Pima County and other Arizona counties are required to provide “federal only” ballots in the same format and style as full Arizona ballots. For the recent primary election, Pima County spent $104,067.71 to print the large number of regular, provisional, duplicate and test ballots that were necessary for the four recognized political parties and 248 precincts. Only seven voters (four Republicans and three Democrats) cast federal only ballots, at a cost per federal ballot cast of approximately $14,867. These costs are not reimbursed by the State.

A similar process will need to be followed for the November general election, although the costs will presumably be lower because there will not be four separate partisan ballots as was the case in the primary election.

CHH/mjk

c: Ellen Wheeler, Assistant County Administrator  
  Brad Nelson, Elections Director