



DuPage County Election Commission

INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS

DuPage County, Illinois, was among the counties statewide mandated to launch a new type of voter initiative by the March 2006 primary election. In August 2005, the Illinois Legislature passed a bill requiring all Illinois counties to offer early voting to registered voters. The concept allows registered voters to cast ballots during a specified window before the official Election Day. Unlike absentee ballots, early voting simply requires voters to provide a valid, government-issued ID card at one of the designated early voting sites — no special circumstances or excuses needed. Other municipalities around the U.S. found the process helped boost voter turnout by making the process more convenient.

The need

Because the early voting initiative would be a first in Illinois, DuPage County Election Commission (DCEC) officials retained Hodge Schindler to help spread the word to the public and the media through a targeted PR and marketing effort that would use all aspects of our skill sets. And because of delays in approving program expenditures, we were unable to begin work until nine weeks before the scheduled start of early voting in late February 2006.

Our approach

After researching early voting programs in other states, we devised a multi-prong approach using passive and active elements:

- 1) Logo and tagline development: “Early Voting. Your Choice. Your Time.”
- 2) Developed a media list for release distribution about Early Voting in DuPage County.
- 3) Wrote copy for the DuPage County Election Commission Web site touting Early Voting and the Early Voting hotline.
- 4) Wrote a letter promoting Early Voting, sent to officials in towns in DuPage County.
- 5) Designed a button for voters who voted early.
- 6) Wrote and designed a brochure explaining the concept and polling places that was distributed throughout DuPage County.
- 7) Designed a postcard that was mailed to more than 320,000 registered voters.
- 8) Created a half-page ad that ran in a regional newspaper.
- 9) Coordinated interviews between DuPage County officials and local print and broadcast media.
- 10) Distributed a 17-minute public-service interview with the DCEC president to local cable channels.

The outcomes

Having met all of our internal and external deadlines, the campaign to promote Early Voting in DuPage County was a measurable success. More than 8,400 registered voters visited the 10 Early Voting sites during the period before the March 2006 primary election. The turnout in DuPage County was significantly higher than in surrounding counties with similar population statistics. According to surveys of early voters, more than 10 percent heard about the program through the Early Voting postcard, while more than 500 people called the special hotline for more information. (About 5 percent found out about Early Voting in DuPage County through articles in local newspapers.) DuPage County Election Commission officials were so pleased with the results that they expanded the program to include more Early Voting sites for the 2006 general election and added other promotional and educational efforts to ensure every registered voter was aware of the program.