Hand Counting Ballots and Ballot Reconciliation
Best Practices

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Elections and Government Services
2014 Election Official Certification Training
February 2014
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
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:

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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!