Communicating Election and Post-Voting Processes Toolkit — Glossary

[Based on EAC’s Glossary of Terms](https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/glossary_files/Glossary_of_Election_Terms_EAC.pdf)

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# A

#### Audit

Systematic, independent, documented process for determining the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled.

#### Audit Trail

The information recorded during election activities to reconstruct steps followed or to later verify actions taken with respect to election procedures and voting systems.

# B

#### Ballot

The official presentation of all contests to be decided in a particular election. Either in paper or electronic format, the mechanism for voters to show their voter preferences.

#### Ballot Drop Box

A locked container, either indoor or outdoor, where voters can return an absentee ballot for collection directly by an election official.

#### Ballot Envelope

The official inner and outer envelopes used to transport absentee and mailed ballots.

#### Ballot Scanner

A device used to read the voter selection data from a paper ballot or ballot card.

#### Barcode

An optical and machine-readable representation of data as a sequence of bars and spaces that conform to accepted standards. A QR code is an example of a barcode.

#### Batch

A collection of paper ballots gathered as a group for tabulation and auditing.

#### Batch-fed scanner

An electronic voting device that:

* accepts stacks of hand-marked or BMD-produced paper ballots and automatically processes them until the stack is empty;
* is usually used at an election jurisdiction’s central location;
* is mostly commonly used to process absentee ballots;
* usually has input and output hoppers for ballots;
* scans a ballot and rejects it if either unreadable or un-processable;
* detects, interprets, and validates contest selections;
* detects and sorts (either digitally or physically) ballots that are unreadable or unprocessable, or
* that contain undeterminable selections, marking exceptions, or write-ins; and
* tabulates and reports contest results as required.

#### Board (Election)

A group of individuals working together to complete an elections task. Examples include Precinct Boards, Canvassing Boards, Auditing Boards, among others.

#### Board of Canvassers

A group of individuals working together, following specific rules and procedures, to compile, review, and validate election materials.

#### Board of Elections

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities, and charged with control of elections and voting procedures.

# C

#### Canvass

* Aggregating or confirming every valid ballot cast and counted, including absentee, early voting, Election Day, provisional, challenged, and uniformed and overseas citizen.
* Solicit votes.

#### Canvass Report

A detailed report of activities and information about the canvass of an election.

#### Cast

The final action a voter takes in selecting contest options and irrevocably confirming their intent to vote as selected.

#### Cast Vote Record

A permanent record of all votes produced by a single voter, whether in electronic, paper, or other form. They are also referred to as ballot images when used to refer to electronic ballots.

#### Central Absentee Precinct

A central absentee precinct (CAP) is a precinct established in the courthouse or other public building in a county or city for the receiving, counting, and recording of absentee ballots cast in the county or city.

#### Certification of Official Election Results

A written statement attesting that the election results are a true and accurate accounting of all votes cast in a particular election.

#### Certified Election Results

Final vote tallies that have been attested as true and accurate by the official responsible for confirming their accuracy.

#### Chain of Custody

The processes, or paper trail, that documents the transfer of materials from one person (or place) to the next. Every state and local jurisdiction has its own controls for ensuring the chain of custody of election materials is properly maintained. These controls may include locks, seals, audit logs, witness signatures, or other security measures. Documentation of the chain of custody also provides evidence that all voting procedures were followed.

#### Challenged Ballot

Ballot voted by an individual whose eligibility to vote has been questioned by another (typically an election official). The ballot is held until the reason for the challenge is resolved.

#### Chief Election Officer

The official responsible for overseeing elections in a jurisdiction.

#### Contest

A single decision or set of associated decisions being put before the voters (for example, the option of candidates to fill a particular public office or the approval or disapproval of a constitutional amendment). This term encompasses other terms such as “race,” “question,” and “issue” that are sometimes used to refer to specific kinds of contests.

#### Count

Process of totaling votes.

#### Counted Ballot

Ballot that has been processed and whose votes are included in the candidates and measures vote totals.

#### Cure

The process of fixing an error or providing information to an elections office when your ballot has originally been rejected for counting.

#### Cured Ballot

A ballot that was originally rejected for an error or because it was missing required information but was ultimately counted because the voter corrected the error or supplied the required information.

# D

#### Damaged Ballot

A ballot that has been torn, bent, or otherwise mutilated or rendered unreadable such that it cannot be processed by the ballot tabulating equipment designed for use with the ballot.

#### Defective Ballot

A ballot that has been torn, defaced, or marked in a way that it cannot be tabulated by a scanner.

#### Drop Box

A locked container, either indoor or outdoor, where voters can return a mailed ballot for collection directly by an election official.

#### Duplicate Ballot (Ballot Remake)

A ballot is substituted for a damaged or partially invalid ballot. Duplicate ballots are usually remade by a regulated process where the votes from the damaged or partially invalid ballot are duplicated onto another ballot that can be tabulated by a scanner.

# E

#### Election Board

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities, and charged with control of elections and voting procedure.

#### Election Equipment

All of the necessary items to conduct elections and voting. This can include technology such as electronic poll books, voting machines, and other non-technical equipment, including voting booths and voting signs.

#### Election Law

The official laws that govern the electoral process.

#### Election Results (Election Returns)

Tallies of votes cast in an election after the polls have been closed for voting.

#### Eligible Voters

The universe of all voters who, if they cast a ballot, would have the legal right to have eligible contests on that ballot tabulated. This would include those who do not appear in the list of eligible voters because they live in a same-day registration or no registration state and did not or could not register ahead of time.

#### Extra Mark

A mark on a paper ballot that appears to be unrelated to the act of indicating a voter’s selection. Examples include: a mark made unintentionally by a voter that is obviously not related to making a selection; a hesitation mark, a dot within or outside of the contest option position made by resting a pen or pencil on the ballot; written notes or identifying information not related to the indication of the voter’s selection; or printing defects.

# H

#### Hand Count

Counting ballot sheets and/or selections on ballot sheets by human examination.

# I

#### Internal Audit Log

A human-readable record, resident on the voting machine, used to track all activities of that machine. This log records every activity performed on or by the machine indicating the event and when it happened.

# L

#### Logic and Accuracy (L&A) Testing

Equipment and system readiness tests whose purpose is to detect malfunctioning devices and improper election-specific setup before the equipment or systems are used in an election. Jurisdictions are required to test the correctness of every ballot style and to determine that every possible valid and invalid voter choice can be captured or handled by the voting system, both technologically and legally. Election officials conduct L&A tests prior to the start of an election as part of the process of setting up the system and the devices for an election according to jurisdiction practices and conforming to any state laws.

# M

#### Machine-Unreadable Mark

Mark in a contest selection position of a paper ballot that cannot be detected as readable or marginal by a scanner and requires human adjudication.

#### Mail Ballots (n.)

A ballot cast by a voter other than in-person at a voting location. Mailed ballots are typically mailed to voters but can be issued over the counter from an election's office. Depending on the jurisdiction, mailed ballots can be returned by mail, in a drop box, or in-person. Mailed ballots are synonymous with vote-by-mail and absentee ballots.

#### Manual Tabulation of Ballots

Counting ballot sheets and/or selections on ballot sheets by human examination.

#### Mark

Any symbol made by the signer that represents the execution of a document or indicates a voting selection.

# O

#### Observers

Individuals that monitor the opening and closing of voting locations, voting, the counting and tabulation of results, or any other part of an election.

#### Overseas Ballot

A ballot cast by a member of a uniformed service in active service overseas, or by a civilian living overseas.

# P

#### Poll Book

An official register of electors entitled to vote at an election, used to verify and check in voters prior to issuing them a ballot.

#### Poll Worker

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

#### Post-Election

Procedures Laws, policies, and administrative procedures that are conducted after an election, often related to the canvassing, auditing, and certifying of election results.

#### Post-Election Tabulation Audit

A post-election audit that involves hand-counting a sample of votes on paper records, then comparing those counts to the corresponding vote totals originally reported as a check on the accuracy of election results, and to detect discrepancies using accurate hand-counts of the paper records as the benchmark.

#### Provisional Ballot

A ballot cast by a voter who was not on the list of eligible voters, whose information was incomplete or not accurate, or who had already received a ballot in the mail and was allowed to vote. Fail-safe ballots are usually kept separate from the other ballots until an election official can determine if the voter is eligible to vote. These ballots are sometimes called fail-safe ballots.

#### Provisional Ballot Envelope

An official envelope used to enclose a ballot that was cast provisionally to separate the ballot from other cast ballots until the voter's eligibility can be determined.

# R

#### Random Audit

A public process of manually tallying a percentage of votes, selected at random by the elections official, and typically involves a defined minimum number of precincts or races. This procedure is conducted to verify the accuracy of an automated count.

#### Recount

An additional count of the votes cast in an election, typically required due to state law, a candidate request, or a court order, that is used to determine the accuracy of the reported results of an election. This process may be conducted using ballot tabulation equipment or by hand, depending on local laws and procedures.

#### Registered Voter

A voter who is listed on an electoral roll for the jurisdiction where a voter resides.

#### Rejected Ballot

A ballot that has been cast but cannot be counted due to a defect or ineligibility of the voter.

#### Risk-Limiting Audit

Post-election tabulation audit procedure for checking a sample of ballots (or voter-verifiable records) that provides a pre-specified statistical chance of correcting the reported outcome of an election if the reported outcome is wrong (that is, if a full hand-count would reveal an outcome different from the reported outcome).

# S

#### Sealed Container

A container used to hold or transport election materials, such as ballots, where strategically placed serialized or tamperproof evident seals have been used to alert officials if it has been altered or accessed without authorization.

# T

#### Tabulate (Tally)

Process of totaling votes.

#### Tabulation Audit

A post-election audit that involves hand-counting a sample of votes on paper records, then comparing those counts to the corresponding vote totals originally reported as a check on the accuracy of election results, and to detect discrepancies using accurate hand-counts of the paper records as the benchmark.

#### Tally Sheet

The paper form or electronic record used to collect data in the process of counting votes.

#### Tamperproof Evident Seals

A security mechanism using strategically placed serialized or tamperproof evident materials that alert officials if a device used in the elections process has potentially been altered or accessed without authorization.

# U

#### Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)

UOCAVA citizens are U.S. citizens who are active members of the Uniformed Services, the Merchant Marine, and the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, their eligible family members, and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States. This Act provides the legal basis for these citizens' absentee voting requirements for federal offices.

# V

#### Valid Registered Voter

A voter whose record is current with the appropriate election authority and is eligible to vote.

#### Vote Counting System

The total combination of mechanical, electromechanical, or electronic equipment (including the software, firmware, and documentation required to program, control, and support the equipment) that is used to count votes; to report or display election results, and to maintain and produce any audit trail information.

#### Vote in Person

Voting before or on Election Day where the voter completes the ballot in person at a designated polling site, elections office, or vote center that is overseen by election officials or poll workers.

#### Voted Ballot

Ballot that contains all of a voter's selections and has been cast.

#### Voter Intent

How the voter attempted to express their vote choices through actions taken to mark, verify, and cast an issued ballot.

#### Voter Intent Manual

A standard for counting ballots that aims to ensure that ballots are counted in accordance with the goals of the voter, using written rules for both human processes and machine algorithms to ensure that all ballots marked in a similar way are counted in the same way.