



Political Party Observer Guidelines



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Introduction

Our goal for the Elections office is to be transparent while protecting the safety, security, and integrity of the election and our staff. Below is a brief introduction to the different areas of observation and guidelines set forth to ensure the safety and efficiency of our department.

The Pima County Elections Department is responsible for:

- Processing candidate nomination petitions
- Campaign finance reporting
- Programming of the election management system
- Ballot layout
- Selecting, staffing, and operating vote centers on Election Day
- Tabulation of ballots
- Producing a canvass of official results

The Elections department works closely with the Pima County Recorder's Office throughout the election cycle. The Recorder and Elections department are separate departments that both have an integral part in every election. The Recorder's office is responsible for keeping and maintaining the Pima County voter registration rolls, conducting early voting, signature verification, and processing provisional ballots after Election Day. Communication and teamwork between departments allow us to fulfill our obligations throughout the election.

During the periods open to observation, the Elections office has five areas of concentration:

- Early Ballot Processing
- Duplication
- Tabulation
- Write-In Assignment
- Ballot Adjudication

Below are guidelines outlined for observers who will be assigned to ballot processing areas. All participating observers must sign a loyalty oath with the Elections Department on their first day of assignment.

General Guidelines

- The Party Chairman will be notified of processing days to allow the scheduling of observers.
- Every observer must sign in, show identification at reception, and be on the designated observation list.
- No personal effects are allowed in the observation areas. Purses, briefcases, backpacks, bags, etc., must be secured in the lockers in the front lobby.
- Cell phones are not permitted in observation areas, and pictures or recordings of any kind are prohibited in the ballot processing center.
- Weapons of any kind are not allowed in the facility. Firearms must be checked in at the front lobby and secured in a locker while on the premises.
- Observers will wear lanyards identifying party affiliation and be escorted by Elections staff while in the building.
- The number of political party observers will be limited to 1 per political party in each observation area.
- Observers are not permitted to touch or handle ballots. Keep a mindful distance when observing to allow processing boards to work.
- Observers are permitted to take notes during observation. Only red ink is permissible in processing rooms with voted ballots.
- All questions must be directed to the inspector/supervisor, and the appropriate authority will provide answers.
- Observers may not wear clothing/accessories or display materials relating to a political party, political organization, candidate, or ballot measure.
- Keep talking to levels that do not disrupt or distract the workflow of the boards.
- Treat personnel and other visitors in a courteous manner.
- Stay within the designated observation areas to prevent disruption of workflow and safety hazards.
- No food or drink is allowed where ballots are being processed. Water in sealed containers is permissible on the floor.
- A live video recording remains active in all ballot processing areas.¹
- Failure to abide by the above rules may result in termination of assignment as determined by the Pima County Elections Director.²

¹ A.R.S. § 16-621(D) – Procedures at the Counting Center

² Elections Procedures Manual (2019); pages 141-142- Observer Guidelines

Early and All-Mail Ballots Processing Boards

Early Ballot Processing- Early ballots are mailed and received by the Recorder's office. They are then signature verified and logged by Recorders staff. The Recorder's office maintains the chain of custody of all mail and early ballots until transferred to the elections department for processing. Ballots ready to be processed are given to the Elections department in batches by mail trays. These batches are now ready to be processed by the Elections office to prepare for tabulation. The Recorder's office organizes batches of affidavit envelopes utilizing an alphanumeric code. The batches consist of early ballots in affidavit envelopes; for example-Batch A-1, B-1, etc. The ballots in the mail trays are wrapped in batch code sheets. These sheets contain the voters' names for the corresponding batch of ballots.

The following areas are under the Early Board Inspectors' responsibility and will be the main point of contact.

- **Highlighting** – Highlighting boards take the mail trays of early affidavits by batch. They begin to match and highlight the names on the batch code sheets against the affidavit envelopes to account for every ballot in that batch. If there is a discrepancy in names or counts, the Recorder's office is contacted to reconcile any discrepancy. At this step, ballots are not extracted from the envelopes or viewed. Highlighting boards process affidavit envelopes. They work independently to prepare the batch trays for the next step.
- **Openers** – Opener teams take the highlighted batches of mail trays and use electric letter openers to open the affidavit envelopes by batch. The affidavit envelopes are then put back in the mail trays as they were received. At this step, ballots are not extracted from the envelopes or viewed. Opener teams process affidavit envelopes. They work independently to prepare the batch trays for the next step.
- **Processing** – All processing boards handling voted ballots are comprised of two members of different political parties.³ Processing boards receive the mail trays by batch after they have been through the highlighting and opening stations. The boards then begin extracting the ballots from the envelopes. The ballots are visually inspected for anything that would physically prevent the ballot from running through a tabulation machine (DS850). Ballots torn or with any food or other residue will be separated for duplication. At the end of each batch, ballots are hand counted to verify that the total processed matches the total received from the Recorder's office before they are bagged and sealed for tabulation. Other than when ballots are being processed, ballots are secured in the ballot storage vaults.

³ A.R.S. § 16-551 (A); § 16-531; Elections Procedures Manual (2019), page 197 – Establishing Election Boards

Duplication Processing-

- Duplication (Dup)- Dup boards are reviewing and duplicating ballots that will not physically run through the tabulators. Ballots are sent from the Early ballot processing boards to our duplication boards. Duplication boards use an ExpressVote to mark the duplicate ballot. The originals will get stamped and assigned an alphanumeric code. The same code is also transferred on the ExpressVote ballot in order to match the duplicate against the original.⁴ A second team will verify the selections made on the printed ExpressVote card against the original ballot to ensure the correct selections are made. The early processing and duplication boards maintain accounting forms for all batches and ballots they process.

⁴ A.R.S. § 16-621(A); Elections Procedures Manual (2019), pages 201-202 – Duplication Procedures

Tabulation Room Processing

The following areas are under the Tabulation Supervisors' responsibility and will be the main point of contact.

Tabulation Process-

- Tabulation – Once they have gone through processing, ballots are bagged and sealed early ballots are sent to tabulation. Ballots are run through the tabulators (DS850) and counted. If there is a discrepancy in the count, the batch does not continue in tabulation. It is put aside for reconciliation against records from our early ballot processing. Once the discrepancy has been resolved, tabulation of that batch will continue. Results from early ballots processed are not viewed until Election night at 8-00 p.m. when the first reports are generated. However, the number of processed ballots is accounted for daily and posted to the Elections webpage.⁵

Adjudication Boards-

- Adjudication – Once ballots have been scanned, Adjudication boards will electronically review any ballots flagged by the Election Management System (EMS) to determine voter intent. Voter intent is recorded on the system for that ballot as determined by the bipartisan board. A second review is performed before final determinations are accepted.⁵

Write-In Assignment Boards-

- Write-In Assignment – Once ballots have been scanned and tabulated, the assignment of Official Write-In candidates begins. The boards review an export of write-in votes from the EMS. Every write-in vote is viewed, processed, and marked as unassigned or assigned to a candidate on the official list. The selections are uploaded to the EMS with vote totals for each write-in candidate.⁶

⁵ A.R.S. § 16-621 and Elections Procedures Manual (2019); pages 195,200 – Central Count and Adjudication Operations

⁶ A.R.S. § 16-543.02; A.R.S. § 16-448; Elections Procedures Manual (2019), pages 208-209 – Write-In Tally Board and Procedures

Reference Guide

Early Ballot Processing Reports

- Turnover Receipts- A receipt issued by the Recorder's office with batch total information. The receipt is signed by staff from both the Recorder's and Elections Department upon transfer of ballots.
- Early Ballots Processed Report- Spreadsheet of batch totals received, processed, and tabulated. Totals are updated daily during processing and posted to the Elections webpage.
- Early Ballot Processing Logs- Accounting forms the boards use to document the batches each board has processed. Logs maintain a paper trail of batches and quantities processed.
- Duplication logs- Accounting forms the duplication boards use to document the batches each board has duplicated. Logs maintain a paper trail of batches and quantities processed.

Tabulation Reports

- Zero Report- Before starting the tabulation, a zero report is generated to verify that no results are on the EMS (Election Management System). The reports are printed from both the EMS and DS850 tabulators.
- Batch Bin Reports- Automatically print after saving each batch on the DS80s. The reports contain information on the number of ballots sorted to each bin. The reports are placed with their corresponding batch of boxed ballots.
- Precincts Processed- This report is produced at the end of each processing day to verify that the total count on the tabulators matches the EMS system.
- Results with Public Detail- These are only printed for hand-count Audit Batches. The report provides totals necessary to audit the ballots without compromising the secrecy of the results.
- Early Ballots Processed Report- Spreadsheet of batch totals received, processed, and tabulated. Totals are updated daily during processing and posted to the Elections webpage.

Tabulation Room Procedures

Logic & Accuracy Testing (L&A)⁷

Official Logic and Accuracy Test- Mandatory test of the tabulation machines, the accessible ballot marking devices, the adjudication system, and the EMS to ensure all equipment is working properly and producing expected results. The Elections Department conducts a preliminary and a final test for local consolidated and special elections. Party observers will sign a certificate to verify the logic and accuracy of the EMS system to complete the L&A process.

- Political Party Logic & Accuracy Test- The Pima County Elections Department allows political parties to perform their logic and accuracy tests. Designated party representatives create a test deck by marking specified ballot styles. The party representatives create a report with their pre-determined results before beginning the test. On the day of the L&A testing, observers will be provided with a zero report from the EMS system to confirm that no results are in the EMS or on the tabulators. They will then distribute their ballot test deck to each tabulation machine. After the ballots have been processed, the test results will be provided to compare against the observer's pre-determined results. If there are any discrepancies, the staff and observers work to reconcile the issue before certification.
- Official Secretary of State Logic & Accuracy Test- The Secretary of State (SOS) conducts logic and accuracy tests in all elections for federal, statewide, and legislative offices. Designated political party representatives observe the testing. The SOS will provide a pre-marked test deck with pre-determined results to compare with system results. The same procedures in the party test will be applied to the SOS test under their instruction. If there are any discrepancies, the staff and SOS work to reconcile the issue before certification. Corrections that cannot be made on the same day will require the SOS to return at a later date to complete the test. However, if the results are accurate, the SOS staff will sign the official state logic and accuracy certificate to complete the L&A process. The SOS test is the final test before the election.

⁷ A.R.S. § 16-449 - Required test of equipment and programs; notice; procedures manual; Elections Procedures Manual (2019), LOGIC AND ACCURACY (L&A) TESTING pages 100-109

Seal Verification⁸

The seal verification process is voluntary to help ensure confidence in the process. However, the Elections Director will discontinue the privilege if observers become disruptive to the tabulation process. Observers cannot view information on the EMS monitor for security reasons.

- Observers may participate in seal verification of the ballot bags, tabulation machines, and server cabinets. A seal is also placed on all access doors at the end of every processing day and verified at the start of each processing day. Observers may track whatever information seems pertinent to them.

Hand Count Audit Batches⁹

- The tabulation room supervisor will provide instructions to observers on the selection of audit batches. Observers from different political parties will select early ballot bags to be a part of the random selection for the hand-count audit. The audit batches are based on 1% of the early ballots cast and no more than 5,000 ballots. For example, 1% of 500,000 will be 5,000 ballots, and audit batches are set to the Pima County standard of 200-250 ballots per bag. The random selection of batches to process for audits starts on the first day of tabulation and continues until the required number of ballots is met, ranging from 30-50 audit bags.

Recounts Hand Count Audit Batches

- The selection of audit batches for recounts follows the same process for early ballots. Political party representatives will assist in the selection of the batches.

⁸ Elections Procedures Manual (2019), SECURITY MEASURES FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEMS, pages 110-112

Information for the above procedures can be found in Title 16 of the Arizona Revised Statutes and in the Arizona Elections Procedures Manual (2019).

⁹ A.R.S. § 16-602 – Removal of ballots from ballot boxes; disposition of ballots folded together or excessive ballots; designated margin; hand counts; vote count verification committee.

Concerns or Questions?

- Report any issues or concerns to the area supervisor.
- Document any questions or suggestions on the observer questionnaire and place them in the suggestion box.

Please note

Historically, tabulation room observers can bring their purses and cell phones into the room. The Elections department is happy to continue this privilege with the following rules- (1) any bags or purses shall be searched to ensure the safety of employees and board workers. (2) Observers cannot text or make telephone calls in the tabulation room. Observers may step into the observation hallway if they need to communicate with someone.