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DEPARTMENT of Public Welfare

STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office Memorandum

TO : David J. Vail, M.D., Director
Medical Services Division

DATE: February 11, 1971

FROM : Sandra Bisgaard
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SUBJECT: Operation Citizenship

The following report on Operation Citizenship covers three areas of patient involvement in last fall's election activities: (1) registration and voting, (2) visits by candidates, and (3) mock elections or straw votes.

I. Registration and Voting

Operation Citizenship was coordinated by the volunteer services departments at Fergus Falls, Anoka, the St. Peter complex, and Moose Lake, by the rehabilitation therapies department at Rochester, by the chief social workers at Willmar and Cambridge, and by one of the recreational therapists at Hastings, all with varying degrees of success. No effort was made at either Brainerd or Faribault to inform those eligible to vote, i.e., voluntary patients, of the registration and voting procedures and, consequently, no residents at either of these institutions voted.

At Fergus Falls, two residents were assisted in meeting the voter registration requirements of their home communities; the remaining five that voted came from areas that did not require prior registration. The voting services available to patients at the hospital were discussed at various patient meetings throughout the hospital. Voter information was also given extensive coverage during the month preceding the election in the weekly hospital newspaper, which is read by both patients and staff. Six residents were assisted in securing absentee ballots. All of these voted and at least one other planned to vote at home while on leave. Of the 555 hospital residents, 160 were eligible to vote. Therefore, only 4 per cent of those eligible actually voted.

Out of the 450 patients at Anoka, eleven applied for absentee ballots, but many of the eleven didn't send their ballots in properly notarized even though a booth was set up to give patients information on the notarization procedures. Only four patients approached the booth to ask for instructions. Voter information was circulated through patient meetings and posters on the wards. The respondent from Anoka feels that the poor results were not worth the amount of effort that went into the project.

The respondent from St. Peter was not aware that anything should be done other than provide ballots. A letter was sent out to the entire hospital population stating that the League of Women Voters would be at the hospital on a certain day. Respondent does not know how many patients wanted to vote.

At Willmar, patients capable of voting in their home areas were encouraged to make visits home on Election Day. Respondent says no figures are available but that not too many seemed interested. Patients received voter information mainly through the social workers on their respective units, who were given applications for absentee ballots to give to the patients. Respondent estimates only ten to twenty patients actually voted by absentee ballot.

At Hastings, patients were told at an all-patients council meeting how and where to register but were not provided with the means to do so. Registration information was also displayed on a table in the central admissions office. Respondent asked the Humane Practices Committee at the hospital what should be done to help patients vote. The Committee thought the matter could be handled separately by the various units. Thus, there was no real coordination of patient voting. Not only was the attempt at voter information inadequate, according to the respondent, but it came too late as well. The volunteer services department offered its staff as escorts for patients who wanted to go to their precincts on Election Day, if staff on the wards weren't available for this purpose, but none of the wards responded to this offer. Respondent thinks no absentee ballots were used.

At Moose Lake, 65 patients registered to vote. Registration and voting procedures were discussed in various ward meetings prior to the election. Fifty-five patients, including six retardates, voted by absentee ballot. Of the 65 registered, one became too ill to vote, a number were discharged, and some went home to vote. Out of a population of 600, most were eligible to vote. Respondent said that some patients who had not voted in previous elections did so this year.

In early October, the rehab therapies staff at Rochester went to all wards and asked patients individually if they wanted to vote. Applications for absentee ballots were sent to the counties for all of them. Follow-up requests for ballots were sent to all counties which did not respond to the original request. Absentee ballots were held until October 29, at which time patients were called to the Recreation Center to fill them out. Of the 68 who had been registered, 51 responded. The hospital took care of notarization and postage where necessary. On November 3, eight patients were taken to the local polls to vote.

At Cambridge, respondent obtained sample ballots prior to the election and explained the voting procedures to each of the 10 residents who were eligible to vote. The seven residents who actually voted were taken to the local polls on Election Day.

The League of Women Voters was active at only two hospitals this year. At Anoka it set up a booth to receive applications for absentee ballots. The League visited St. Peter about six weeks before the election and met with all patients who wanted to vote. They assisted patients in filling out applications for ballots and provided them with postage and envelopes.

II. Visits by Candidates

Candidates for office and/or party workers visited only three of the hospitals. At Fergus Falls, DFL and Republican party workers passed out campaign literature at separate noon hours during the week prior to the election, and the

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DFL candidate from the 7th congressional district visited the hospital. The respondent from Willmar said that the candidates who visited the hospital confined their campaigning mainly to the staff and that none actively sought the patient vote. Seven candidates for state legislature visited Moose Lake on October 28 to talk to both staff and patients and distribute campaign literature.

III. Straw Votes

Rochester and Willmar were the only hospitals which held mock elections. RSH patients could vote for either major party candidate in the races for U.S.

- Senator, Governor, Lt. Governor, and 1st District Congressman. WSH patients had the opportunity to vote for the entire slate of offices and also for minority party candidates, as well as the two proposed constitutional amendments.

At Rochester, 159 of the 694 patients (23 per cent) participated in the straw vote. At Willmar, 90 of the 578 residents (16 per cent) registered, but many of the ballots were improperly filled out and could not be counted in many races.

Following are the results of the two mock elections, along with the official election totals for the general population as certified by the state canvassing board:

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>ROCHESTER</u>	<u>WILLMAR</u>	<u>STATE</u>
1) U.S. Senate			
Humphrey	64%	65%	57.8%
MacGregor	36%	31%	41.6%
Strebe		3%	.4%
Braatz		1%	.2%
2) Governor			
Anderson	58%	46%	54.0%
Head	42%	46%	45.5%
Heck		8%	.4%
(write-ins)			.1%
3) Lt. Governor			
Perpich	57%	53%	51%
Boo	43%	47%	49%
4) Sec. of State			
Donovan		55%	49.6%
Erdahl		45%	50.4%
5) Auditor			
Wefald		50%	49.1%
Hatfield		38%	49.9%
Smith		12%	1.0%

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>ROCHESTER</u>	<u>WILLMAR</u>	<u>STATE</u>
6) Treasurer			
Boche		44%	45%
Bjornson		56%	55%
7) Atty. General			
Spannaus		46%	51%
Forsythe		54%	49%
8) Pub. Service Comm.			
Ronald Anderson		45%	55%
C. Elmer Anderson		55%	45%
9) Chief Justice			
Daly		41%	25%
Knutson		59%	75%
10) 1st Dist. Cong. Race			
Lundeen	38%		31%
Quie	62%		69%
11) 6th Dist. Cong. Race			
Montgomery		48%	47.3%
Zwach		45%	51.8%
Martin		7%	.9%
12) Amendment #1			
Yes		74%	77%
No		26%	23%
13) Amendment #2			
Yes		76%	55%
No		24%	45%

The hospital(s) voted in the same direction as the state on both amendments and in the races for U.S. Senate, Lt. Governor, Treasurer, Chief Justice, and the first district congressional race. Rochester followed the general population in the governor's race, but Willmar gave an equal percentage of votes to each of the major candidates. In the races for Secretary of State, Auditor, Attorney General, Public Service Commissioner, and the sixth district congressional race, Willmar voted in the opposite direction from the general population.

IV. Conclusions

The conduct of Operation Citizenship during the last election was disappointing, to say the least, due to a lack of interest and/or coordination in many of the hospitals. The difference in attitudes toward patient voting, especially among the MR institutions, is striking. At one hospital, the number of residents eligible to vote was considered too small to bother with, and no effort was made to inform this group of the voting procedures. Yet at another institution, with an equally small number of eligible residents, enthusiasm for the project ran high.

- At most of the MI institutions, patient involvement was low. Perhaps more interest in future elections could be generated through intensive educational programs, including mock elections, and the active solicitation of visits by candidates and citizen groups.

The results of the two straw votes indicate that, for the most part, patients are voting similarly to the general population, although the size of the samples, especially at Willmar, were too small to draw any definite conclusions. It is interesting to note that in the races for auditor and 6th district congressman, in which Willmar voted in the opposite direction from the general population, the votes cast for the state winner in both populations varied by only .9 per cent and .7 per cent respectively.

SB/bjk