



SAN FRANCISCO  
ELECTIONS

# Guide to Observing Elections Processes

City and County of San Francisco

November 3, 2020, Consolidated General Election

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# I. Introduction

The mission of the San Francisco Department of Elections (Department) is to provide equitable access to voting-related services and to conduct elections that are free, fair, and functional. In carrying out its mission, the Department must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as any election-related regulations issued by the California Secretary of State.

Serving over 500,000 registered voters, the Department makes a concerted effort to operate in an open and transparent manner in order to inspire public confidence in the integrity of elections in the City. For every election cycle, the Department invites interested members of the local community to observe elections processes in the legal and logistical context of safeguarding voting system security and preserving voter privacy. While feedback on these processes is always welcome, observers must recognize the need to protect voter rights, including the right to cast a secret ballot.

In this election cycle, the Department will also consider and incorporate current guidance from public health officials regarding ways to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Accordingly, all in-person observers must remain at least six feet away from Department staff and other observers and wear facial coverings at all times. In addition, Department staff may limit the number of people in any given area, both to protect public health and to prevent potentially crowded conditions from interfering with the efficiency and accuracy of vital operations. While elections processes may be observed in person at the Department's main office in Room 48 of City Hall, the Pier 31 warehouse, and the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium (this site will host some ballot processing activities that in previous elections were conducted in City Hall), the Department encourages observers to view election activities online via [sfelections.org/observe](https://sfelections.org/observe).

To monitor the number of people in any one area, the Department requires all media and observers to sign in before entering any site. For activities inside City Hall and Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, observers must sign in at a station the Department will organize at the Grove Street entrance to City Hall. After signing in, Department personnel will provide media and observers with blue observer badges that clip onto clothing and must be visibly worn during their time at any site. When leaving a site, media and observers must sign out and return the badges. The badges will be sanitized when returned to the Department.

After signing in and clipping on the badge, media and observers will be escorted to all election activities by Department personnel. When observers want to leave an area, they must inform designated Department personnel and they will then be escorted to the exit to sign out and return their badges.

When visiting the warehouse, media and observers must sign in at the station located outside the fencing and wait for Department personnel to provide an escort to the requested area or activity. Upon completing their observations, observers must inform Department personnel and wait for an escort out of the work areas. Observers must sign out, and return their badges. The badges will be sanitized when returned to the Department.

The Department will allow observation based on the number of people who can safely practice social distancing in any one area. If the number of people exceeds the space available for social distancing, the Department will determine the amount of time that observers can remain in an area before leaving to allow other people the opportunity observe election activities

Please note that the recent passage of California Assembly Bill 860 (AB 860) will permit the Department to begin processing vote-by-mail ballots 29 days before Election Day rather than the usual 10 days, and will require the Department to process any vote-by-mail ballots returned through 17 days following Election Day, rather than the usual 3 days. Other changes, including the distribution of vote-by-mail ballots to all registered voters and expanded access to the Accessible Vote-by-Mail system, may also impact ballot processing procedures and schedules. For a detailed schedule of all observable activities, including dates and hours, see the Appendix.

*Please note that this guide is not intended to provide a comprehensive review of applicable law or legal advice of any kind.*

## II. Observation Guidelines

While the guidelines below were drafted and published by the California Secretary of State, observers should be aware that the law provides county elections officials with some discretion with regard to how they are applied in the specific circumstances of different jurisdictions.

### A. Health and Safety Measures

In addition to the rights and responsibilities set forth below, election observers must adhere to health and safety provisions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. In order to provide a safe and secure election for election workers, voters, and observers for the November 3, 2020, General Election, the Secretary of State's Office, in consultation with California public health officials, developed the guidance document, Election Administration Guidance under COVID-19. The specific health and safety guidance presented here is based on and consistent with information provided in that document).

All election observer shall follow practices that help control and prevent the spread of COVID-19, including daily self-screening at home daily prior to arriving at their observation location. When performing daily self-screening, check for any of the following COVID-19 symptoms:

- Frequent cough
- Fever
- Difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Recent loss of taste or smell

Election observers should stay home if they are experiencing any of the above symptoms.

In addition, the observer should stay home if they:

- Feel sick
- Have tested positive for COVID-19
- Live with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

Election observers shall adhere to the following COVID-19 guidelines while observing in San Francisco during the November 3, 2020, General Election:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand -sanitizer that is at least 60% ethyl alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Avoid shaking hands.
- Wear face coverings. Face coverings shall:
  - Fully cover the nose and mouth and be secure under the chin
  - Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
  - Be kept clean
- Maintain physical distancing of six feet. Observers may be asked to observe from a designated area to ensure health and safety guidelines are being met.

## **B. Rights and Duties of Observers**

### **Observers have the right to:**

1. Observe pre-Election Day activities, as permitted by law, such as voting equipment preparation and testing and vote-by-mail ballot processing.
2. Observe the proceedings at polling places, including the opening and closing procedures.
3. Obtain information from the voter list that is posted or otherwise available at of the polling place.
4. Take notes and watch election procedures.
5. View election-related activities at the central counting site on Election Day.
6. View the canvass of the vote activities following the election.
7. View vote-by-mail and provisional ballot processing.
8. Ask questions of poll workers as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of any part of the voting process.
9. Ask questions of supervisors at the central counting site as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of the election procedures.
10. Use an electronic device, including a smartphone, tablet, or other handheld device, at a polling place provided that the use of the device does not result in a violation of any other provision of the Elections Code.

### **Observers are responsible for:**

1. Checking in at each site, whether the polling place or central counting site.
2. Wearing an identification badge.
3. Maintaining a professional manner while observing the election process.
4. Ensuring they do not interfere with the election process.
5. Following established county observation rules/policies.

### **Observers must not:**

1. Interfere with the conduct of the election. The elections official is entitled to determine whether a person is interfering with the conduct of the election.
2. Physically handle any voting materials or equipment without the express permission of the elections official.
3. Move or rearrange tables, chairs, or voting booths at the polling place or central counting facility.

4. Sit at the official worktables or view confidential voter information on any computer terminal or document.
5. Communicate with voters within 100 feet of the entrance to, or inside of, a polling place, a vote center, an elections official's office, or a satellite location by encouraging them to vote for or against a person or a measure or regarding the voter's qualifications to vote. Exit polling of voters is permitted, provided it is conducted at least 25 feet away from the entrance to the polling place.
6. Directly challenge a voter. Only a member of a precinct board may do so, based on evidence presented.
7. Display any campaign material or wear campaign badges, buttons or apparel.
8. Wear the uniform of a peace officer, a private guard, or security personnel.
9. Use cellular phones, pagers, or two-way radios inside the polling place and/or within 100 feet of the entrance to the polling place.
10. Talk to or attempt to stop poll workers or the central counting site workers while they are processing ballots.
11. Use the telephones, computers, or other polling place facilities at polling places or the central counting site.
12. Touch election personnel.
13. Eat or drink in a polling place or the central counting site.
14. Assist in operations at any polling place or the central counting site.
15. Prevent other observers from observing materials or a process.
16. Enter secure areas without express permission of the elections official.
17. Delay or interrupt scheduled operations and processes solely because an observer is present.

## **C. Rights and Duties of Elections Officials**

### **Elections officials have the right to:**

1. Use discretion in determining a sufficiently close distance for observers to stand from the process they want to observe.
2. Require observers to be quiet inside the observation area.
3. Use discretion to determine how (e.g., written or verbal) and to whom observers may pose questions and challenges during the observation process.
4. Ask an observer who does not follow observation rules to leave the premises.
5. Restrict the number of observers permitted in a room to prevent interference with the observed process.
6. Restrict the items observers may bring with them into the polling place or central counting site, such as cell phones, large bags, or back packs, etc.

### **Elections officials are responsible for:**

1. Maintaining the integrity of the administration of the election and determining observer misconduct or interference.
2. Establishing security rules for public observation. Examples of such rules are the use of sign-in sheets and identification badges and prohibiting the use of cell phones, pagers, cameras, and other audio or video equipment or electronic devices.
3. Providing notice to the public of the dates, times, and places of election-related activities that may be observed by the public, as required by law. For example, elections officials are required to provide 48 hours' notice for vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot processing and five days' notice of the post-election one percent manual tally.

## **D. Media Guidelines**

The California Secretary of State has historically taken the position that cameras and video equipment are not allowed at polling places with some exemptions. For instance, if a credentialed media organization wants to photograph or film candidates casting their ballots, the elections official may permit it, provided there is no interference with voting activities, intimidation of voters or poll workers, or compromise of any voter's privacy.

In general, the media is required to follow the guidelines noted above. The Department suggests that media organizations inform the Department prior to photographing or filming a voting center or polling place. In all instances, the media organization must obtain the consent of the voters present prior to filming or photographing voting activity. For additional information, please refer to the County Clerk/Registrar Voters Memorandum #18116.

For access to the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, where the Department will be processing vote-by-mail ballots, media organizations should check in with the Campaign Services Division at the Grove Street entrance of City Hall. They will then be escorted to the observation area. All questions should be directed toward the area supervisor, Department escort, or Director of Elections.

## **III. Pre-Election Day Observation Activities**

### **A. Ballot Measure Letter Designation**

88 days prior to each Election Day, the Department designates letters for each ballot measure in the public area of its office in Room 48 at City Hall. Ballot measure titles and letters are assigned in accordance with San Francisco Municipal Elections Code (SFMEC) §505.

### **B. Selection of Ballot Measure Arguments**

82 days prior to each Election Day, the Department selects one proponent and one opponent ballot measure argument for publication in the Voter Information Pamphlet in accordance SFMEC §545.

### **C. Outreach Presentations**

In addition to conducting a year-round outreach program, the Department schedules election-specific outreach activities and presentations for each election. The Outreach Calendar can be viewed at [sfelections.org/outreach/calendar](https://sfelections.org/outreach/calendar).

### **D. Poll Worker and Field Support Training**

Starting approximately one month before each Election Day, the Department begins training the thousands of poll workers who serve voters on Election Day. Due to the Public Health Order, poll worker training classes, which last approximately 2 ½ hours, will be held online, and focus on the rights of voters, including language and access rights; new health and safety

procedures; proper setup and operation of voting equipment; procedures for processing voters; and transfer of custody protocols for ballots and other vital materials after the polls close.

In each election, Field Election Deputies (FEDs) serve as liaisons between poll workers and Department personnel in the Election Day Support Center at City Hall; each FED is responsible for supporting a territory of approximately 7-10 sites.

To prepare for Election Day, FEDs must complete several training sessions. The primary training session will be conducted via Zoom and will consist of a four-hour course addressing a variety of common and less common Election Day situations. FEDs will also be required to complete an online poll worker training course and attend an in person voting equipment practice lab, to gain a thorough understanding of voting procedures and poll worker duties. Finally, FEDs will complete a half-day route driving session, in which FEDs familiarize themselves with assigned territories.

## **E. Logic and Accuracy Testing of Voting Equipment**

Prior to each election, the Department conducts Logic and Accuracy (L&A) testing of voting machines that comprise San Francisco's voting system: the ImageCast Evolution Ballot-Scanning Machine, ImageCast X Ballot-Marking Device, and ImageCast Central Scanner.

L&A testing ensures that the equipment properly records and accurately tabulates all votes.

The L&A Testing Board, which is composed of registered City voters with a variety of backgrounds, reviews and approves both the L&A plan and the L&A results for each election. In accordance with California Elections Code (CAEC) §15000, the Testing Board must certify testing results no later than seven days before Election Day.

### **i. ImageCast Evolution Ballot-Scanning Machines, used at the polling places on Election Day**

The first step in testing ballot-scanning machines is to run a set of test ballots and generate a tabulation report on those ballots. A team of proofers then compares marks on the test ballots against the machine's report. Any discrepancies are investigated until the issues can be resolved. Next, electronic memory card data is uploaded into the election database, with a second team of proofers reviewing all system entries for accuracy. As testing is completed on each unit, staff return the memory cards to the machines, affix security seals, and place the machines in a secured staging area at the warehouse in preparation for delivery to polling places.

### **ii. ImageCast X Ballot-Marking Devices, used at the voting center and polling places to facilitate accessible voting**

The first step in testing the accessible voting machines is to have proofers confirm that ballot printouts accurately reflect the marks made by Department personnel on a set of test ballots using the touchscreen interface. Next, printouts are scanned on the ballot-scanning machine and the tabulation report is reviewed. Then, Department staff test each accessible machine's audio and audio-tactile interface (ATI) components before affixing security seals to the machines and transferring machines to a secured staging area at the warehouse in preparation for delivery to the Voting Center and polling places.



**iii. ImageCast Central Count Scanners, used primarily to tabulate vote-by-mail and provisional ballots**

The testing procedures for central count scanners are similar to the testing procedures used for ballot-scanning machines. However, because these machines process ballots of all ballot types included in the election, test ballots for the scanners include all ballot types.

During the election cycle, on each day before the Department processes ballots, the scanners are re-tested before any cards are processed. This daily testing is performed to ensure that the equipment is functioning properly and accurately throughout the duration of ballot processing.

## **F. Early Voting at the Voting Center**

To protect public health, the City Hall Voting Center will be set up in an outdoor area in front of the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium on 99 Grove Street.

The Voting Center will be open every weekday from October 5 through November 3 and on the three weekends prior to Election Day. This site will serve all City residents—including non-citizens eligible to vote in the Board of Education contest—who wish to drop off their ballots, use accessible voting equipment, cast the ballot in person, or, after the registration deadline, register and vote provisionally.

At the Voting Center, the Department will provide accessible-marking devices but there will be no ballot-scanning machines onsite.

Ballots cast at the Voting Center on Election Day are not tabulated immediately as poll ballots are, but are instead secured in return envelopes for processing and tabulation at a later time.

To minimize congestion in the Voting Center area, the Department will staff ballot drop-off stations outside the Voting Center beginning on October 5. These ballot drop-off stations will be set up to allow for easy and convenient access for pedestrians, drivers, and bicyclists. Starting October 31, the Department will open additional auxiliary ballot drop-off stations in the City, which will be located at the following locations:

- Supervisorial District 1 - Anza Branch Library, 550 37th Ave
- Supervisorial District 2 - Golden Gate Valley Library, 1801 Green St
- Supervisorial District 3 - Portsmouth Square, Washington St at Walter U Lum Pl
- Supervisorial District 4 - Ortega Branch Library, 3223 Ortega St
- Supervisorial District 5 - Park Branch Library, 1833 Page St
- Supervisorial District 6 - Chase Center, 1655 3rd St
- Supervisorial District 7 - West Portal Branch Library, 190 Lenox Way
- Supervisorial District 8 - Noe Valley/Sally Brunn Branch Library, 451 Jersey St
- Supervisorial District 9 - Mission Branch Library, 300 Bartlett St
- Supervisorial District 10 - Bayview/Linda Brooks-Burton Library, 5075 3rd St
- Supervisorial District 11 - Excelsior Branch Library, 4400 Mission St

## G. Vote-by-Mail Ballot Processing

While observers are welcome to watch vote-by-mail ballot processing in person and are generally allowed to come close enough to processors to confirm that proper procedures are being followed, CAEC §15104 prohibits observers to touch or handle vote-by-mail ballots.

Observers may also watch vote-by-mail ballot processing online at [sfelections.org/observe](https://sfelections.org/observe).

With the passage of Assembly Bill 860 that made several amendments to the California Elections Code the Department can commence ballot processing 29 days before Election Day instead of 10 business days.

Vote-by-Mail ballot processing consists of five steps: 1) envelope scanning, 2) signature comparison, 3) transfer of accepted envelopes to Bill Graham Civic Auditorium for processing, 4) ballot extraction, and 5) votemark scanning. As part of Step 2, Department staff attempt to notify any voters who have submitted ballot return envelopes with missing or mismatched signatures, encouraging such voters to submit new signature samples so their ballots can be accepted. As part of Step 4, dedicated teams “adjudicate” (interpret ambiguous marks using standardized rules) or “remake” (duplicate valid votemarks on irregular ballots onto new ballots for counting). Each of these five and two ancillary ballot processing steps are described in details below.

**1. Envelope scanning.** The Department will begin scanning returned vote-by-mail envelopes as soon as it receives the first such envelope in early October.

San Francisco’s official vote-by-mail return envelopes include barcodes with ID number of the voter to whom the enclosed ballot was mailed. Upon receipt of each official return envelope, the Department uses an Agilis Ballot Sorting system to read the envelope’s barcode and to scan, upload, and link the signature on the envelope to the voter’s record in the Election Information Management System (EIMS registration database). Staff also use the Agilis system to divert unreadable return envelopes, separating them for manual review.

Vote-by-mail return envelopes successfully processed by the Agilis system, as well as those processed by manual envelope review teams, will be forwarded to the signature comparison team, also stationed at City Hall.

**2. Signature comparison.** The Department utilizes a multi-stage review process to compare each ballot envelope signature with the signatures on file for that voter. Using this method, no ballot is challenged for a signature-related reason unless the signature in question has been reviewed by three different staff members and compared to all signatures in the voter’s record.

In the first stage, a staff member compares the signature on a given return envelope to the signature image from the corresponding voter’s affidavit of registration, and determines whether these two signatures compare by looking for common characteristics. If the signatures compare, the ballot is accepted and transferred to the extraction team for opening and tabulation. If the signatures do not compare, the ballot is placed on pending status and proceeds to the second stage.

In the next stage, a different staff member compares the voter’s signature on the return envelope to all other signatures in the voter’s file. Only when the signature does not compare to any signature on file, will the ballot proceed to the third stage. In this final stage, another staff member again compares the signature to all signatures in the voter’s records. If, after three

attempts to find a comparable signature, staff still cannot verify the signature on the return envelope compares with one on any form signed by the voter to whom the ballot was sent, the ballot must be challenged and the voter notified.

**i. Voter Notification Program.**

The Department attempts to contact voters with challenged ballots using several methods. First, the Department mails a bilingual cure form regarding the challenge and actions the voter must take to allow the Department to count the ballot, and a postage-paid return envelope. Second, the Department provides notification to voters with challenged ballots via the Department's online Voter Portal, which offers a digital version of the cure form. Finally, if the voter has an email address or telephone number on file, the Department attempts to contact the voter by email and/or telephone, generally within one working day of challenging the ballot.

Voters may return challenge cure forms by mail, email, or fax, as well as in person to any polling place or voting center. During the November 3 election cycle, the Department will facilitate home delivery and pickup of challenge cure forms for voters unable to travel due to COVID-19 related quarantine.

Upon receipt of a challenge cure form, a staff member scans the voter's signature sample, links the scan image to the voter's file for future reference, accepts the voter's ballot, and forwards the ballot envelope on to the ballot extraction team.

**3. Transfer of accepted ballot envelopes for processing.** After undergoing envelope scanning and signature comparison (Steps 1 and 2), accepted vote-by-mail ballots will be transferred from City Hall for ballot extraction and vote counting (Steps 3 and 4) to the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium using a secure custody transfer process.

To transfer accepted vote-by-mail ballot envelopes to the Auditorium, Department staff will begin by placing batches of ballot envelopes into ballot transport boxes secured with tamper-proof seals, and record the seal numbers on a custody transfer form. Staff will then place the secured ballot transport boxes onto mobile racks, complete an inventory check, and encase each rack with shrink-wrap and tamper-proof tape.

A Deputy Sheriff will accompany Department staff to transfer racks via truck to the Auditorium. Finally, two Department staff members at the Auditorium will receive the racks, confirm the security seals are intact, confirm seal numbers match those recorded, and sign the custody transfer form. Ballot extraction staff will then remove the security seals, dismantle the shrink-wrap, and bring the transport boxes to the ballot extraction area.

**4. Ballot extraction.** As each rack of accepted vote-by-mail ballots is delivered, the ballot extraction team will begin inserting ballot envelopes into the Opex high speed envelope extractors. After ballot envelopes are processed (slit open) by the machine, staff will manually remove and flatten individual ballot cards and ready them for scanning. Throughout the extraction process, staff will protect vote secrecy by keeping envelopes face down so that voter information is removed from view. After extraction and flattening, boxes of accepted ballots will be transferred to the votemark scanning team.

**5. Votemark scanning.** After ballot cards have been removed, staff will scan the cards for tabulation using ImageCast Central (ICC) scanners. When scanned ballots contain potentially valid over-votes, under-votes, blank contests, marginal marks, or write-in votes, ICC scanners divert such ballots for manual review and adjudication.

#### **i. Ballot adjudication and remake**

State law requires the Department to count irregular votemarks, provided the intent of the voter is clear. Therefore, when an ICC scanner detects a ballot with marginal or irregular markings or a write-in vote, an image of the ballot is sent to an adjudication team for review and interpretation.

Some types of irregularly marked ballots require Department staff to remake ballots on ballot-marking devices so votes can be read and tabulated properly by ICC scanners. These include provisional ballots with invalid votes (e.g., those cast by voters using ballot types containing contests in which they are not eligible to vote and physically damaged vote-by-mail ballots (such as partially torn ballots).

To ensure consistent processing, both tasks are completed by two person teams using illustrated guides with standardized rules. In order to maintain social distancing, the Department will adopt new methods to allow adjudication and remake staff to work in pairs without coming within six feet of each other.

Adjudication teams will work at separate stations, rather than at single stations, with one member of each team marking a main screen and the other using a mirrored monitor to review and confirm adjudication actions. Remake teams will also work in tandem at different stations, with one member of the team entering votemarks and the other member of the team comparing those marks to ballot printouts.

After processing and tabulation, original, adjudicated and remake ballots will be securely transferred and stored at the Department's warehouse for the duration of archival period.

#### **Launching a challenge**

While vote-by-mail ballots may be challenged on a number of grounds, challengers must enter the challenge before the ballot envelope in question is opened, and "Because the voter is not present, the challenger shall have the burden of establishing extraordinary proof of the validity of the challenge at the time the challenge is made (CAEC §§15105, 15106).

Observers may challenge whether those Department personnel handling vote-by-mail ballots are following established procedures, including verifying signatures and addresses by comparing them to voter registration information, securing ballots to prevent any tampering before counting, etc.

Challenges may also be made for the same reasons as those made against a voter voting at a polling place (CAEC §§14240, 15105).

## **IV. Election Day and Night Observation Activities**

### **A. Polling Places and Voting Center Operations**

On Election Day, observers may observe voting activities at polling places, ballot drop-off stations, and the voting center. While observing in voting areas, observers must respect the rights of voters to cast a secret ballot and to vote in an environment free of intimidation. Observers must check in at each observation area (Polling Place, City Hall, the warehouse) and wear

identifying badges at all times while observing the elections process. For those interested in observing the processes at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, observers must check in with the Campaign Services Division at the Grove Street entrance of City Hall. Observers at City Hall and the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium will be escorted to the observation area. Observers should also be aware that state law specifically prohibits observers from handling and viewing certain election materials including:

**i. Voted Ballots**

The California Constitution guarantees every voter the right to cast a secret ballot. A number of Department procedures are designed to prevent the accidental or intentional disclosure of ballot selections to others. Observers must respect this right to secret ballot and avoid viewing, or appearing to view, marked ballots.

**ii. Roster of Voters**

CAEC §14223 allows observers to inspect rosters, but observers may not sit at the official election table with poll workers or “impede, interfere, or interrupt the normal process of voting”.

**iii. Ballot Containers**

CAEC §15204 prohibits members of the public from touching ballot containers. Unauthorized persons, including observers, may not touch or move any voting equipment.

**iv. Voters and Poll Workers**

Observers should generally avoid the use of cameras, including cell phones, in all Department facilities. Camera and cell phone usage may distract or intimidate voters and poll workers, and may also violate, or appear to violate, the privacy of voters. If an observer wishes to use a cell phone or take a photograph of any person or item, the observer must get express permission from the election officials.

**v. Assisting voters**

While at a polling place or voting center, observers may notice that some voters receive assistance in voting. The law allows a voter to bring any one or two people, other than the voter’s employer or union representative, into a voting booth in order to help the voter mark selections on the ballot (CAEC §14282). As part of their official duties, poll workers may help voters as well, and in any case must keep a list of assisted voters in the roster of voters (CAEC §14283). The law also allows poll workers to deliver and retrieve necessary supplies and ballots to voters unable to enter polling place to conduct curbside voting. Observers may observe voters being assisted, provided they do not intimidate the voter or violate the voter’s right to cast a secret ballot.

**vi. Challenges**

While observers and members of the public are entitled to suggest that one or more voters be challenged, only poll workers and elections officials may actually do so, and only on the grounds enumerated in CAEC §14240. All challenges must be conducted in conformance with the specific rules, oaths, and procedures in Article 3 of the same code. Therefore, if an observer believes a voter should be challenged, the observer must notify a poll worker or an elections official rather than attempting to make the challenge. A poll worker will in turn immediately contact the Department of Elections for assistance before any further action is taken.

When a challenge is being evaluated, the law requires that “Any doubt in the interpretation of the law shall be resolved in favor of the challenged voter.” (CAEC §14252) Other voters must be permitted to continue to vote and if “persistent challenging of voters is resulting in a delay of voting sufficient to cause voters to forego voting because of insufficient time or for fear of unwarranted intimidation, the board shall discontinue all challenges.” (CAEC §14253)

#### **i. Election Center Phone Bank**

To provide support and answer questions from poll workers and others in the field, and to dispatch in-person assistance or additional supplies as needed, the Department organizes the Election Center, staffed with phone bank operators using a networked computer application called Incident Reporting Information System (IRIS). Observers are welcome to watch the activities in the Election Center, which is open from 5:30 a.m. until approximately midnight on Election Day and is housed in North Light Court of City Hall.

### **B. Return and Processing of Ballots, Materials, and Electronic Data**

To facilitate the receipt of vital polling place materials, the Department establishes an Election Night Processing Center at its warehouse at Pier 31. After the polls close, poll workers prepare rosters of voters and ballots for transport by Deputy Sheriffs, who collect these items (San Francisco Charter § 13.104.5). Meanwhile, Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA) officers are entrusted with the collection of electronic data and transport of memory cards from polling place voting equipment to the second collection point at Larkin Hall at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. Observers are welcome to watch deliveries to the warehouse or the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium on Election Night, but must avoid interfering with those engaged in these critical tasks.

### **C. Preliminary Results Reporting**

The Department will release the first preliminary summary report of election results at approximately 8:45 p.m. This report will provide the results from the vote-by-mail ballots that the Department received and processed before Election Day.

With this first summary report, the Department will also release a preliminary Statement of the Vote, ranked-choice reports, and Cast Vote Record data.

At approximately 9:45 p.m., the Department intends to release a second summary report of results that includes votes cast at the polling places. At approximately 10:45 p.m., the Department intends to release a third summary report of results.

After all polling places have reported results, the Department will release a fourth summary report, as well as a second preliminary Statement of the Vote, ranked-choice reports, and Cast Vote Record data.

Election results will be available from the following sources:

1. San Francisco Government Television (Channel 26)
2. Online at the Department’s website, [sfelections.org/results](https://sfelections.org/results)
3. Department’s office in Room 48, City Hall

## V. Post-Election Day Observation Activities

Observers must check in at each observation area (Polling Place, City Hall, the warehouse) and wear identifying badges at all times while observing the elections process. For those interested in observing the processes at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, observers must check in with the Campaign Services Division at the Grove Street entrance of City Hall.

Observers at City Hall and the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium will be escorted to the observation area. During observation, Observers may direct questions regarding procedures to the designated staff member in a manner that does not interfere with procedures. This staff member, whose presence in the area will be specifically for observers, will be identified upon arrival at observation area. The staff member may answer, or direct them to an appropriate subject-matter expert.

Depending on the complexity of the question, the Department may ask the requestor to put the inquiry in writing to facilitate follow up.

### A. Vote Tabulation and Reporting

Ballot processing continues after Election Day until the Department has counted all ballots. At 4 p.m. every day on which the ballots are counted, the Department will release updated results reports. On any days during which no ballots are counted, the Department will post a notice on its website stating that no update will be issued for a specified day or days.

### B. Processing of Remaining Ballots Including Provisional Ballots

Department staff continue to process ballots received before or on Election Day, including vote-by-mail and conditional ballots cast at the Voting Center, polling place ballots with write-in votes, and provisional ballots, until all such ballots have been counted. In addition, after Election Day, the Department will process vote-by-mail ballots postmarked on or before Election Day and received within 17 days, and challenged ballots timely cured by voters.

Observers are encouraged to view activities via the Department's livestream at [sfelections.org](http://sfelections.org). For security reasons, observers will not be permitted to access tabulation equipment or to enter the Arena at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.

#### i. Provisional ballot processing

Per state law (CAEC §14310), any voter whose eligibility cannot be immediately established is entitled to vote provisionally using a special envelope designed for that purpose. As authorized under CAEC § 2160, the Department has created a provisional ballot envelope that also serves as a voter registration affidavit.

Voters who cast provisional ballots include those not listed on precinct rosters, those unable to surrender previously mailed ballots, those unable to comply with federal identification requirements, and those using the conditional voter registration process.

#### 1. Transport and scanning

On Election Night, Deputy Sheriffs transport provisional ballot envelopes from all polling places to the Department's warehouse processing center on Pier 31. At the warehouse, staff organize the envelopes by precinct and count them manually; this preliminary count is released to the public the next day and updated during the Canvass period.

Provisional ballot envelopes are transported to the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium the next morning. Starting the day after the Election Day, staff take and upload digital photographs of provisional ballot envelopes on the Department's network. During the processing of provisional ballots, Department staff compare the information written on the envelopes to voters' information

on file and input data of unregistered voters into EIMS (if a provisional ballot envelope is blank or void, staff will place it in a designated container and reroute it to a manual inspection area.)

## 2. Processing

Processing of provisional ballot envelopes is a multi-step process.

### a) Step 1: Linking registration records

The first step in processing provisional ballots is to locate the voter's registration record in EIMS by inputting the voter's name written on the provisional envelope, and to create a provisional ballot record in EIMS. During this step, staff also enter the envelope receipt number which voters can use to verify the status of their ballots.

1. If the voter is registered in San Francisco, the provisional ballot record is linked to the corresponding voter's record and the ballot proceeds to the second stage in the process. If the voter used the provisional envelope to update party preference, the voter's record is flagged for an update.
2. If a registration record cannot be located in EIMS based on the name written on the envelope, the ballot is placed on "Pending" status and is rerouted to a different team who will process the voter's registration application and link the new voter record to the provisional ballot record.

### b) Step 2: Eligibility verification

The second step is to verify that the person who signed the provisional envelope is the voter to whom the provisional ballot is now linked in the database and to confirm that this person was eligible to cast the ballot enclosed in the envelope. If the voter has an active registration status in EIMS, has not voted in the election, preference in the voter's record, the address on the envelope matches the address in the voter's record, and the voter used the same ballot type that was used in the voter's home precinct, staff can proceed to verifying the voter's signature. If any of these criteria are not met, then staff take one or more of the following actions:

1. If the voter has inactive or cancelled registration status, the processor updates status to active. The ballot then proceeds to signature verification.
2. If the address on the provisional envelope is not a residential address (e.g., P.O. Box) or the address is blank, the processor inputs the residential address from the voter's registration record into the provisional record before verifying the signature. The ballot then proceeds to signature verification.
3. If the address on the provisional envelope does not match the address in the voter's registration record, the processor inputs the voter's new address so that the voter's registration record can be updated accordingly. The ballot then proceeds to signature verification.
4. If the voter used the wrong ballot type (voted in a precinct with different contests), the processor will flag the provisional ballot as "Wrong Ballot Type". Such envelopes are considered "Partially Accepted" as the Department will only count the contests for which the voter was eligible to vote. The ballot then proceeds to signature verification.
5. If the address on the provisional envelope is not located in San Francisco (the address is in a different county or state), the ballot is placed on "Pending" status and proceeds to Step 3.
6. If the voter's record shows the voter has already voted, the ballot is placed in "Pending" status and proceeds to



### Step 3.

Staff compare signatures on provisional ballot envelope using procedures used to compare signatures on vote-by-mail ballot envelopes. If the processor is able to find a comparable signature and the ballot is not in “Pending” status, the provisional ballot can be “Accepted” (fully or partially) and forwarded to another team for opening, ballot extraction, and tabulation. If no comparable signature can be found in the voter’s registration record, the ballot proceeds to Step 3.

#### **c) Step 3: Review of envelopes in pending status**

During this step of review, Department staff undertake different types of research depending on the type of issue involved before accepting or challenging a ballot. If a ballot can be accepted, the envelope will be forwarded for opening and tabulation, with ballots cast on incorrect ballot types being remade to reflect only valid votes.

1. If the provisional ballot has been placed in “Pending” status because the voter is a new registrant in San Francisco, the registration information provided on the provisional envelope is inputted into the Vote Center Application to create a new voter record. The voter record is then linked to the provisional ballot record, and the ballot proceeds to eligibility and signature verification.
2. If the provisional ballot has been placed in “Pending” status due to lack of a comparable signature, staff will make another attempt to locate such a signature. As with procedures for verifying signatures on vote-by-mail envelopes, staff perform a thorough review to find a comparable signature before challenging a provisional ballot, reviewing all signed documents in EIMS as well as the statewide database, VoteCal. If the signature on the provisional envelope compares to any one of the signatures on file for the voter during this more exhaustive search, the envelope is accepted and opened for tabulation. If not, the envelope will be reviewed again by a third employee before the ballot is placed in “Not-counted” status.
3. If the ballot has been placed in “Pending” status due to the voter having signed the roster at a polling place, Department staff will review the roster scan to determine whether the voter in fact signed the roster and whether the voter did so in error. If research reveals that the voter cast another ballot for the election, the ballot is placed in “Not-counted” status.
4. If the ballot has been placed on “Pending” status because the home address of the registered voter is not in San Francisco, the law allows that person to vote in San Francisco if the move occurred within 14 days of Election Day (CAEC §2035). In this case, the ballot may be accepted and forwarded for opening and tabulation. If the move occurred prior, the ballot is placed in “Not-counted” status.

#### **d) Step 4: Counting of accepted ballots**

Every day during the processing period, staff will transfer accepted and partially counted provisional ballots for tabulation. Ballots cast by voters using the wrong ballot type will first be “remade” on the correct ballot type, so only valid votes will be counted, before being scanned and tabulated.

#### **ii. Notification program for those whose provisional ballots are counted**

The Department notifies voters whose provisional ballots cannot be counted. The notice explains the reason for the challenge and explains the steps the voter must take in the next election to ensure their ballot can be counted.

## C. Official Canvass and One Percent Manual Tallies

The Department must begin the Official Canvass, or internal audit of election results, no later than the Thursday following Election Day (CAEC §15300). The canvass entails many tasks, among which are tallies of ballots cast in one percent (1%) of precincts participating in an election, as well as 1% of the vote-by-mail and other ballots cast in an election. The canvass also includes an inspection of all materials returned by poll workers, and a reconciliation of the number of signatures on rosters of voters against the number of voted ballots recorded on Posted Ballot Card Statements.

The Official Canvass is conducted primarily at the Department's warehouse at Pier 31. Observers can visit the warehouse during canvass, but should identify themselves to staff as the area is secured by the Deputy Sheriffs and is accessible to authorized personnel only.

Observers can also watch the random selection of precincts and batches of vote-by-mail and other ballots to be included in the manual tallies (CAEC §15360). The selection will occur in the lobby of the Department's office located in City Hall, Room 48. The Department posts a five-day public notice of the date and time of the random selection of precincts.

To randomly select ballots to hand tally, the Department uses 10-sided dice. After dice are rolled, the numbers facing up are matched to numbers assigned to a list of precincts for which the Department will manually tally cards voted at polling places. Next, the Department will roll the dice to select vote-by-mail and other ballots that were counted in batches that may include ballots from different precincts. For this latter category of ballots, the numbers from the rolled dice are referenced to a list of batch numbers.

If the selected precincts or batches do not include all of the contests voted upon in the election, the Department will continue rolling the dice to select additional precincts or batches until ballots from all contests are identified for inclusion in the tallies.

## VI. Final Results Reports

In most elections, the Department has until 30 days from Election Day to certify the election and release final results (CAEC §15372). As part of this process, the Department delivers a certified statement of the results to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors and to the Secretary of State. The Department also posts final results on [sfelections.org/results](https://sfelections.org/results), issues a press release, and broadcasts notifications via social media.

In addition to the results reports, the Department will post images of scanned voted ballot cards on its website. Each image will be accompanied by an AuditMark log showing how the system counted the vote marks and any changes made during the adjudication process. Ballot images will be organized by supervisorial district, precinct, and type of ballot (vote-by-mail vs. poll ballots). The Department will post transaction logs from voting equipment used to tabulate ballots. As with ballot images, transaction logs will be posted alongside final election results on the Department's website.

As in the past, the Department will protect results files by applying SHA512 cryptographic hashes to the results data files, ballot card images, and transaction logs posted on [sfelections.org](https://sfelections.org). ("SHA" is an acronym for "Secure Hash Algorithm" and SHA512 is the strongest cryptographic hash in the SHA2 family.)

## Appendix A: November 3, 2020, Election Calendar of Observable Activities

Before Election Day			
Activity	Details	Time	Location
Ballot Measure Letter Designation	The Department designates letters for local ballot measures <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	December 9, 11 a.m.	City Hall, Rm 48
Selection of Proponents' and Opponents' Arguments	If the Department receives more than one proposed proponent or opponent argument for a measure, the Department will select one proponent and one opponent argument according to priority levels and, if necessary, by lottery <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	December 12, 2 p.m.	City Hall, Rm 48
Voter Outreach Presentations	Contact Matthew Selby (415) 554-4376 for details, time, and location		
Logic and Accuracy Testing	ImageCast Central (ICC) Scanners and other media devices	September 18–October 9, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.	Arena, Bill Graham Civic Auditorium
	ImageCast Evolution Ballot-Scanning Machines	September 29 – October 7, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.	Warehouse, Pier 31
	ImageCast X Ballot-Marking Devices	September 18 – September 28, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.	Warehouse, Pier 31
Poll Worker & Field Support Training	Contact Matthew Selby (415) 554-4376 for details, time, and location		
Voting Center	Any voter may vote at the Voting Center beginning 29 days before the election	October 5– November 3, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. October 24–25 and October 31–November 1, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.	In front of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, Grove Street
Open House	During the Open House, attendees are invited to tour the Department's office and learn about processes that take place before, on, and after Election Day in support of the election	TBD	City Hall, Rm 48
Vote-by-Mail Ballot Processing	Sorting, scanning, and verifying signatures on the vote-by-mail ballot envelopes in preparation for ballot counting <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	As early as September 22, after transmission of ballots to military and overseas voters, until complete	Arena, Bill Graham Civic Auditorium
	Opening of vote-by-mail ballot envelopes, ballot extraction, ballot counting in preparation for tabulation <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	October 12 until complete	Arena, Bill Graham Civic Auditorium
	For activity on a specific day, contact Matthew Selby (415) 554-4376		
Ballot Adjudication & Remake	When ballots contain valid votes, even in cases in which a ballot has been irregularly marked, are torn, bent, or otherwise damaged and unreadable, the Department reviews and adjudicates these ballots. When necessary, ballot remake is conducted.	October 12 until complete	Arena, Bill Graham Civic Auditorium
Mock Election Day Support Center	The practice of logging and resolving inquiries and issues in a simulated environment similar to Election Day <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	November 1, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	City Hall, North Light Court

## On Election Day

Activity	Details	Time	Location
Voting Center/ Polling Places	Check <a href="https://sfelections.org">sfelections.org</a> for polling place locations	Voting Center and polls are open from 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. on Election Day	City-wide
Election Day Support Center	Provides support to poll workers and dispatches in-person assistance to polling places when needed <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	5:30 a.m. to approximately midnight	City Hall, North Light Court
Processing Center	Receives voted ballots, rosters of voters, and other materials from polling places	Begins after 8 p.m. and continues until all polling place materials have been received	Warehouse at Pier 31
Data Collection Center	Receives memory cards from polling places	Begins after 8 p.m. and continues until all polling place memory devices have been received	Larkin Hall, Bill Graham Civic Auditorium
Election Night Results Reporting	Results are available on <a href="https://sfelections.org">sfelections.org</a> , San Francisco Government Television – SFGTV, Channel 26, physical location TBD	First preliminary results released at approximately 8:45 p.m. with updates released at approximately 9:45 p.m. and 10:45 p.m.	City Hall, Rm 48

## After Election Day

Activity	Details	Time	Location
Ballot Processing and Tabulation	Ballots include vote-by-mail ballots that voters dropped off at the polling places or the City Hall drop-off stations, or that the Department received in the mail within 17 days of Election Day; vote-by-mail ballots that were timely remedied by voters; provisional ballots; and ballots with write-in votes.  For activity on a specific day, contact Matthew Selby (415) 554-4376 <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	Continues until all ballots have been counted and the results are certified	Arena, Bill Graham Civic Auditorium
Results Reporting after Election Night	The Department posts updated results online on any day ballots are tabulated	Daily at approximately 4 p.m.	<a href="https://sfelections.org">sfelections.org</a>
Canvass	An internal audit of the election to ensure the accuracy of results	November 5, 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. beginning November 6, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. except Sundays and holidays	Warehouse at Pier 31
1% Manual Tallies	Random selection of precincts and batches for manual tallies <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	November 12, 11 a.m.	City Hall, Rm 48