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Shelby, Utica set turnout records for Nov. 8 election

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SHELBY TOWNSHIP/UTICA — Voters came out in droves and lined up, in some cases 80 people long, to set turnout records in both Shelby Township and Utica Nov. 8.

Shelby Township had a 72.7 percent turnout; Utica had a 67.8 percent turnout. The overall turnout rate for Macomb County was 67.3 percent.

Both Shelby Township Clerk Stan Grot and Utica Clerk Beth Ricketts told the *Shelby-Utica News* that the election process went smoothly, for the most part.

"It was very intense," said Grot, who worked 22 hours without a break and returned home from physically dropping off Shelby Township's election results at the Macomb County Clerk's Office at ap-

proximately 3:30 a.m. Nov. 9. "The turnout was just overwhelming. But I think everyone who wanted to vote voted."

Of Shelby Township's 56,194 registered voters, 40,821 cast ballots in the general election, including 14,075 absentee voters. Grot said about 3,000 more residents sent in absentee ballots this year than in the 2012 general election, and 97 percent of requested absentee ballots were returned.

"It's a national election, first of all, and this was a very unusual and not normal election than people are used to because the candidates running turned out the voters, and there was a lot at stake at the national level," Grot said.

Local issues also brought many voters to the polls, he said.

"There were also a couple proposals

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on the ballot. One of them was regional transportation, which people came out in droves to vote against it, and the other one was the fire (operating millage renewal)," he said. "That passed very easily. It was a no-brainer."

He said he and his staff finished at approximately 11 p.m. Nov. 8, but afterward they had to compile a lot of reports and orga-

nize information to keep on file.

"I look forward to (working elections) because it's what keeps me going, and what keeps me excited is seeing all these voters coming out and participating in our election process," Grot said. "It gives me the opportunity to serve them — that's why I was elected."

Ricketts said she was expecting the turnout to be more than 50 percent, given the contentious presidential debates that fixated the nation's attention. In the last two presidential elections, she said, vot-

er turnout in Utica was just below 50 percent.

She said the city has approximately 3,400 registered voters. Of those who cast ballots, she said 600 were absentee voters, and the return rate of absentee voter ballots was 98 percent.

"We're very happy that the voters came out and voted," she

said. "Each precinct had extra workers. The only big line — it wasn't that huge — was in the morning because people like to vote before they go to work. I give a big thank-you to my workers and to the voters."

Ricketts said she and her staff finished tallying the election results at approximately 11 p.m. Nov. 8.

One of the most notable take-aways of the Utica election, she said, was the sheer closeness of the mayoral race. Thom Dionne pulled ahead of City Councilman Frank Czapki by five votes — 900 to 895.

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Photo by Sarah Wojcik

The line to vote at Eisenhower High School traveled down a long hallway and wrapped around to form a U-shape Nov. 8.