



**Watch our
video for
more on
the post-
election
process!**

How are votes counted in North Carolina?

Where do our election results come from? It's more important than ever that North Carolinians understand this process. Election disinformation and misinformation are taking root. This growing cynicism is a form of voter suppression. Democracy simply cannot function in the absence of voter confidence. The truth is: Many safeguards are in place to ensure that voters' voices are heard, and that our elections are free and fair. Our votes are tabulated during a transparent public process.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Can I request an absentee ballot and then decide not to use it?

Yes. Your voter record does not show that you have requested an absentee ballot, so none of the polling place workers will know that you have received a ballot when you show up to vote in person. You do not need to get permission to vote in person. Once you vote in person, simply destroy that unused absentee ballot.

What if someone else finds a voter's unmarked absentee-by-mail ballot?

All absentee ballots that are mailed are accompanied by an envelope that matches that particular ballot. Your absentee ballot can only be returned in that envelope. If someone were to try and impersonate you and complete the container envelope (with two witnesses and your signature) along with your ballot, the election reconciliation process would know that two people tried to vote in your name. This would be investigated as a criminal case, as a felony, by law enforcement.



KEY DATES

GENERAL ELECTION 2022

Sept. 9: Absentee-by-mail ballots ready to be sent to voters.

Oct. 14: Civilian voter registration deadline. After this point, only same-day registration during one-stop early voting is available.

Oct. 20: One-stop, in-person early voting period begins.

Nov. 1: Deadline for civilians to submit an absentee ballot request form.

Nov. 5: One-stop, in-person early voting period ends at 3 pm

Nov. 8: Election Day and civilian absentee ballot return deadline.

LEARN MORE

League of Women Voters of North Carolina

my.lww.org/north-carolina-state

State Board of Elections

NCSBE.gov

BallotTrax

northcarolina.ballottrax.net/voter

Election Protection Hotline

866-OUR-VOTE

What is the canvass?

Canvass is the normal reconciliation process for all elections, taking place over 10 days following the closing of the polls on election day. This process is open to the public, and we encourage you to attend the meetings at your county Board of Elections. After canvass, the State Board of Elections certifies all election contests, and the winners are officially known.

Is there evidence of voting machines being hacked in North Carolina?

No. At polling locations, no computers, tabulators, or other voting machines are connected to the Internet. Your votes are recorded directly from your ballot and do not go through an Internet connection. Most counties in NC use hand-marked paper ballots. The few counties that are not using hand-marked paper ballots are using electronic voting machines that produce a paper version of the marked ballot. These paper ballots can be audited and recounted after the election if there are questions or concerns.

How is it possible that so many results are released early on election night?

If you vote by absentee-by-mail or at an early voting site, your ballot is scanned into the tabulator and stored until after the election in a secure location, following all NC State Board of Elections protocols.

The tabulator, both for absentee-by-mail ballots and early voting ballots, keeps a record of the votes marked on the ballot. On election night (at 7:30 pm or shortly thereafter), the results of the tabulator are run, and the votes are reported to the public. No results are allowed to be released until after all voting is completed.





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2022 NC GENERAL ELECTION – CANVASS GUIDE FOR LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS MEMBERS/PUBLIC OBSERVERS

What is Canvass? The term "Canvass" means the entire process of determining that the votes have been counted and tabulated correctly, culminating in the authentication of the official election results. ([NC 163-182.5](#))

According to the NC State Board of Elections (NCSBE) procedures, a county board of elections (CBOE) Canvass covers the following:


- Sample Audit – test to ensure voting equipment read the voter's choices accurately.
- Absentee Ballot Review/Count – pertaining to ballots received after and not processed before Election Day.
- Provisional Ballot Review/Count – ballots will have a preliminary review and are researched by CBOE staff to determine eligibility for counting.
- Election Day Reconciliation
- Challenges/Protests
- Close Contest Audit – also known as Recounts.

Canvass is the responsibility of CBOE members. All decisions are made by Board members.

SAMPLE AUDIT

The NCSBE selects two precincts or polling locations and a race for each county after Election Day for the audit. A team of two workers, one from each of the major parties, conducts a hand-to-eye count of the ballot to check that the count registered on the tabulator machine accurately reflects the voter's choice on their ballot. Some counties may use risk-limiting audits on sample batches of ballots.

ABSENTEE BALLOT REVIEW/COUNT

All absentee mail-in ballots must be received by Nov. 14, delayed three days because of the Veterans Day holiday ([Numbered Memo 2022-09](#)). All ballots must be postmarked on or before Nov. 8. These postmarks are likely to be an issue because at least 20-30% of ballots already received by CBOEs are coming in without a postmark. Some CBOEs may be willing to accept data made available through voters' use of BallotTrax, but there is no NCSBE guidance on that. 

More ballots with deficiencies will be presented at Canvass than during the prior Absentee Ballot Review meetings. There are limited options to cure ballots received after Election Day. All cure certificates must be received by 5 p.m. on the day of Canvass, Nov. 18 ([Numbered Memo 2021-03](#)). Remember: All absentee ballots that come through the Uniformed Service and Overseas Voter Portal and Visually Impaired Portal need to be replicated to be scanned and included with all the other ballots. Also, expect some mail-in ballots to arrive damaged and need to be replicated.

Observers should pay attention to, and note, the reasons for denying a ballot. Many numbered memos provide specific guidance on approving ballots, and newer board members and directors may not be familiar with all of them. To name a few: [NMs 2021-07 \(Notary Seals\)](#), [2021-03 \(Envelope issues, revised\)](#), [2020-29 \(Address issues on Envelope\)](#).

PROVISIONAL BALLOT REVIEW/COUNT

Voters must be offered a provisional ballot when their name does not appear in the poll book, when the voter questions the ballot style assigned to them, or when their eligibility to vote is questioned. Provisional voting is a fail-safe voting option so that a person can always cast a ballot when they present to vote. At Canvass, the provisional ballots are reviewed for eligibility and are counted by the Board of Elections.

Ballots are *approved*, *partially approved*, or *denied* by vote of the Board members. Observers should note the reasons for all ballot denials. The most common reason for denial is that the voter is not registered to vote in that county, but that determination is not always straightforward. Observers should make note of instances of voters who claim to have been registered at the same address and never moved. Also, please note the number of voters whose registration was not accepted due to failure of mail verification.

ELECTION DAY RECONCILIATION REVIEW

Election reconciliation takes place at every polling location at the close of voting. At Canvass, all reports are summarized and reviewed by the Board. All voted and unvoted ballots must match the initial ballot supply inventory. Any discrepancy is discussed. The Authorization To Vote forms and the ballot tabulator number must match, and all provisional, spoiled, and emergency bin ballots are counted. Any issues with observers, polling place difficulties, voter challenges, or other unusual events will be included in these reports.

There may be reports of duplicate ballots because of poll worker error or communication issues with the receipt of absentee ballots. Those ballots will be discussed, and the duplicate ballot will be removed from the final results count.

CHALLENGES/PROTESTS

Voter challenges and protests are extremely rare and are governed by complicated statutes and court orders. Should these occur during the Canvass, take careful notes.

CLOSE CONTEST AUDIT (RECOUNTS)

If the unofficial result of a contest/race is within 1% of the total votes cast, the candidate(s) may request a recount. For statewide races, the NCSBE makes this determination. The demand for a recount must be in writing and delivered to the NCSBE.