



SACRAMENTO COUNTY

ELECTION OBSERVER GUIDELINES

The purpose of an Election Observer is to provide an avenue for public observation and input into the election process. Public participation ensures integrity and voter confidence in the electoral process.

CHECK IN PROCEDURES

1. All observers must report and sign in daily at front counter located at 7000 65th Street Suite A, Sacramento, CA 95823.
2. An Election Observer Badge will be issued and must be worn at all times.
3. When leaving for the day, please return the badge to the front counter.

GENERAL RULES

1. Observers who fail to follow these rules will be required to leave the facility for the duration of the election canvass.
2. This is a neutral office. No discussion of politics, campaigns or candidates is allowed among observers within the facility.
3. No observer shall interfere with the orderly processing of Vote-by-Mail (VBM) ballot return envelopes or processing and counting of VBM ballots, including touching or handling of the ballots or envelopes. (Elections Code §15104e)
4. Observers will be permitted access to a designated observation area(s), sufficiently close to enable them to observe and challenge whether individuals handling VBM ballots are following established procedures (Elections Code 15104d)
5. If the challenge process unduly impedes or interferes with the verification process, challenges shall be discontinued.
6. Radios, cameras, cell phones and recording devices are not allowed. Pagers and cellular phones must be set to vibrate or off mode while observing the canvass. You *may not* use your cell phone in the building EXCEPT in the front lobby should you need to make a call.
7. Backpacks, briefcases and large purses are not allowed.
8. The individual's function is to observe that procedures are followed. Observers cannot assist in operations, touch or handle any ballots or other election-related materials.
9. All questions concerning a procedure must be directed only to the supervisor or Manager of the section.
10. The number of observers may be limited so as not to interfere with the process. Observers must avoid physical contact with employees.

11. Observers are to hold discussions and conversations outside the designated Canvass work areas. Anyone not adhering to these rules will be asked to leave for the day.
12. Observers will be allowed into the canvass work areas only when employees are performing canvass operations.
13. Operations will continue as scheduled whether or not an observer is present.
14. Observers must remain in the area they were assigned to. If you are found unsupervised in an area that you were not assigned to, you will be escorted from the building.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR OBSERVERS

Wear comfortable shoes, you will be standing for long periods (we do not provide chairs or seating arrangements.)

Please refrain from wearing strong perfume or aftershave while observing.

If staff can hear you breathe, back up, you're too close.

BALLOT HANDLING CHALLENGES

1. Any member of the county grand jury, and at least one member each of the political party Central Committees or County Councils who have a candidate on the ballot, and any other interested organizations, shall be permitted to observe and challenge the manner in which the VBM ballots are handled, from the processing of VBM ballot return envelopes through the counting and disposition of the ballots (Elections Code §15104b)
2. Observers may not challenge signatures on VBM ballot return envelopes. Only the elections official shall perform signature comparison, in accordance with Division 3 of the California Elections Code.
3. Observers may challenge whether the individuals handling VBM ballots are following established procedures.

CANVASS

Canvass begins the day after the election and continues everyday (excluding Sunday) until complete. Per Election Code law, Canvass procedures must be completed within 30 days after the date of the election.

All canvass procedures are open to the public, and the same election night guidelines are applied to canvass proceedings. The canvass resumes each morning and does not wait for your arrival, nor will it be halted until completed.

Any questions on procedures should be made directly to the Canvass Manager, and not to individual workers. No communication between canvass workers and observers will be allowed regardless of the topic. If you are seen communicating directly with a canvass worker, you will be asked to leave.

No food or drinks will be allowed in Canvass area around any ballots. We kindly ask observers to eat and drink at a local restaurant in our area during breaks.

THINGS TO REMEMBER – Election Code 18562.5

(a) A member of the public is guilty of a misdemeanor if, while observing any of the following, he or she willfully engages in any conduct set forth in subdivision (b):

- (1) The processing of vote by mail ballots conducted pursuant to Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 15100) of Division 15.
- (2) The semifinal official canvass conducted pursuant to Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 15150) of Division 15.
- (3) The official canvass conducted pursuant to Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 15300) of Division 15.
- (4) A recount conducted pursuant to Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 15600) of Division 15.

(b) (1) Attempting to ascertain the identity and ballot choices of a voter, or having observed or learned the identity of a voter, attempting to ascertain the ballot choices of that voter.

- (2) Opening a provisional or vote by mail ballot envelope containing a voted ballot in order to ascertain the voter's ballot choices.
- (3) Making or placing a mark or device on a ballot or secrecy envelope in an attempt to ascertain the voter's ballot choices.

If you have any questions regarding these procedures, please contact Karen Startup, Campaign Services Manager at (916) 875-6451.

SUPPLEMENTAL OBSERVER REQUIREMENTS INSUFFICIENT PETITION INSPECTION

The following policies and procedures are added to the Election Observer Guidelines for authorized petition inspection.

Proponent may designate authorized representatives to inspect the petition. Proponent must, in writing, name each authorized representative. The original authorization letter will be presented to and retained by VRE staff.

Proponent and all authorized representatives must present valid and current identification prior to admission to the secure area for petition inspection.

Proponents and authorized representatives (proponents) may inspect the petition pages and relevant EMS screens. All inspection will be monitored by VRE staff.

At no time will proponents be allowed unmonitored access to these materials.

All inspection must be by appointment only in order to schedule appropriate VRE staffing.

All inspection will begin and end at times within the normal business hours of VRE.

Proponents must be escorted into and out of the secure areas of the facility.

Proponents are not entitled to interrupt the work of VRE staff.

Should the number of proponents or their requests to enter and/or leave the secure areas interfere with normal VRE work or exceed ability of the staff to accommodate the request, VRE will limit the number proponents and require the proponents to arrive and leave together at coordinated times.