

Hand Counting Ballots and Ballot Reconciliation Best Practices



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Hand Counting Ballots

- Advantages of counting by hand
 - No equipment to test, maintain and secure
 - No equipment breakdowns
 - Human eyes look at each vote on each ballot



Hand Counting Ballots

- Disadvantages of hand counting ballots
 - Requires a level of judgment not needed when machines are counting
 - Human error due to distractions, long hours, age of election judges



Ballot Reconciliation

- Make sure ballots are reconciled and all accounted for:
 - When received from vendor (unvoted ballots)
 - Before delivery to polls (unvoted ballots)
 - At polls on election day anytime ballots are picked up for counting (voted ballots)
 - At counting center (voted ballots)
- Use sample ballot reconciliation checklist form to track ballot reconciliation

Ballot Reconciliation

- **Ballot Reconciliation Forms**
 - **Ballot Certification Report**
 - Used to track the number of ballots sent to each precinct
 - One form per precinct
 - **Poll Book Ballot Reconciliation Report**
 - Used to reconcile number of voters in poll book to number of ballots issued
 - At least 2 forms per poll book in case of early ballot pickup
 - **Ballot Reconciliation for precinct tabulators**
 - Used to reconcile number of ballots counted on tabulator with number of ballots issued from poll book ballot reconciliation report
 - **Ballot Chain of Custody and Seal Log**
 - Used to track chain of custody of ballots

Ballot Reconciliation

- Ballot Reconciliation Forms (cont)
 - Absentee-Mail Ballot Reconciliation
 - Used to reconcile absentee/mail ballots on a daily basis
 - One form per precinct
 - Early Absentee Ballot Preparation Reconciliation
 - Used if doing early prep of absentee ballots
 - One form per precinct

Ballot Reconciliation



Ballot Certification Report

MUST ACCOMPANY BALLOTS TO EACH POLLING PLACE, VERIFIED BY ELECTION JUDGE AND RETAINED WITH POLLING PLACE MATERIALS

Precinct #: _____

I, _____ Election Administrator for _____ County, hereby certify that the total number of ballots printed and received in my office for the _____ Election held on the ____ day of _____, 20__ and above noted precinct was _____.

Total number of ballots delivered to Polling Place: _____

Beginning number on ballots delivered to Polling Place: _____

Total number of ballots retained for Absentee voting: _____

Number on Seal to secure ballots: _____

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20__

Election Administrator

Verified by: _____
Chief Election Judge or Election Judge

Ballot Reconciliation

Poll Book Ballot Reconciliation Report

Form is included in the back of each poll book and is used to reconcile ballots on Election Day.

COUNTY _____

PRECINCT _____

PART 1

1. Last ballot number issued _____
2. Subtract Void and Spoiled Ballots _____
3. **Subtotal** _____
4. Subtract number of ballots reserved for Absentee voting – see Certificate of Number Of Ballots Sent to Polling Place Form- (use the number from that form) _____
5. **Total number of paper ballots issued** _____

PART 2

6. Total number of paper ballots issued (same as Part 1, #5) _____
7. Subtract total number of unresolved provisional ballots _____
8. **Total number of ballots less unresolved provisional ballots** _____*

PART 3

9. **Total number of ballots in ballot box** (sheet 1) _____*
(sheet 2) _____

(this number should be the actual number of ballots counted – the number of sheet 1 and sheet 2 ballots may be different.)

*#8 and #9 should match. If they do not, fill out the reason below.

If number of ballots hand-counted does not reconcile with number from poll book ballot reconciliation, detail below how many ballots are short or in excess and any reason of which you are aware for the discrepancy:

Signature of Judges:

Ballot Reconciliation

- When to Reconcile
 - Upon receipt of ballots from vendor
 - Note number of ballots received for each ballot on **Ballot Certification Report**
 - Before delivery to the polls
 - Document number of ballots delivered to polls for each precinct on the **Ballot Certification Report**
 - Document seal number on ballots delivered to polls for each precinct on the **Ballot Chain of Custody and Seal Log**

Ballot Reconciliation

- When to Reconcile
 - At polls on election day
 - Verify the seal number on **Ballot Chain of Custody and Seal Log**
 - At early pick-up and at close of polls, verify number of ballots being picked up with number issued from **Poll Book Ballot Reconciliation Report**
 - Seal and document seal numbers
 - At counting center
 - Confirm seal number on transported ballots with seal number recorded on the **Ballot Chain of Custody and Seal Log**
 - Verify number of ballots *to be* counted from
 - Verify number of ballots *actually* counted

Summary

- Steps to efficient, accurate hand counting
 - Thorough training
 - Refresh training between elections
 - Begin counting before polls close
 - Counting must continue until complete
 - Count # of ballots, placing in stacks of 25
 - Reconcile # of ballots to poll book ballot certification report
 - Start with one person reading and two tallying
 - Rotate readers and tally-ers to help ensure accuracy and integrity
 - Have tally-ers “check” after each 5 tallies to help stay on track



Summary

- Reconciling Ballots
 - Thorough training on how and when to reconcile
 - Refresh training between elections
 - Use reconciliation check list to ensure that each step of reconciliation is completed
 - Familiarize yourself and your poll workers and counters with reconciliation forms
 - Reconciliation = security and integrity!

