

Voter Registration and Elections

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Divisions

Campaign Services
Outreach
Precincts
Registration
Vote by Mail
Voting Systems & Technology

County of Sacramento

Election Integrity in Sacramento County

Introduction

Sacramento County works hard to ensure all elections held within our jurisdiction follow federal and state voting laws. It is of the utmost importance that all elections are conducted with integrity, accuracy, and security. This document has been compiled to answer general voter questions, address concerns, and provide additional resources as it pertains to election processes and procedures:

- [Voting System Security](#)
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 - ✓ In-person Voting
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Transparent elections are vital to a healthy democracy. Sacramento County and the Registrar of Voters invite members of the public to participate in virtual [community advisory meetings](#).

Voter questions can be directed to (916) 875-6451 or voterinfo@saccounty.net. Public tours and observations are welcome at any time at 7000 65th Street, Ste A in Sacramento. Call or email to make an appointment.

We proudly conduct elections with accuracy, integrity and dignity

7000 65th Street, Suite A • Sacramento, California 95823-2315
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Voting System Security

Sacramento County has used the [Dominion Voting System](#) as our primary voting system vendor since 2018. Prior to Dominion, Sacramento County used a system by [Election Systems & Software](#) (ES&S) that was purchased in 2003. Dominion Voting Systems was the only voting system vendor in 2017 who submitted a bid and was certified in the State of California under their current system, when the County was seeking to purchase a new system for adopting a voting model called the [Voter's Choice Act](#).

Sacramento County currently utilizes Dominion software to layout the official ballot; tabulators which scan, process, count, and report votes; adjudication system to determine voter intent questions; accessible ballot marking devices for voters with disabilities; and official ballot printers.

Paper ballots are required in California.

The [California Secretary of State's office](#) is responsible for the certification standards and testing, including the utilization of the National Certification Test Plan, developed by the Election Assistance Commission. Testing includes:

- Examination and testing of system software
- Software source code review and evaluation
- Hardware and software security penetration testing
- Hardware testing under conditions simulating intended use, storage, operation, transportation, and maintenance environments
- Evaluation of system documentation
- Operational testing to validate system performance and functioning under normal and abnormal conditions

Once a voting system is certified in California and the trusted build is delivered to the county, by law it cannot be modified without prior approval from the Secretary of State. To validate that the voting system used in an election has not been compromised or modified, mathematical algorithms called HASH Codes are generated at the time of installation for certification testing. These HASH codes can be run against any voting machine used in California at any time to validate that the software is identical to what was tested and certified and has not been modified.

The Registrar of Voters is ultimately responsible for the maintenance, operation, and security of any voting system. This includes ensuring no part of the voting system is connected to the internet at any time ([CA Elections Code 19205](#)) and proper testing of all units prior to an election.

Phases of testing include:

1. *Acceptance Testing*: as Sacramento County receives voting equipment, it goes through a process of evaluation, testing, and review. We follow the approved [Use Procedures](#) and set-up the system. We configure and test the units, checking for machine failures or any anomalies.
2. *Logic & Accuracy Testing (L&A)*: once Sacramento County has verified ballot contests and information for an upcoming election, the system is tested with current ballot content prior to deployment or use in any election. Test ballots with various markings are fed through the tabulators to ensure it is capturing votes correctly and reporting accurately. Any unit that fails this testing will not be deployed in an election. This process is observable to the public. All documentation during testing is kept for 22 months and available to review upon request.
3. *1% Manual Tally Audit*: To ensure no changes to the voting system was made during the election or after L&A concludes, a hand count audit is conducted prior to certifying any election results. [CA Elections Code 15360](#) requires counties to randomly select precincts after Election Day and perform a hand count of all ballots tabulated in those respective precincts. This audit also includes any separate contests that appeared on a voter's ballot that were not included in the precincts drawn.

The manual tally teams retrieve all of the ballots for the randomly selected precincts and contests from the secure ballot storage area and proceed to hand count the votes in each batch. They ensure that at least one batch from each tabulator is counted by hand.

After the teams complete their hand counts, a Supervisor or Manager from the Precinct Operations division (who are the only ones with the results of each precinct batch) will compare the hand count to the computer count. The outcome of every hand count is included in our [Statement of the Vote](#).

Any member of the public can review the manual hand count, which includes all tally documents, tally sheets, adjudication reports, and batch reports, upon request.

Click [here](#) to sign up for notifications on when L&A testing, the manual tally, and other election activities will occur.

In addition to the certification standards and testing, the physical security of the voting system is crucial. All ballot tabulators and ballot processing require the following:

- Two people with ballots or equipment at all times
- 24-hour surveillance of tabulation and ballot processing rooms, even during non-election times
- No vendor access to rooms or any equipment without at least one permanent election employee present
- CCure security access to ballot tabulation room and server room is limited to eight permanent, full-time Sacramento County staff, Supervisor level or higher. Limited access to ballot printing rooms that includes staff of the Vote by Mail and Campaign Services divisions
- All voted ballots are sealed by batch and stored in a secured cage under 24-hour surveillance. These batches are labeled with the precinct number, tabulator number, date, time, operator initials, and how many ballots are in each batch
- All employees, permanent and temporary, must take an oath to uphold the Constitution and follow state and federal election laws. These oaths are taken every election before any employee, including the Registrar of Voters, can even touch a ballot or voting system.

All ballot tabulation takes place in our main office at 7000 65th Street, Ste A, Sacramento 95823. The ballot tabulation machines are only connected to a local server to tally the votes from each unit. This equipment is never connected to the internet, making it impossible to remotely hack into the voting system. Our servers and tabulators are all located and stored on-site, not in any other department, jurisdiction, or foreign country. Labels, port blockers, and color coded cords ensure no one plugs the voting system into any other outlet besides the certified server for use with the equipment.

Tabulation results from each machine are transferred to a secured PC using a new USB drive that is scanned in a "sandbox" environment to check for viruses or malware. After the results are transferred to be uploaded to our website, the USB drive is logged and not re-used for any other task. It is stored in a secured box and destroyed after 22 months.

Audit logs are kept on each voting system unit, which will record any change to hardware or software components. Updates to voting systems from the vendor must be approved by the California Secretary of State, which are then provided to the counties to install and verify. All election materials, including testing documentation and ballots, are securely stored for 22 months after the election.

Voter Registration Records & File Maintenance

Sacramento County performs updates to the voter file on a daily basis, in accordance with state and federal laws, such as the [National Voter Registration Act of 1993](#) (NVRA), the [California National Voter Registration Act](#), [California Elections Code](#), and the [Help American Vote Act of 2002](#).

Voter registration opportunities are provided through paper registration forms, located at post offices, libraries, registration/petition drives, NVRA agencies, and the elections office. Eligible citizens can also register to vote [online](#). If there is something wrong or missing on the voter registration form, including not affirming that they are a US citizen, the potential voter will be contacted for additional information prior to activating their registration.

With the implementation of the California statewide voter database, known as [VoteCal](#), counties receive regular notifications and updates from other counties and state agencies. Electronic notifications update counties if a voter moves to another county, has passed away, or has otherwise become ineligible to vote, such as a felony conviction resulting in prison time.

Agencies that Sacramento County receives updates from include, but are not limited to:

- California Secretary of State
- California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- United States Postal Service, through the National Change of Address (NCOA) system
- Employment Development Department (EDD), through VoteCal
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
- California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation (CDCR)
- Sacramento Superior Courts
- Sacramento County Department of Public Health

Elections materials do not get forwarded. Any mailings that come back as undeliverable or with a new address will prompt additional correspondence to the voter to confirm their residency.

If a voter does not vote within four years, the voter will then be moved to the inactive file, which will cease any materials, including ballots, from being mailed. In order to be re-activated, the voter must confirm their residency in Sacramento County.

Regular voter file maintenance is completed to check for duplicate voter records both within Sacramento County and throughout California. Some data may be entered incorrectly, due to ineligible handwriting or a typo, or there may be something like a name change that make it more challenging to link voter records together. Sacramento County uses different voter file information and criteria to search for potential duplicates to ensure that the voter only has one active record in California.

When a voter moves to another state, it is important they cancel their previous voter information in California to ensure our department receives that information. If a voter has moved and that information was not received by Sacramento County, we ask the current resident write "return to sender, no longer lives here" on any election mailings (notifications, County Voter Information Guides, mail ballots) so we can update their record appropriately.

All mail ballots are signature verified against the voter's record prior to extracting or processing the ballots inside the envelope.

Voter ID

In California, voter identification is not required to be provided when a voter casts their ballot in every election.

When a voter registers to vote, the voter is expected to provide their driver license or last four digits of their Social Security Number on their voter registration form. If they do not provide this information, or if their record cannot be matched against the DMV database, then they are required to show identification the first time they vote in Sacramento County to prove they are a real person. These are the only voters who are required to show some form of identification when voting.

In accordance with the federal [Help America Vote Act of 2002](#), acceptable forms of identification are listed on the [Secretary of State's website](#).

When a voter votes in-person, they are to declare their name and address when checking-in at a Vote Center, and then sign a roster to affirm that they are that person, at that address, and are eligible to vote in the election.

When a voter votes using their mail ballot, they sign the return identification envelope, signing is the same affirmation as in-person voters, and a signature comparison is completed prior to extracting the ballot inside the envelope and counting that ballot. If a mail ballot voter is required to provide identification when they vote, they are to include a copy of that identification in their return envelope. If they do not, Sacramento County will reach out to them prior to counting their ballot.

More information can be found in the notice sent to county election officials by the Secretary of State's office, [CCROV 20225](#).

In Sacramento County, we follow the state and federal laws for Voter ID requirements. It is recommended that proposed changes on state legislation be submitted to your local legislators. Find your representatives using this look-up tool: <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>

Ballot Security

Ballot security is essential in conducting a fair, transparent, and accurate elections. A ballot goes through many different teams and stages of verification, and the physical ballot, along with the storage of the ballot allows it to be accessed and reviewed by staff.

[California Elections Code 2300](#) guarantees voters have the right to a private ballot. Once a ballot is extracted from an identification mail ballot envelope, or placed into a ballot box, there is no way to tie that ballot to any particular voter. This is by design. To ensure ballots are being counted based on the voter's intent, a hand count audit is completed on randomly selected precincts. Voting system Logic & Accuracy testing is also conducted prior to an election to ensure the equipment is tabulating ballots correctly.

Regardless of how a person votes, a signature is needed to cast a ballot in the election. These signatures are used to apply voter history, so while we do not know how any one person voted, it is public record whether or not someone did vote. We use these numbers to ensure that the number of voters who receive voting history in a precinct match the number of physical ballots received by that precinct. This is how we check to ensure ballots are not added to any precinct that shouldn't be there.

Once voter history is applied, any other ballot issued to the voter is voided, which no longer allows that voter to cast another ballot in the election. Below are details on how this applies with mail ballots, and in-person voting.

- *Mail Ballots:* Mail ballot identification envelopes contain a unique barcode, tying that ballot to a voter's record. These ballots go through a mail sorter, which takes a picture of the envelope for signature verification and also weighs the ballot to ensure multiple ballots are not inside. If the envelope is too heavy, it will be processed manually. All mail ballots then go through a signature verification process where trained staff compare signature common characteristics; angles, pen pressure, and size. If the signature is accepted, the ballot is sent on to extraction. If the signature does not match, a Supervisor will review and reach out to the voter for corrective action. The

ballots to be counted are then sent to a team of extractors who pull the ballot out of the identification envelope using a machine to ensure maximum voter privacy. The extracted ballots are sent to a processing team to unfold, check for damage, and prepare for tabulation. Processed ballots are sent to the ballot tabulation room, which is under 24-hour surveillance, and are scanned in batches. These batches of ballots are placed into a clear plastic bag with a label that includes the number of ballots, operator's name, precinct number, and date and time of scanning. Scanned, sealed ballot batches are stored in a secured ballot cage, also under 24-hour surveillance, with restricted access. Stored ballot are only accessed for manual tally (hand count) audits, reconciling or adjudication needs.

- *In-person Voting:* Sacramento County utilizes multiservice Vote Centers instead of Election Day only polling places. Vote Centers are open for multiple days and allow voters to vote at any convenient location. This is done through a secured, real-time connection to the voter file from the Vote Centers. When a voter checks-in, their file is updated through a secured Citrix portal showing if they already voted, by mail ballot or in-person at another location. This update automatically voids any mail ballots or other opportunities to vote. If a mail ballot comes in after the voter votes in-person, the sorter will catch it and the voter's information is turned over to the Secretary of State's Fraud Investigation Unit for further research.

No ballot tabulation or scanning takes place at the Vote Center. All ballots come back to the elections office to be tabulated. Voted ballots return each night from every Vote Center location, with a completed Chain of Custody log that includes the logging of tamper evident seals on the ballot boxes.

The first ballot received from a voter at the Election's Office will be counted and any other attempts to vote by that voter will be voided.

All staff working with ballots are required to take an oath, work in teams of two or more at all times under the supervision of experienced full-time staff. Only red pens may be used in ballot processing areas. The tabulators are programmed to not read red ink and this minimizes risk of any attempts to alter ballots. Staff found to tamper or interfere with the election process, including not following procedures, will be immediately released from employment.

Additional details for ballot security measures are located on the [Sacramento County Voter Registration & Elections website](#).

Ballot Duplication & Adjudication

Whether ballots are voted by mail ballot or in-person, every ballot goes through several teams to ensure ballots can be tabulated (not damaged) and that any voter intent questions are answered. The process in determining voter intent issues is referred to as "adjudication".

- Duplication is the process in which ballots are re-made to ensure they can be tabulated. This includes ballots that have been damaged, military/overseas ballots, and ballots using the [Accessible Vote by Mail system](#).
 1. The duplication team (our Campaign Services division) prints the correct ballot "on demand" to duplicate the ballot. Printing of these duplicate ballots is done in a secured room under 24-hour surveillance with a minimum of two people at all times.

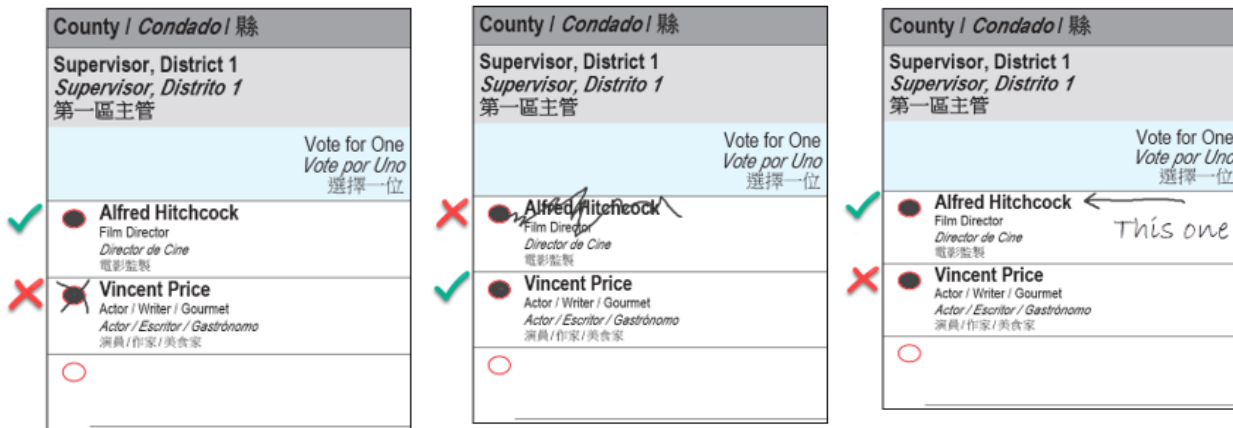
[Ballot Printer security and audit requirements are mandated by the Secretary of State's office](#). A copy of Sacramento County's Ballot Printer Application is available upon request.

There are no pre-printed ballots anywhere in the elections office or Vote Centers, with the exception of L&A test ballots that are marked "TEST", and spoiled or surrendered ballots that are marked "VOID". All ballot paper and printing must be accounted for during the election canvass period.

2. A team of two then reviews the damaged ballots and marks the voter's choices on the newly printed, clean ballot using a blue highlighter. The team records a unique identifying number on the new duplicated ballot and the original ballot. This is logged so that the original ballot can be located and referred to at any time. The original ballot is stamped as "VOID".
3. A second quality control team then reviews the ballots to ensure the first team duplicated the voter's choices correctly. If it matches, the duplicated ballots will be sent on to tabulation. The original ballots are filed by number, all together, in a secured area. If it doesn't match or there is a question about a voter's selections, the process starts over.
4. Duplicated ballots are all tabulated together (which could mean a mix of voting precincts), with tabulators dedicated to duplicated ballots. In case of questions, recounts, or audits, we can easily locate all ballots that have been duplicated.

- Adjudication is the process in which voter intent issues are reviewed and determined. This includes reviewing the ballot for mistakes, cross-outs, capturing votes for qualified write-in candidates, and notes to see if a team could determine what choices the voter intended to make. If a voter intent issue cannot be determined, then no changes are made. Unlike duplication, this process is done electronically with no physical changes to the original ballot.

These images are examples of some of the scenarios encountered by Sacramento County that require adjudication to ensure ballots are counted the way the voter intended.



- Scanned ballot images are sent to a team of "adjudicators" who review the ballot image for voter mistakes or notes. This team will make a decision on the voter's intent.
- The adjudicated ballot image then goes into a Supervisor queue to be reviewed prior to finalizing. Anytime a change is made to a ballot, it is noted with an electronic audit mark on the ballot image.
- Once the adjudicated ballot images are approved by the Supervisor team, they will enter into the reporting system to be tallied with the other votes.

The 1% manual tally hand count audit teams confirm that the ballot was adjudicated appropriately, as they are counting the physical ballots and do not have access to the adjudication reports. Only the manual tally Supervisor and Manager have access to these reports to compare after the hand count has been completed. If there are questions or concerns, the adjudication teams and manual tally teams will meet to review questions, with final decisions by the Registrar of Voters.

Election Certification Requirements & Activities

Prior to certifying the election results, Sacramento County must complete the following tasks:

- Complete a hand count audit of ballots in 1% of the voting precincts (manual tally), selected at random the day after Election Day
- Reconcile all voted ballots, spoiled ballots, surrendered ballots and ballot paper to ensure all materials have been accounted for
- Balance the number of signatures (mail ballot envelopes, roster sheets, or Conditional Voter Registration/provisional envelopes) and voting history we have in a precinct to the number of physical ballots in that precinct. This ensures that no additional ballots are printed, marked, and added to a precinct
- Review challenged ballots and attempted voted twice cases

General Sacramento County IT Security

The Sacramento County Department of Technology utilizes a defensive in-depth strategy that leverages people, processes, and technologies to protect its information systems' confidentiality, integrity, and availability.

- <https://www.cisecurity.org/spotlight/ei-isac-cybersecurity-spotlight-cia-triad/>

To achieve this, the County of Sacramento has assembled strong, innovative, multi-disciplinary teams to address the present-day and future cybersecurity threats and privacy challenges.

These teams follow industry best practices and federally backed frameworks like the NIST Cybersecurity Framework, NIST Risk Management Framework, and NIST Security and Privacy Controls for Information Systems and Organizations.

- <https://www.nist.gov/cyberframework>
- <https://www.nist.gov/cyberframework/risk-management-framework>
- <https://csrc.nist.gov/publications/detail/sp/800-53/rev-5/final>

In alignment with best practices and framework requirements, the County of Sacramento leverages industry-leading cybersecurity tools to detect, prevent, log and alert security violations within its Information Systems.

Furthermore, the County of Sacramento has developed a robust cybersecurity program that integrates with state and federal entities to ensure compliance with regulations and coordinate cybersecurity threat mitigation actions.

- <https://us-cert.cisa.gov/>
- <https://www.cisecurity.org/ei-isac/>
- <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/law-enforcement/california-cybersecurity-integration-center>