

Ballot Counting and Canvassing Process

Candidates and members of the media are sometimes surprised when they learn that there are additional ballots to be counted after Election Day. These uncounted ballots may leave some close races undecided for up to one week. This memo is provided to explain post-election night ballot counting.

On Election Night, the results will be displayed right after 8:00 pm for the ballots already received and counted. However, there are three categories of ballots, which cannot be counted on Election Night:

- Absentee ballots turned in at the polling locations;
- Absentee ballots received in the mail after Election Day;
- Provisional ballots voted at the polls.

In accordance with Utah Law, the canvassing of returns for the Primary Election will be conducted seven days after the election. This provision of the law allows for time to complete the ballot count and conduct a thorough audit of the election results to ensure accuracy. The results will be reviewed and certified by Board of Canvassers comprised of your City Council Members.

Absentee Ballots turned in at Vote Centers/Polling Locations

Some absentee voters choose to drop off their absentee ballots at Vote Centers/polling locations on Election Day and this is permissible. However, all absentee ballots must be pre-processed before they are counted including verifying the absentee voter's signature prior to opening the envelopes. Since we receive these ballots late on Election Night, we must process and count them at a later time and include the results as part of the canvass.

Absentee ballots received in the mail after Election Day

A mailed absentee ballot that is received after Election Day is considered valid if it is post-marked the day before the election and received in the Election Division before noon on the day of the official canvass.

Provisional ballots voted at the polls

Registered voters who move within the State of Utah, but do not re-register with their new address are allowed to vote a provisional ballot. Also, Salt Lake County is participating in an Election Day Voter Registration Pilot Project established by House Bill 156. This bill allows citizens who were not previously registered to vote in Utah to provisionally vote if they provide ID and proof of residency. Provisional ballots are sealed in envelopes at the polls and the information on the provisional envelope is individually researched and verified at the Election Division before the ballot is counted or rejected in accordance with election laws. The number of outstanding provisional ballots for any specific electoral jurisdiction will not be known until the day of the official canvass.

We realize it is difficult for candidates who are involved in close races to wait until the day of the official canvass to know whether they won or lost. However, we hope that the reasons for the delay have been adequately explained in this memo. If you have additional questions, please call Dahnelle Burton-Lee at (385) 468-7371.