

# The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and Voting in LTC Facilities

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# About the survey

- The data was collected using an online questionnaire that was sent to all state and local long-term care ombudsmen (volunteers not included) to their official email accounts using NORC's listserv.
- The responses were collected from September 16 to October 1, 2008.
- The total number of **valid** responses was 229, which is ~35% of all state and local long-term care ombudsman programs.
- This project was supported in part by grant No. 90AM2690 from the Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to freely express their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not necessarily represent official Administration on Aging policy.

# What Current Research Says...

- No specific studies about ombudsmen involvement in voting-related activities.
- Limited number of studies on institutionalized populations. Partially due to the lack of data, but also the challenges of conducting such a study.

# But we know that...

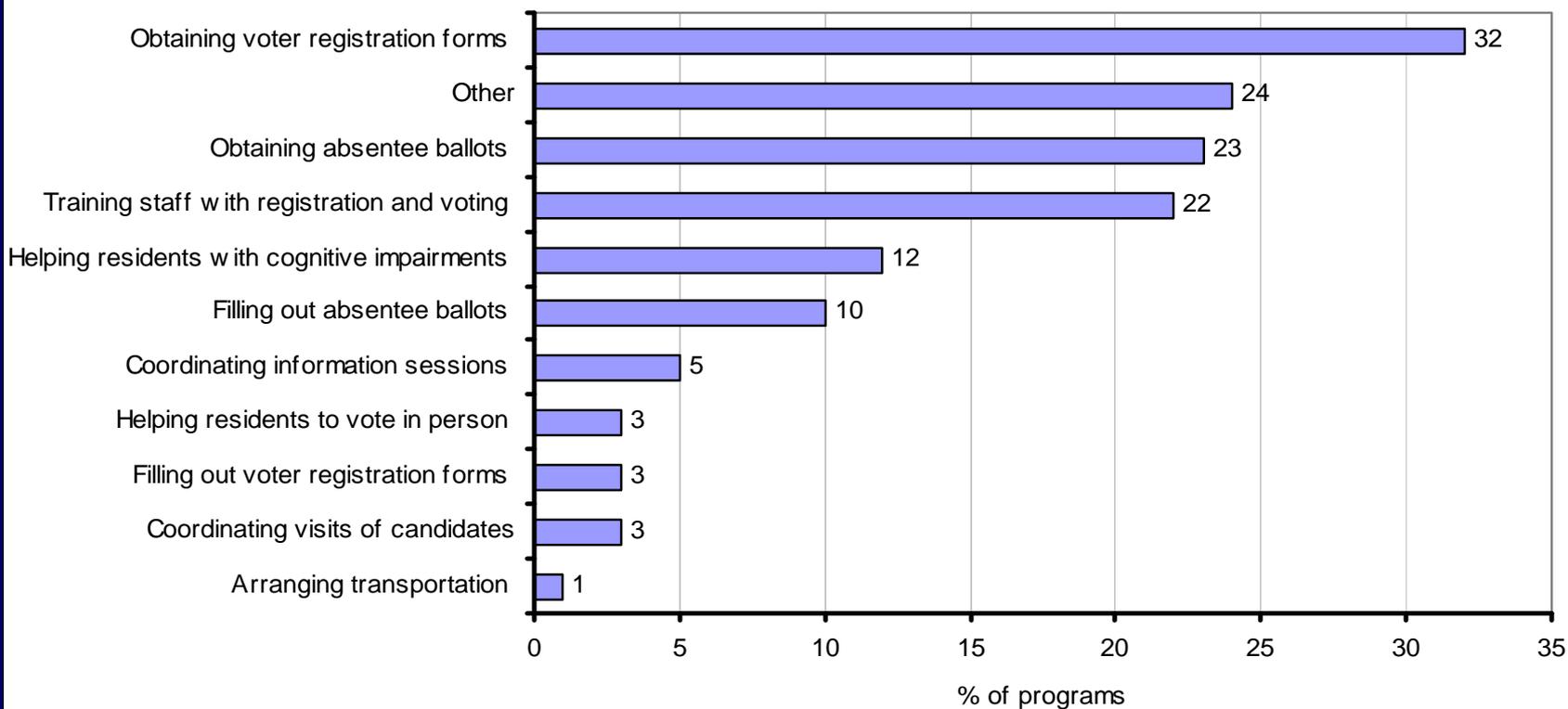
- Turnout among institutionalized populations is much lower than among non-institutionalized populations (Federal Elections Commission 2000).
- There are important legal and physical barriers (Karlawish et al. 2004; Kohn 2007).
- There is limited involvement of election officials (Smith and Sabatino 2004).
- Social interaction (contacts and discussions of politics) is conducive to higher turnout among populations with disabilities (Schur and Kruse 2000; Shields et al. 1998).

# The questions of this presentation:

- Are state and local ombudsmen involved in helping residents to vote? How?
- What factors explain their involvement?

# Are state and local ombudsmen involved in helping residents to vote?

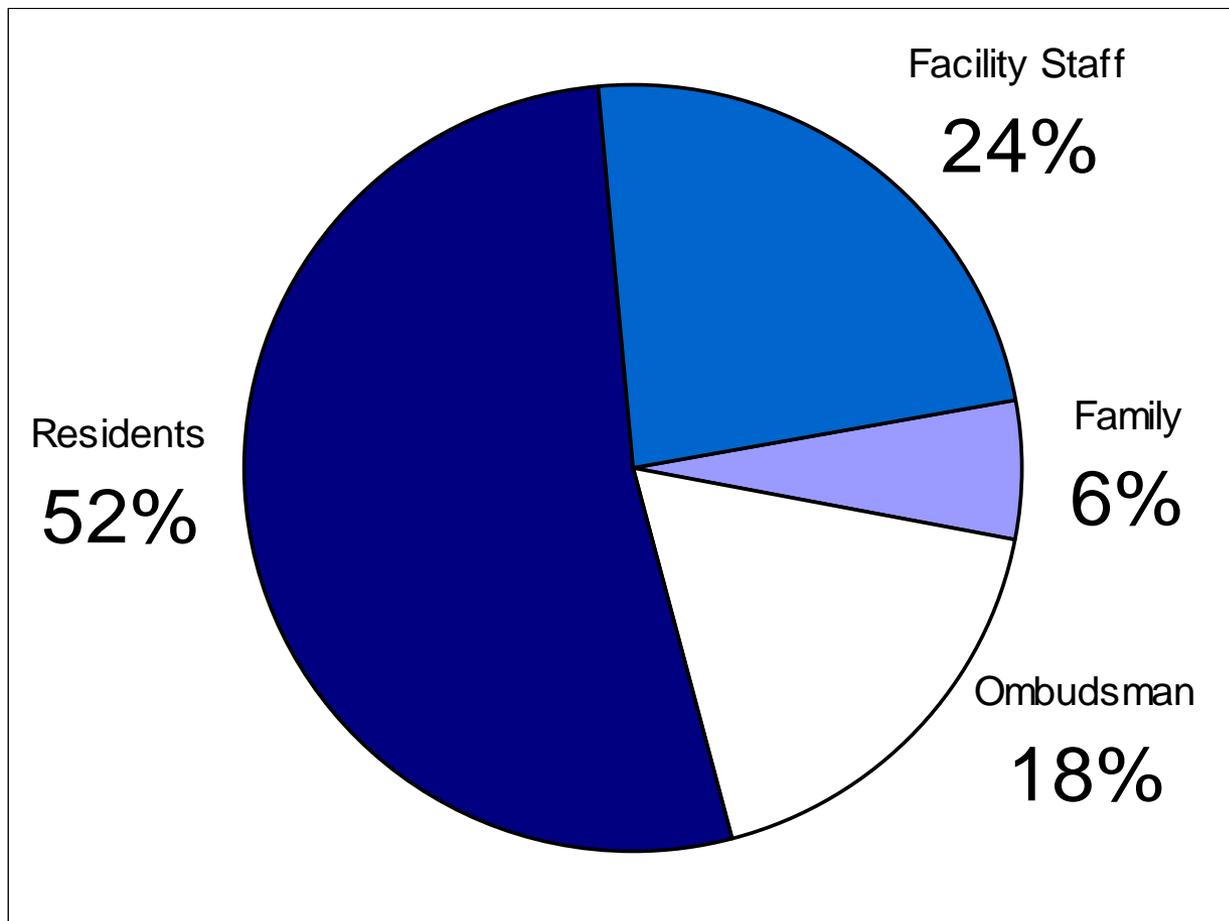
Activities of the LTC Ombudsman Program



# Complaints related to voting rights

- 8% of the state and local ombudsman programs reported receiving a complaint related to voting rights during this year.
- Programs that were involved in more than one activity were more likely to receive a complaint about voting rights than programs that were not involved in any activity.
- Programs with larger staff were also more likely to receive complaints than programs with smaller staff.
- There were no differences in the percentage of complaints received between state and local programs, and between programs with resources and programs without resources.

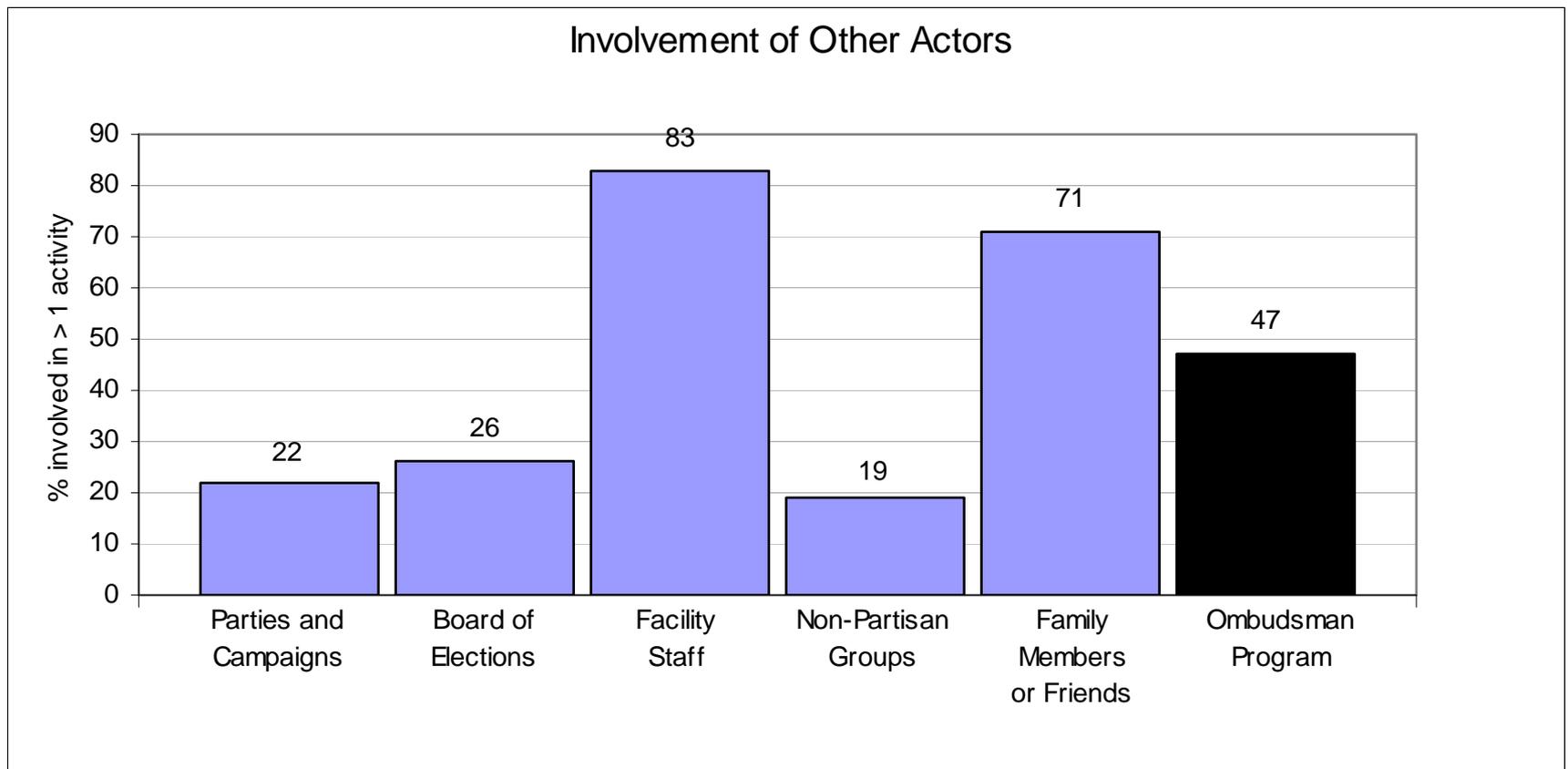
# The sources of complaints



# Are State Ombudsmen Different from Local Ombudsmen?

- A higher percentage of state ombudsman programs than local programs are involved in voting-related activities.
- Although local programs are less involved, they have greater variation in their involvement. For instance, 5% of local programs are involved in more than 5 activities, while no state program reported being involved in more than 5 activities.
- There are no statistically significant differences between the specific activities in which state and local programs are involved.

# How do ombudsmen compare to other actors?



# What factors explain their involvement?

Some explanations:

- 1) The resources and workload of the program.
- 2) The perceptions about the involvement of others and the interest of the residents.
- 3) Personal characteristics of the ombudsman such as the number of years in the field of long-term care.
- 4) The existence of legal/physical barriers.

# Obtaining Registration Forms

Factor	Relationship	Odds Ratio
Years in the field	Positive	1.03
Allocated money	Positive	1.37
Staff per facility	Positive	1.25
Residents' engagement	Positive	1.65 *
Political Parties/Candidates	Positive	1.22
Board of Elections	Positive	1.51
Facility Staff	Negative	0.89
Advocacy Groups	Negative	0.65
Family and Friends	Positive	2.30 ***
Polling Stations	Positive	1.15

\*\* p significant at .05 level  
\*\* p significant at .10 level  
\*\*\* p significant at .15 level

# Obtaining Absentee Ballots

Factor	Relationship	Odds Ratio
Years in the field	Positive	1.03
Allocated money	Positive	4.40 **
Staff per facility	Positive	1.26
Residents' engagement	Positive	1.33
Political Parties/Candidates	Positive	2.35
Board of Elections	Negative	0.47
Facility Staff	Positive	1.69
Advocacy Groups	Positive	13.06 *
Family and Friends	Positive	1.81
Polling Stations	Positive	3.51 *

\*\* p significant at .05 level  
\*\* p significant at .10 level  
\*\*\* p significant at .15 level

# Conclusions

- Need for greater coordination and communication between the different actors, so activities can be divided according to competencies.
- Need for more education on this issue among all parties involved about the nuances of the voting process and voting rights of residents of LTC facilities. State and local election officials are well-equipped to provide this education.



## Contact:

If you have any questions about the study, please contact:

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