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5 things that went wrong in election

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Last week's election in Hamilton County accomplished something unprecedented in this age of partisan bickering.

Pretty much everyone agrees it was a mess.

That was abundantly clear Tuesday when Republicans and Democrats gathered to talk to the Board of Elections about what went wrong on Election Day and how they can fix it before voters pick a president in 2016.

No one who spoke, regardless of their political affiliation, wants a repeat of the glitches and delays that plagued voters and poll workers last week.

The main culprit is a new, electronic sign-in system that suffered a programming error so egregious it prompted a public apology Tuesday from the company responsible for it. As many as 4,000 voters may have been knocked off the registration list because of the error.

But there were other problems.

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Election

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Some were technical, some were poll worker mistakes and some were a combination of the two.

"It was a crazy morning," poll worker Marlene Kocher said of the new system's rollout.

And it turned into a crazy day. Based on investigators' findings so far, here are five reasons why:

» **What day is it?** The big blunder was the programming error. It happened when someone with Tenex Software Solutions, the company that was paid \$1.2 million to create the new system, entered the wrong date as the cut-off for voter registration. The correct deadline for registering in time to vote last week was Oct. 5. The system, however, used July 6 as the cut-off date, excluding as many as 11,000 voters who registered after July 6 but before Oct. 5. Because all of those people didn't show up to vote, the actual number of excluded voters probably is closer to 4,000.

Still, those voters were inconvenienced and were required to cast provisional ballots, which are counted days after the election when their eligibility is confirmed.

"It's a simple human error," Tenex President Ravi Kallem said of the date mistake. "I apologize for that. It's our responsibility."

So how did it happen?

Tenex and the county did a test run with the new technology in a smaller special election last August. The cut-off date for registering to vote in that election was July 6 — and it was never changed when the system was rolled out for the countywide election last week. Kallem said the fix is easy: put in the correct date next time. "I'm confident this is something you will not see again," he said.

» **Polling place Wi-Fi connections.** County officials say they checked polling places to make sure they had an Internet connection long before Election Day. But in some locations, poll workers had trouble booting up the electronic poll books and, in some cases, linking to printers just a few feet away. The reasons for the trouble aren't clear yet, but several poll workers said Tuesday they struggled with the connections all day.

Since the electronic poll books were supposed to speed up the process — reducing sign-in times from about 2 minutes to 40 seconds — the delays were especially frustrating.

"I had many irate voters," said Walter Golladay, a poll worker in Loveland.

» **Training tech newbies.** Poll

It didn't help that so many poll workers are retirees who didn't grow up using iPads, the platform on which the new system is based. Elections officials said they'd take another look at how they might improve the training program.

"I think comfort with technology is an issue across the board with a number of our poll workers," said Chip Gerhardt, a board of elections member.

» **New equipment, new problems.** Kallem said many of Hamilton County's troubles were common to other communities that have adopted the new technology, from glitches in the equipment to mistakes by the people using it.

Some machines had trouble scanning the bar code on drivers' licenses because it was smudged or too faded for the machine to read it properly. And some couldn't find names or birth dates because the information on the voter's identification didn't exactly match that in the computer system.

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