

# Ballot Drop Boxes

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# Topics

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- Why Ballot Drop Boxes?
- Usage Trends
- Legal Requirements and State Regulations
- Ballot Retrieval, Transport, and Accounting
- The Voter Experience
- Third-Party Ballot Collection
- Vote by Mail Rejection Rates
- Emergency Regulations & New Laws

# Ballot Drop Boxes

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**Ballot drop boxes provide voters a safe, convenient way to return their voted ballot! Similar to a USPS mailbox, but ballots are picked up directly by authorized election officials and secured at the elections office to prepare for signature verification procedures.**

## **Voter's Choice Act (Election Code 4005) requirements:**

- 28 days before Election Day: one box for every 15,000 registered voters
- Locations must be secure, accessible to voters with disabilities, and located as near as possible to public transportation routes
- Pick-up and Chain of Custody rules covered under CA Code of Regulations 20130-20138



# Usage Trends

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Drop boxes first introduced in **2010** at 6 City Hall locations with 4,820 ballots returned.

**2016 General:**  
Number of boxes: 17

Ballot Drop Box  
Returns: 71,133

**Percentage of total  
ballots cast: 12.4%**

**2018 General:**  
Number of boxes: 53

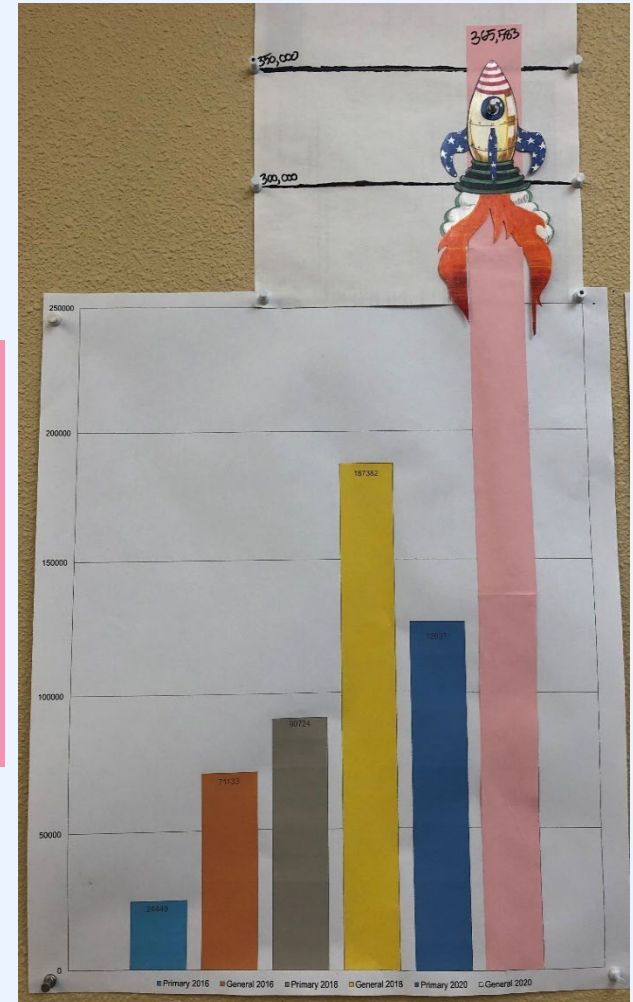
Ballot Drop Box  
Returns: 187,382

**Percentage of total  
ballots cast: 35.9%**

**2020 General:**  
Number of boxes: 72

Ballot Drop Box  
Returns: 365,583

**Percentage of total  
ballots cast: 50.9%**



# The Voter Experience

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- Locations included in the Vote by Mail ballot packet, County Voter Information Guide and posted on County Election Official's website
- Sandwich board and directional signage strategically placed to assist voter navigation to drop box
- Track your ballot through [Wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](https://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov) (through BallotTrax)

- Ballot Instructions/Reminders Sign
- White Vote by Mail ballot replacement envelopes
- Contact Information
- “I Voted” Stickers



# California Secretary of State (SOS)

## Ballot Drop Box Regulations

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- Definition of an authorized, official Ballot Drop Box
- Ballot Drop Box Design and Requirements
- Determination of Ballot Drop Box Locations
- Accessibility of Locations
- Drop-off Location and Ballot Drop Box Security
- Ballot Drop Box Public Notifications & Collection Times
- Chain of Custody
- Processing of Retrieved Ballots



<https://www.sos.ca.gov/administration/regulations/current-regulations>



# Unstaffed Ballot Drop Box Security



- Unstaffed ballot drop boxes outdoors shall be securely fastened in a manner to prevent tampering (such as fastening to concrete or an immovable object)
- Unstaffed ballot drop boxes placed inside a building shall be secured in a manner that will prevent unauthorized removal
- If feasible, ballot drop boxes shall be monitored by a video security surveillance system, or an internal cameras that can capture digital images and/or video (but not required)
- All ballot drop boxes shall be secured by a lock or sealable with a tamper-evident seal. Only an elections official and a designated ballot retriever shall have access to the keys and/or combination of the lock

# Unstaffed Outdoor Ballot Drop Box

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Sacramento  
County utilizes 2-  
3 Unstaffed Ballot  
Drop Boxes



# Staffed Ballot Drop Box Security



- Staffed ballot drop boxes are placed in a location that is in view of a live person who is employed by the location, a city or county employee, or temporary worker or volunteer retained for purpose of monitoring the box. They may be:
  - Securely fastened to a stationary surface or to an immovable object
  - Placed behind a counter, or
  - Portable so it can be transported to a curbside area or a mobile voting area
- Staffed ballot drop boxes shall be placed in an area that is inaccessible to the public and/or otherwise safeguarded during the hours the ballot drop box is not in use
- All ballot drop boxes shall be secured by a lock or sealable with a tamper-evident seal. Only an elections official and a designated ballot retriever shall have access to the keys and/or combination of the lock

# Staffed Indoor Ballot Drop Box

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A majority of boxes used in Sacramento County are staffed

- City Halls
- Sac Public Libraries
- Raley's/Bel Air

# Collection Times



- **E-29 thru E-10:** at least once every 96 hours (excluding Sat & Sun)
  
- **E-10 thru Election Day:**
  - Staffed Boxes: at least once every 72 hours (excluding Sat & Sun)
  - Unstaffed Boxes: at least once every 24 hours (excluding Sat & Sun)

Designated Ballot Retrievers (teams of two, sworn Election Officials) are provided route assignments, key lanyards, hand carts, extra supplies, and Chain of Custody forms to collect ballots..

# Ballot Drop Box Ballot Retrieval & Transport

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- **Upon Arrival:**

- Record the time on the Chain of Custody form
- Inspect the ballot drop box and ensure the blue seal bridging the gap between the side of the ballot drop box and the door is solid blue (indicating no tampering has occurred)

- **Opening Ballot Drop Box:**

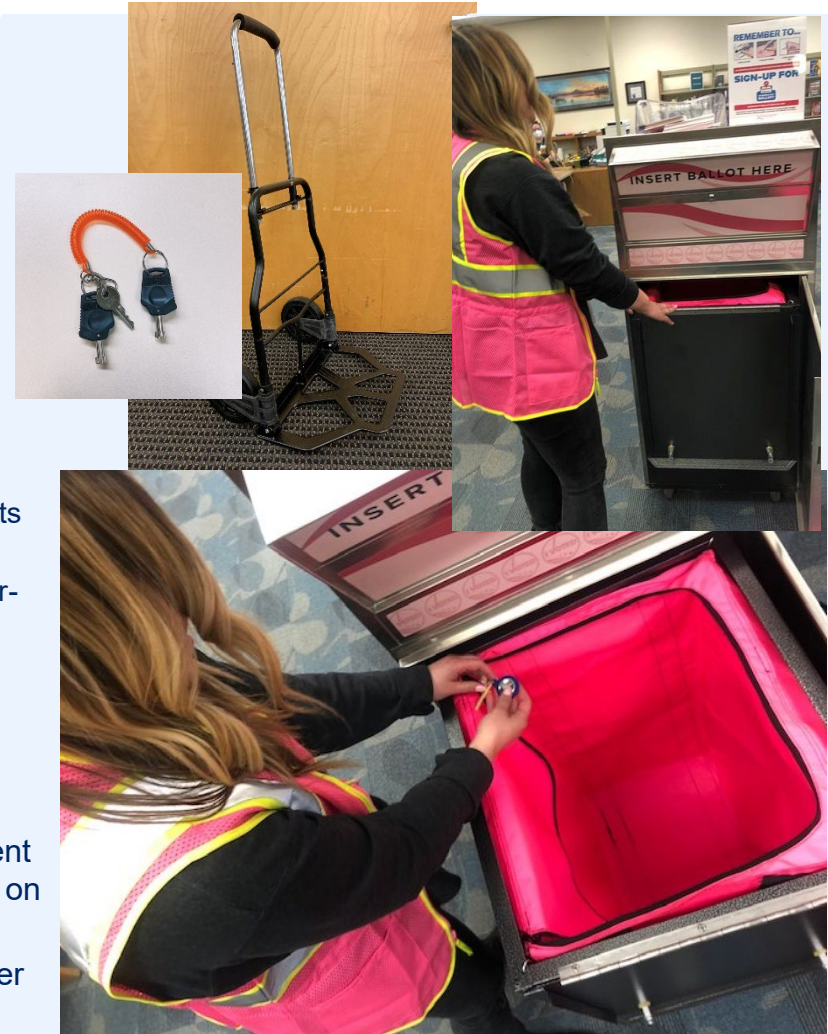
- Remove the blue seal from the box and adhere to the Chain of Custody form (note that the blue seal should now read “VOID OPEN” since the seal was broken to open the box)
- Unlock the box using the keys

- **Retrieving Ballot Bag:**

- Roll out the metal cart and visually verify the tag on the tote reflects the location accurately
- Remove pink Ballot Transport Tote and zip closed. Thread tamper-resistant pull-tite seal through zipper.....
- Place tote on a hand cart for rolling to transport vehicle

- **Replacing Bag and Closing Ballot Drop Box**

- Place new pink Ballot Transport Tote into metal cart and roll back into ballot drop box
- Close and lock the ballot drop box door, adhere a replacement blue seal across door opening, and record time of departure on Chain of Custody form
- Remain with partner at all times and return to main office after making all stops on assigned pick-up route





# Chain of Custody Form (a.k.a. Retrieval Form)

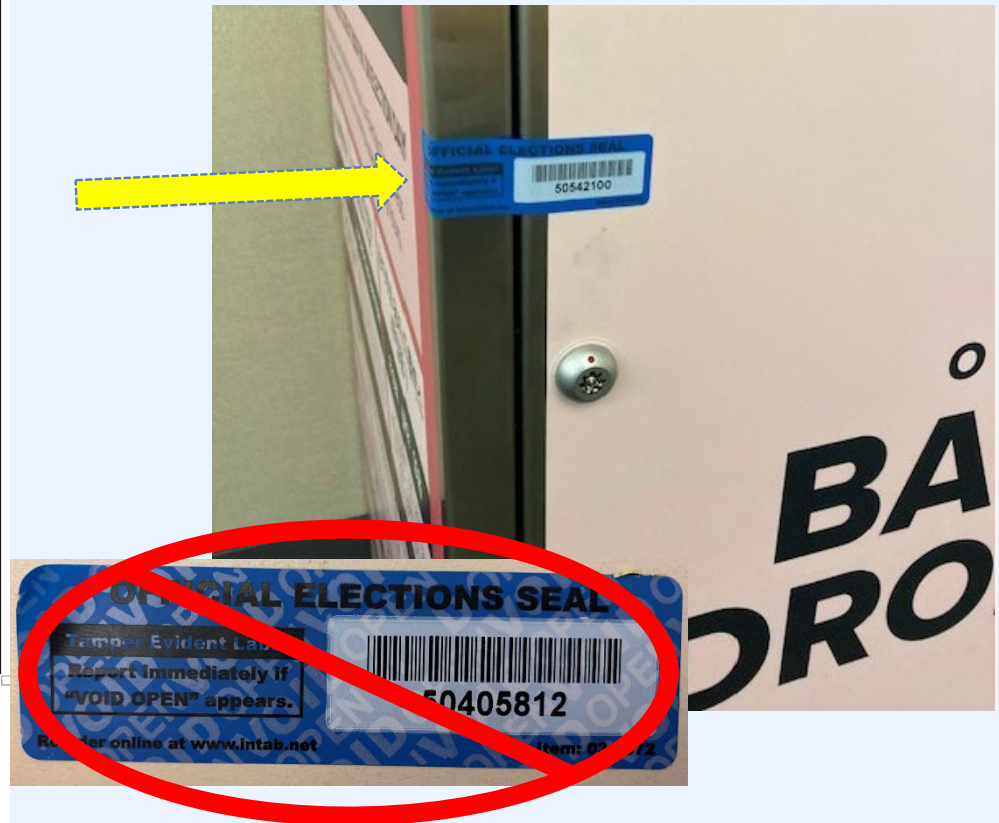
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A chain of custody plan ensures that the movement of ballots is logged and can be tracked at all times.

County of Sacramento Voter Registration and Elections June 7, 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election OFFICIAL VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT DROP BOX CHAIN OF CUSTODY FORM			
Drop Box Location	BEL-AIR ELK GROVE FLORIN – 8345 ELK GROVE FLORIN RD		
Date		Drop Box ID	04
Time In		Time Out	
Blue Tamper-Evident Seal intact?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Used Blue Tamper-Evident Seal #	
Evidence of tampering?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If YES, describe here:	
Pull-Tite Seal #		Replacement Blue Tamper-Evident Seal #	
Retrievers Name & Signature			
Retrievers Name & Signature			
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY BY ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT			
Date		Arrival Time	
Does Used Blue Tamper-Evident Seal # match prior Chain of Custody form?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Pull-Tite Seal #	
		Seal intact?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Total Weight		Ballot Count	
Receiving Official Name & Signature			
Receiving Official Name & Signature			



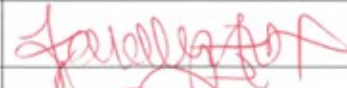



Place used seal here



## County of Sacramento Voter Registration and Elections

*November 2, 2021 City of Isleton Fire Protection Services Transaction and Use Tax Special Election.*

### OFFICIAL VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT DROP BOX CHAIN OF CUSTODY FORM

Drop Box Location		Isleton City Hall - 101 2nd St	
Date	10/22/21	Arrival Time:	2:28 pm
Drop Box ID	1	Departure Time:	2:33 pm
Ballot Container ID	1	Seal #:	50499521
Replacement Container ID	1	Replacement Seal #:	50499522
Retrievers Name		Karalyn Fox	
Retrievers Name		Ximene Devalos	
<b>Delivered to County of Sacramento Voter Registration and Elections</b>			
Date	10/22/21	Arrival Time:	3:56 pm
Ballot Container ID	1	Evidence of Tampering?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Ballot Count	14		
Ballot Retriever Signature			
Ballot Retriever Signature			
Election Official Signature			
Election Official Signature			
Log ballot count into Vote by Mail Ballot Drop Box spreadsheet.			
Secure ballots in the Small Warehouse Cage.			





# Closing Ballot Drop Boxes (Election Night)

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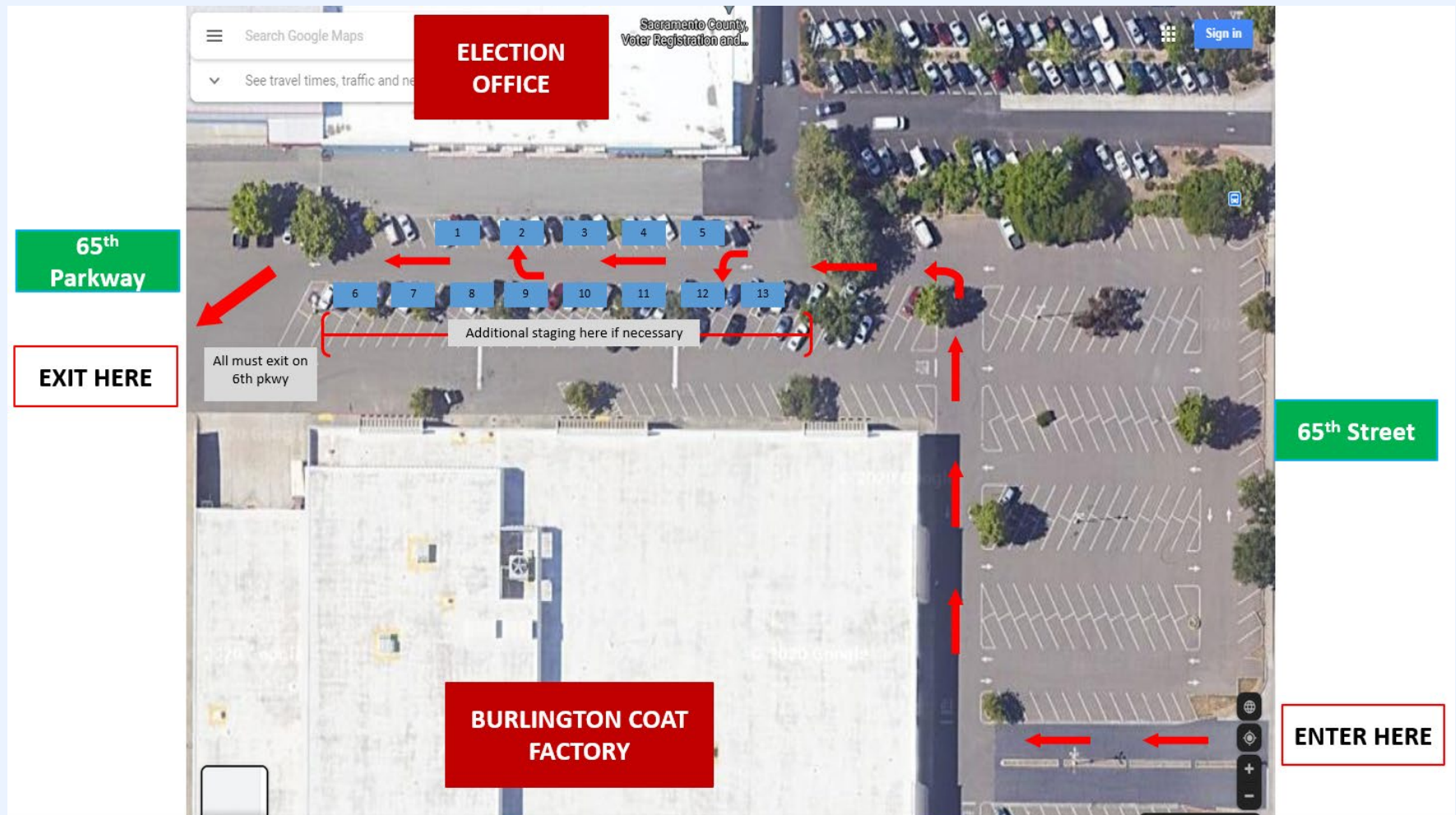


A team of Ballot Box Closers is sent to each Ballot Drop Box location prior to the close of polls on Election Day. At 8 p.m., the ballots are removed from the box and secured for transport. All peripheral items are stored inside the box. The door and slot are locked and a cover is slid over the box to indicate it is closed.

The proper documentation is completed on the Chain of Custody form and the Ballot Box Closer team contacts the Ballot Drop Box Coordinator to confirm they have successfully closed their box and are transporting their ballots back to the main office.

# Closing Ballot Drop Boxes (Election Night)

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# Processing of Retrieved Ballots

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Any ballots received from a ballot drop box shall be processed in the same manner as all vote-by-mail ballots:

- pass through mail sorter to be weighed and sorted
- signature verified against the voter's registration file
- verified they have not voted anywhere else in California, prior to opening the envelope and extracting the ballot inside.



# Voter ID

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- In California, voters are only required to provide identification when they vote ONLY if they did not include it when they initially registered OR our system could not locate them in DMV's database.
- Accept identification as provided under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA)
- For mail ballots, an insert is included in the voter's packet that tells them they must provide HAVA approved identification prior to us counting their ballot, by providing a picture of the identification or including a copy with their mail ballot).
  - If acceptable identification is not provided, the voter will be contacted to provide it prior to the certification of the election.
  - If acceptable identification is still not provided, the ballot will not count per CCROV 20225
- This provides that the voter is a real person. It does not affirm any other eligibility requirements.

# Third-Party Ballot Collection



**California Elections Code 3017 (a)(2) allows a vote by mail voter to designate another person to return their voted Vote by Mail ballot.**

**Who is eligible to return a ballot for another person?** Anyone. Code does not state eligibility requirements for the designee or chain of custody procedures. The return envelope does provide space to put a designee's information, but no ballot will be disqualified if the information is not provided. (EC 3011 (C))

**How long does the designee have to return the ballot?** The person designated shall return the ballot in person, or put the ballot in the mail, no later than three days after receiving it from the voter or before the close of the polls on election day, whichever time period is shorter. (EC 3017 (a)(2))

**Is there a limit to the number of ballots an individual can return as a designee?** There are no provisions in California Elections Code that set a numerical threshold for the number of vote by mail ballots turned in by an individual.

**Can the designee accept compensation based on the number of ballots returned?** No. The person designated to return a vote by mail ballot shall not receive any form of compensation based on the number of ballots that the person returns and an individual, group, or organization shall not provide compensation on this basis. (EC 3017 (e)(1))

**How can a voter that turned over their vote by mail ballot to a designee to return verify whether or not their ballot was returned?** A voter can verify the return status of their ballot by using BallotTrax or utilizing Sacramento County's Voter-Lookup Tool at <https://pollingplacelookupen.saccounty.net/Language/EN>.

**Recommendations to voters:** It is always best to maintain control of your own ballot. If you are unable to return it yourself and need to appoint a designee, only give your ballot to someone you trust. If a campaign or political party asks to return your ballot for you, you have the right to say decline. You can verify the return status of your ballot online or by calling the county elections office.

# Vote By Mail Ballot Rejection Rates

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## **March 2020 = 1.2%**

Total received 404,074

Total rejected 4,671

## **November 2020 = 0.3%**

Total received 677,876

Total rejected 1,745

## **September 2021 = 0.6%**

Total received 540,645

Total rejected 3,078

After the 2020 Primary, standard procedure was updated to include noticing the voter more than once and by multiple methods (mail, phone, email) until their ballot was cured or the election was certified.

In addition, voter participation in ballot tracking through **Where's My Ballot?** skyrocketed between March and November of 2020. Users jumped from approximately 8,000 to 210,000.



# Emergency Regulations: COVID-19

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## VOTE BY MAIL BALLOTS

Vote by Mail ballots mailed to all active registered voters. *Executive Order N-64-20*

## BALLOT TRACKING

County elections officials required to use the Secretary of State's ballot tracking system and provide Intelligent Mail Barcodes (IMbs) on Vote by Mail envelopes. *Executive Order N-67-20*

## REMOTE ACCESSIBLE VOTE BY MAIL BALLOTS (RAVBM)

Any voter shall be permitted to cast a ballot using a certified RAVBM system, regardless of whether the voter is a voter with disabilities or a military or overseas voter. *AB 860 amended EC section 3016.7*

## POSTMARK + 17

A Vote by Mail ballot shall be timely cast if it is received by delivered by mail by the 17<sup>th</sup> day after election day and postmarked on or before election day. *AB 860 amended EC section 3020(d)*

## VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT PROCESSING

May start to process Vote by Mail ballots on E-29. Processing includes opening return envelopes, removing ballots, duplicating damaged ballots, machine reading ballots and preparing them for tabulation. *AB 860 amended EC section 15101*

# Assembly Bill 37 – Sept 2021

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<b>VOTE BY MAIL BALLOTS</b>	Vote by Mail ballots mailed to all active registered voters. <i>EC section 3000.5</i>
<b>BALLOT TRACKING</b>	County elections officials required to use the Secretary of State's ballot tracking system and provide Intelligent Mail Barcodes (IMbs) on Vote by Mail envelopes. <i>EC 3019.7</i>
<b>REMOTE ACCESSIBLE VOTE BY MAIL BALLOTS (RAVBM)</b>	Any voter shall be permitted to cast a ballot using a certified RAVBM system, regardless of whether the voter is a voter with disabilities or a military or overseas voter. <i>EC section 3016.7</i>
<b>POSTMARK + 7</b>	A Vote by Mail ballot shall be timely cast if it is received by delivered by mail by the 7 <sup>th</sup> day after election day and postmarked on or before election day. <i>EC section 3020(d)</i>
<b>VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT PROCESSING</b>	May start to process Vote by Mail ballots on E-29. Processing includes opening return envelopes, removing ballots, duplicating damaged ballots, machine reading ballots and preparing them for tabulation. <i>EC section 15101(b)</i>

# Questions?

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**The Vote by Mail Division**

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