



**SAN FRANCISCO  
ELECTIONS**

# **Guide to Observing Elections Processes**

**City and County of San Francisco**

September 14, 2021, Gubernatorial Recall Election

# Contents

I.	Introduction.....	3
II.	Observation Guidelines .....	4
A.	Health and Safety Measures .....	4
B.	Rights and Duties of Observers .....	4
C.	Rights and Duties of Elections Officials.....	5
D.	Media Guidelines .....	6
III.	Pre-Election Day Observation Activities .....	6
A.	Outreach Presentations.....	6
B.	Poll Worker and Field Support Training .....	6
C.	Logic and Accuracy Testing of Voting Equipment.....	7
D.	Early Voting at the Voting Center .....	7
E.	Satellite Ballot Drop-Off Stations.....	8
F.	Vote-by-Mail Ballot Processing .....	8
IV.	Election Day and Night Observation Activities .....	10
A.	Polling Places and Voting Center Operations .....	10
B.	Return and Processing of Ballots, Materials, and Electronic Data .....	12
C.	Preliminary Results Reporting.....	12
V.	Post-Election Day Observation Activities.....	12
A.	Vote Tabulation and Reporting.....	13
i.	<b>Post Election Day Ballot Processing</b> .....	13
ii.	<b>Provisional ballot processing</b> .....	13
1.	<b>Transport and scanning</b> .....	13
2.	<b>First pass procedure</b> .....	13
3.	<b>Second pass procedure</b> .....	13
4.	<b>Third pass procedure</b> .....	14
B.	Official Canvass and One Percent Manual Tallies .....	14
VI.	Final Results Reports.....	15

# I. Introduction

The mission of the San Francisco Department of Elections (Department) is to provide equitable access to voting and election-related services and to conduct free, fair, and functional elections for the City and County of San Francisco. In carrying out this 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 also makes a concerted effort to operate in an open and transparent manner in order to inspire public confidence in the integrity of elections in San Francisco. In every election, the Department therefore invites interested members of the public to observe elections processes in the context of safeguarding voting system security and preserving voter privacy.

Observers should be aware that several important procedures in the upcoming election will be temporarily modified per the provisions of Senate Bills (SB) 29 and 152, which were signed into law on February 19, 2021 and June 28, 2021, respectively. While SB 29 extended the temporary “universal vote-by-mail” rule requiring California elections officials to mail vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots to all actively registered voters, SB 152 extended three other temporary rules, all through the end of 2021. As a result, for the September 14, 2021, California Gubernatorial Recall Election, the Department will: 1) facilitate universal access to its Accessible Vote-By-Mail System (instead of limiting it to voters with disabilities, in the military, or temporarily living overseas), 2) begin processing VBM ballots 29 days before Election Day (instead of 15 business days), and 3) accept timely postmarked VBM ballots received up to seven days after Election Day (rather than three days).

As in other recent elections, the Department will also offer in-person voting opportunities at its City Hall Voting Center beginning 29 days before Election Day and at all 588 polling places on Election Day.

This Guide has been drafted to help familiarize election observers with their rights and responsibilities, as prescribed by California Secretary of State guidance and various provisions in the California Elections Code. It also includes a schedule of activities, observable both in person and via [sfelections.org/observe](https://sfelections.org/observe). (see Appendix A). This Guide is not intended to provide a formal analysis of applicable law or constitute legal advice.

While observers will find more detailed descriptions of their rights and responsibilities in this Guide, they should note that, as in prior elections, the Department will make a special effort to protect public health, voting system integrity, and voter privacy by establishing the following rules:

- ✓ All observers must sign in and out at all sites and be escorted to and from observable activity areas by Department staff.
- ✓ All observers and members of the media must wear blue identification badges issued by Department staff at all times while on site.
- ✓ In order to prevent crowding, Department staff may limit the number of observers in any given area.
- ✓ If other observers are waiting to enter an observable activity area, Department staff may limit the amount of time observers may stay on site.

## 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

The Department advises election observers to adhere to the latest health and safety guidance to ensure a safe and secure environment for election workers, voters, and the general public. As of issuance date of this Guide, face covering requirements have been removed indoors for fully vaccinated members of the public entering City Hall and other City facilities. However, face covering requirements remain in place for unvaccinated members of the public entering City Hall and other City facilities.

### 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. Talk to or attempt to stop poll workers or the central counting site workers while they are processing ballots.
10. Touch election personnel.
11. Eat or drink in a polling place or the central counting site.
12. Assist in operations at any polling place or the central counting site.
13. Prevent other observers from observing materials or a process.
14. Enter secure areas without express permission of the elections official.
15. 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**

Members of the media cannot enter an area in which voting booths are available to voters. Also, 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 into a tabulator or ballot box, 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.

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

### **A. 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).

### **B. 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.

## C. 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.

## D. Early Voting at the Voting Center

The Voting Center will be set up inside City Hall and will be open every weekday from August 16 through September 14 (except Labor Day, September 6), and on the two weekends prior to Election Day. This site will serve all City residents who wish to register to vote, drop off their vote-by-mail ballots, use accessible voting equipment, or cast the ballot in person.

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.

## **E. Satellite Ballot Drop-Off Stations**

The Department will staff eleven ballot drop-off locations – one in each Supervisorial District – to facilitate convenient vote-by-mail ballot collection services in the last four days of the voting period, or from Saturday, September 11 up through Election Day, September 14.

These official ballot drop-off stations will be easily recognizable, with red ballot boxes bearing the official seal of the City and County of San Francisco, will be staffed by Department personnel wearing red vests, and will be serviced by official ballot collectors on a daily basis. For location and hours, please visit [www.sfelections.org/balldropofflocations](http://www.sfelections.org/balldropofflocations).

## **F. 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 [www.sfelections.org/observe](http://www.sfelections.org/observe).

With the passage of SB 152 that made several temporary amendments to the California Elections Code the Department can commence ballot processing 29 days before Election Day instead of 15 business days.

Vote-by-Mail ballot processing consists of four steps: 1) envelope scanning, 2) signature comparison, 3) ballot extraction, and 4) 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 four 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 August.

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.



**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. 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. Ballot extraction.** After undergoing envelope scanning and signature comparison, accepted vote-by-mail envelopes will proceed to ballot extraction phase. 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.

**4. 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.

After processing and tabulation, original, adjudicated and remade 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 City Hall 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. 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 the area adjacent to City Hall cafeteria.

## **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 McAllister Street entrance at City Hall. Observers are welcome to watch deliveries to the warehouse or City Hall 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. Statewide Election results will be available at [sos.ca.gov](https://sos.ca.gov)
2. San Francisco Government Television (Channel 26)
3. Online at the Department's website, [sfelections.org/results](https://sfelections.org/results)
4. 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. 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. Post Election Day Ballot Processing**

After Election Day, Department staff continue to process all ballots cast up through the close of the polls, including vote-by-mail ballots, conditional ballots cast at the Voting Center, and provisional ballots cast at polling places, as well as many ballots received after Election Day, including later-received but still timely cast vote-by-mail ballots and challenged ballots timely cured by voters.

### **ii. Provisional ballot processing**

Per state law, any voter whose eligibility to vote in the current election cannot be immediately established is entitled to vote provisionally using a special envelope that also serves as a voter registration affidavit. (CAEC §14310, § 2160) Provisional voters will include any polling place voters not listed on the precinct roster, any in-person voters not registered to vote anywhere in San Francisco, and any in-person voters whose voter registration records indicate they may have already returned a ballot for this election.

#### **1. Transport and scanning**

On Election Night, Deputy Sheriffs transport provisional ballot envelopes from all polling places to the Department's warehouse at 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 throughout the Canvass period. Once counted, provisional ballot envelopes are transported to City Hall.

At City Hall, the front of each provisional ballot envelope is digitally photographed for upload to the Department's local voter registration database. (Staff divert hard to scan or apparently blank or spoiled provisional envelopes to a special area and process them manually.) To ensure all valid provisional ballots are accepted for counting, provisional ballot envelopes are processed in three separate stages, or passes, as described below.

#### **2. First pass procedure**

In the first pass, Department staff begin by using the name provided on each provisional envelope scan image to search for a matching registration record in the Department's voter registration database. If first pass staff cannot find a matching registration record, they will create a partial registration record using the voter's name, link the provisional ballot to that record, and forward the provisional ballot to the second pass team. If first pass staff do find a registration record matching a voter's information provided on the envelope, they will link the ballot to that record and then perform several checks before accepting the provisional ballot for counting.

If the database indicates that 1) the voter may not be registered to vote in San Francisco, 2) the voter may have already cast a ballot in the current election, 3) the voter may not have a signature on file comparing to the one on the provisional envelope, or 4) the voter may have moved out of San Francisco, first pass staff place the ballot on pending status and forward it to the second pass team for further review (no ballots are challenged in the first pass).

If the database does not indicate any such issues, the ballot is accepted for counting.

#### **3. Second pass procedure**

In the second pass, Department staff begin by processing the registrations of any previously unregistered but eligible

provisional voters using the information provided on their ballot envelopes (forwarding any registrations which appear to lack a local residential address to the third pass team). Next, staff perform another round of research using information in both local and statewide registration databases before accepting each ballot, challenging it, or forwarding it to the third pass team:

- In the first pass, staff forward any provisional ballot with an envelope indicating the voter may no longer live in San Francisco to the second pass team. In the second pass, staff challenge ballots with out of county residential addresses, and forward those with mailing addresses.
- In the first pass, staff forward any provisional ballot with an envelope signature that did not compare to any on file in the voter's registration record to the second pass team. In the second pass, staff search again for a comparable signature and either accept (comparable signature is found) or forward the ballot (comparable signature is not found).
- In the first pass, staff forward any provisional ballot with no signature on the envelope to the second pass team. In the second pass, staff manually examine both sides of the envelope for a signature – if staff still cannot find a signature, the ballot must be challenged.
- In the first pass, staff forward any provisional ballot cast by a voter whose voting history in the database indicates they may have already cast a ballot in this election to the second pass team. In the second pass, staff process this history in accordance with the [SOS ballot processing rules](#).
- In the first pass, staff forward any provisional ballot cast by a voter whose record in the database indicates they may not be registered to vote in San Francisco to the second pass team. In the second pass, staff process this issue in accordance with the [SOS ballot processing rules](#).

#### **4. Third pass procedure**

In the third pass, after conducting further research, staff may accept provisional ballots that were previously put on a pending status. However, all provisional ballots with critical outstanding issues at the end of the third pass must be challenged and the voter notified as necessary (some issues, such as signature miscompare, can be cured, while others, such as living in another county, cannot). Although the vast majority of ballots will be either accepted or challenged in the third pass, there is one situation in which a ballot will remain in pending status until further determination, namely when a voter record indicates the provisional voter may have voted at a polling place in another county, but that county has not yet finished processing and uploading its voting history to the state database.

## **B. 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 visiting the warehouse during canvass should identify themselves to Department 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: September 14, 2021, Election Calendar of Observable Activities

Before Election Day			
Activity	Details	Time	Location
<b>Voter Outreach Presentations</b>	Contact Matthew Selby (415) 554-4376 for details, time, and location.		
<b>Logic and Accuracy Testing</b>	Testing of ImageCast Central (ICC) Scanners and other media devices	August 4–12, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.	City Hall, Rm 48
	Testing of ImageCast Evolution Ballot-Scanning Machines	August 17–27, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.	Warehouse, Pier 31
	Testing of ImageCast X Ballot-Marking Devices	August 9–16, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.	Warehouse, Pier 31
<b>Poll Worker and Field Support Training</b>	Contact Matthew Selby (415) 554-4376 for details, time, and location.		
<b>Voting Center</b>	Any voter may vote or drop off their vote-by-mail ballot at the City Hall Voting Center beginning 29 days before the election.	August 16– September 14, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. September 4–5 and September 11–12, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.	City Hall, in front of Rm 48
<b>Vote-by-Mail Ballot Processing</b>	Sorting, scanning, and verifying signatures on 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 August 3, following transmission of ballots to military and overseas voters, until complete	City Hall, Rm 48
	Opening of vote-by-mail ballot envelopes, ballot extraction, ballot scanning in preparation for tabulation. <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	August 23 until complete	City Hall, Rm 48
	For activity on a specific day, contact Matthew Selby (415) 554-4376.		
<b>Ballot Adjudication and Remake</b>	When ballots contain valid votes, including cases in which a ballot has been irregularly marked, torn, bent, or otherwise damaged and unreadable, the Department reviews and adjudicates these ballots. When necessary, ballot remake is conducted.	August 23 until complete	City Hall, Rm 48
<b>Ballot Drop-Off Stations</b>	Any voter may return their vote-by-mail ballot to any of San Francisco's official ballot drop-off stations.	September 11–12, 10 a.m.–4 p.m. September 13, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.	For locations, visit <a href="https://sfelections.org/balldropoff">sfelections.org/balldropoff</a>
<b>Mock Election Day Support Center</b>	An internal 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>	September 11, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	Rm adjacent to City Hall café



## On Election Day

Activity	Details	Time	Location
<b>Voting Center / Polling Places</b>	The City Hall Voting Center and 588 polling places are open to local voters who wish to register to vote or vote in person, use accessible voting equipment, receive personal assistance, or return their vote-by-mail ballots.	Election Day, September 14, 7 a.m.–8 p.m.	For locations, visit <a href="https://sfelections.org/MyVotingLocation">sfelections.org/MyVotingLocation</a>
<b>Ballot-Drop Off Stations</b>	Any voter may return their vote-by-mail ballot to any of San Francisco’s official ballot drop-off stations.	Election Day, September 14, 7 a.m.–8 p.m.	For locations, visit <a href="https://sfelections.org/balldropoff">sfelections.org/balldropoff</a>
<b>Election Day Support Center</b>	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	Rm adjacent to City Hall café
<b>Processing Center</b>	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, Pier 31
<b>Data Collection Center</b>	Receives memory cards from polling places.	Begins after 8 p.m. and continues until all polling place memory cards have been received	City Hall, McAllister St. entrance
<b>Election Night Results Reporting</b>	Results are available on <a href="https://sfelections.org/results">sfelections.org/results</a> , San Francisco Government Television – SFGTV, Channel 26	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, North Light Court

## After Election Day

Activity	Details	Time	Location
<b>Ballot Processing and Tabulation</b>	Ballots include vote-by-mail ballots that voters returned to polling places and drop-off stations, and that the Department received in the mail within seven 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 (no later than October 14)	City Hall, Rm 48
<b>Results Reporting after Election Night</b>	The Department holds press briefings and posts updated results on its website on any day ballots are tabulated.	Daily at approximately 4 p.m.	In front of Rm 48 and on <a href="https://sfelections.org/results">sfelections.org/results</a>
<b>Canvass</b>	An internal audit of the election to ensure the accuracy of results.	September 16, 10 a.m.–7 p.m. beginning September 17, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. except Sundays and holidays	Warehouse, at Pier 31
<b>1% Manual Tallies</b>	Random selection of precincts and batches for manual tallies. <i>(Streamed on <a href="https://sfelections.org/live">sfelections.org/live</a>)</i>	September 21, 11 a.m.	City Hall, Rm 48