

Weber County has just one polling station. Is that enough?

KUTV

by Kyle Harvey

Wednesday, March 4th 2020

<https://kutv.com/news/local/weber-county-has-just-one-polling-station-is-that-enough>

OGDEN, Utah (KUTV) — Since 2012, Weber County has reduced the number of polling stations from 63 down to one.

County officials say they're responding to an electorate that is increasingly choosing to vote by mail. "If you look at it on the surface, yeah. It sounds horrible," said Clerk-Auditor Ricky Hatch, noting that data tells a different story. "When the voting population changes, from an in-person model to a 90 to 97% by mail, it doesn't make sense to have that many polling places."

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah says they placed people at former polling locations across the county Tuesday who helped re-direct voters to the one remaining location, the Union Station downtown.



[ACLU of Utah @acluutah](mailto:ACLUofUtah@acluutah)

Our Voting Rights Team is in [@WeberCounty](#) today to re-directing voters to the county's only in-person voting location (Union Station Ogden).

Findings so far: [#Weber](#) voters want more the one in-person polling place in Nov. [#utleg](#)
[@mshenefelt](#) [@standardex](#) [@DNewsPolitics](#) [@sltrib](#)



2:20 PM - Mar 3, 2020

"We counted about 300-ish people," said Niki Venugopal, the organization's voting rights coordinator. She said many of those people were from the Huntsville area, a 20 to 30-minute drive from downtown Ogden.

"They were kind of disappointed when they found out they had to drive into Union Station to vote, because they only had a few more minutes in their lunch break," Venugopal said.

Hatch said the county tried hard to inform voters in advance of the changes, using the city's newsletter, news media, social media, and signage. The draw-down from 63 locations to one took several election cycles. There were seven in the last election.

Having a single voting "mega center" at Union Station allowed for all the county's resources to be concentrated in one place, keeping lines to a minimum.

Hatch said they were able to ensure better parking options, as well as better service for people with disabilities and people who needed translators.

"We had voters who consistently walked out and said that was so painless, that was faster than we thought."

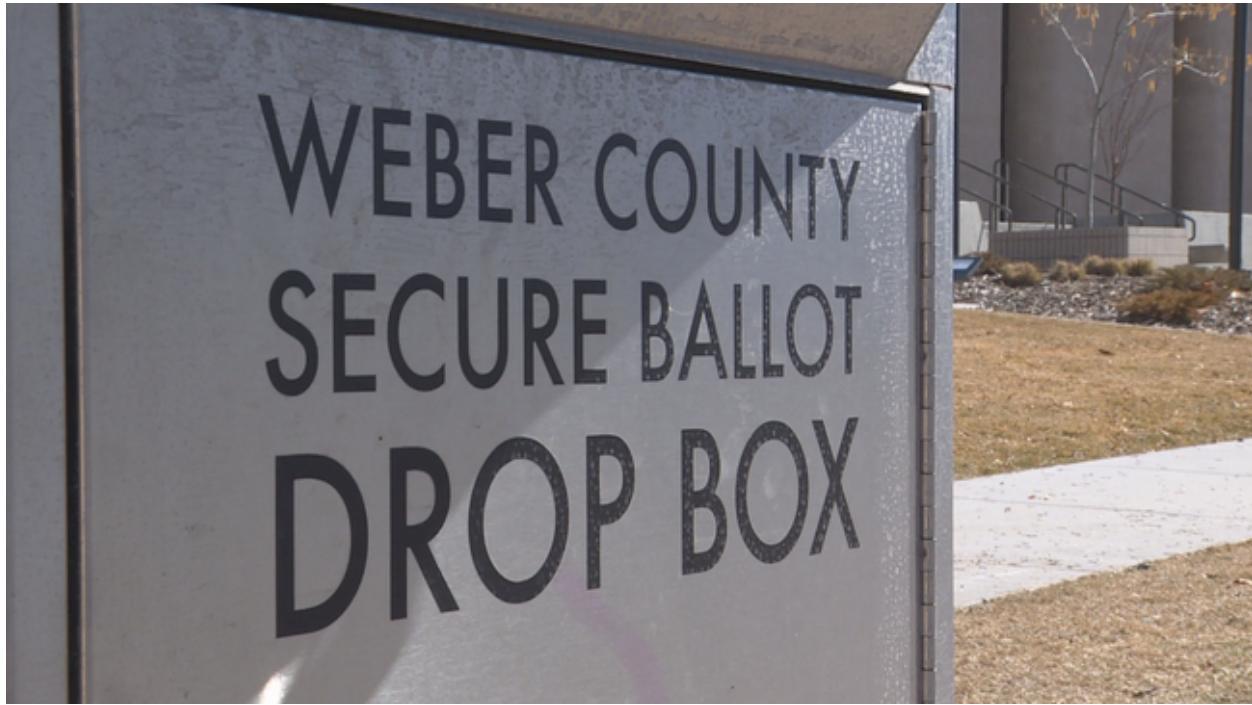


"If you look at it on the surface, yeah. It sounds horrible," said Clerk-Auditor Ricky Hatch, noting that data tells a different story. "When the voting population changes, from an in-person model to a 90 to 97% by mail, it doesn't make sense to have that many polling places." (Photo: Kyle Harvey / KUTV)

The ACLU says rural or poor voters unable to drive longer distances are less able to take advantage of Utah's day-of registration laws. Venugopal said:

"Election Day registration is an important catch-all and a way to make sure that everybody who wants to vote on Election Day can."

Hatch said a county survey showed a majority of voters indicated they were OK driving 20 minutes to a polling location. For those unwilling or unable to, Hatch said the county will mail them a ballot. He said nearly every home in Weber County is within 1.5 miles of a ballot drop-off box.



Since 2012, Weber County has reduced the number of polling stations from 63 down to one. (Photo: Kyle Harvey / KUTV)

The two sides each indicated a willingness to meet with the other to discuss options for June and November elections.