



ELECTION '90

Surprising turnout in state could exceed 60 percent

By Norman Draper
Staff Writer

Statewide voter turnout was unexpectedly heavy Tuesday, and election officials predicted that it might surge past 60 percent of Minnesota's registered voters.

That's much higher than the 49 percent that had been predicted by Secretary of State Joan Growe.

In Hennepin County, election supervisor Marge Christianson estimated that 62 percent of the county's voters cast ballots. Hundreds of voters in cities such as Bloomington and Richfield were still in long lines after 8 p.m. when the polls closed. Those in line then were allowed to vote, and some Richfield residents didn't finish voting until 9:30.

"Richfield is inundated with voters," Christianson said. "Wayzata could go as high as 70 percent."

Ramsey County election supervisor Joan Pelzer said that suburbs such as Maplewood and New Brighton reported a heavy turnout, and that New Brighton election officials were worried about running out of ballots.

The small town of Independence in western Hennepin County reported the largest turnout of its voters ever by midafternoon. Residents had to stand in line to vote at City Hall, the town's only polling place, said City Clerk Mary Leintz.

There were plenty of signs that voters might troop to the polls in greater numbers than expected.

In Dakota County, Auditor Norma Marsh said the "phone was ringing off the wall this morning" with calls from people asking where to vote. The picture was the same outside the metropolitan area.

"Turnout is uniformly higher than expected," said Joe Mansky, director of the election division at the secretary of state's office. "The likely culprits are the governor's race, the Senate race and tax elections."

By evening, Mansky was predicting that turnout would rise well over 50 percent and could easily shoot past 60 percent. The trend toward a heavy turnout was consistent in the Twin Cities and outstate. In Duluth, City Clerk Jeff Cox predicted a turnout of close to 60 percent. St. Cloud City

Clerk Gregg Engdahl said there were lines of voters throughout the day.

Election officials in outstate counties reported turnouts of between 50 and 60 percent. Wabasha County Auditor Joel Beckman said he expected a 70 percent turnout. Voter turnout reached 61 percent during the last comparable election eight years ago when residents decided races in all statewide offices, the Legislature and a U.S. Senate seat. The last gubernatorial election, in 1986, attracted 47 percent of the registered voters, Mansky said.

A turnout of more than 60 percent would still fall short of the hefty voter turnouts during presidential election years. Such elections can draw more than 70 percent of the state's registered voters, Mansky said.

Many precincts were dispensing bright red "I Voted" stickers to those who cast ballots. Growe's office printed 2 million of them.

Staff writers Laurie Blake and Dennis Cassano contributed to this article.