



DEBRA BOWEN

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Final California Election Results and Turnout Stats? Many Ballots Still to Be Processed by County Elections Officials

SACRAMENTO – Just as they do after every statewide election, California county elections officials are currently counting the hundreds of thousands of vote-by-mail, provisional and other ballots that are not counted on election day.

County elections officials have until July 4 to ensure every eligible ballot is counted accurately and certify final election results to the Secretary of State. Then the Secretary of State has until July 11 to review the materials, resolve any reporting discrepancies and compile the 58 county reports for complete election results.

In processing vote-by-mail ballots, elections officials must confirm each voter's registration status, verify each voter's signature on the vote-by-mail envelope, and ensure each person did not vote elsewhere in the same election. Other ballots that are processed after election day include provisional ballots (processed similar to vote-by-mail ballots), and ballots that are damaged or cannot be machine-read and must be remade by elections officials.

Depending on the volume of unprocessed ballots, it may take the full month for county elections officials to verify voter records and determine which ballots have been cast by eligible voters. While the Secretary cannot announce the winner of a contest before all ballots are counted, news media or campaigns sometimes choose to call an election sooner.

“With the popularity of voting by mail and the ability voters have to cast a provisional ballot to ensure they are not disenfranchised, county elections officials’ work continues for up to a month after election day,” said Secretary of State Debra Bowen, California’s chief elections official. “Accuracy is the most important element in democracy.”

As with past statewide elections, Secretary Bowen has asked all county elections officials to report the number of unprocessed ballots they have on hand so she can provide a statewide estimate to the public. The numbers of ballots left to count – as voluntarily reported by county elections officials – will be posted by June 6 at vote.sos.ca.gov/unprocessed-ballots-status. The website will be updated each time a county elections official provides an updated report.

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Many laws and procedures must be followed during this official canvass period before the election results can be certified. Among other things, county elections officials must:

- Audit all materials returned from polling places to ensure all ballots – voted, un-voted, spoiled, provisional, vote-by-mail, surrendered vote-by-mail – are accounted for.
- Ensure the signature on each vote-by-mail ballot envelope matches the signature on the voter's original voter registration application.
- Research all voters who cast provisional ballots to ensure each person was registered to vote and did not vote more than once.
- Remake ballots that machines cannot tabulate because of wrinkles, smudges or other damage.
- Hand-count votes for qualified write-in candidates.
- Sort all vote-by-mail ballots by precinct so they can be manually audited.
- Manually audit 100 percent of the ballots from one percent of the precincts in the county to ensure the results are accurate.
- Manually audit 100 percent of the voter verified paper audit trail to ensure votes cast on direct recording electronic machines were tabulated accurately.
- Audit all voting equipment to ensure it was properly secured and was not tampered with.

The Secretary of State will continue to update the election results website at vote.sos.ca.gov as county elections officials continue reporting results. County officials sometimes update their own websites before reporting to the Secretary of State. County contact information is at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_d.htm.

For more details on the election reporting process, visit vote.sos.ca.gov/frequently-asked-questions/#website.

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