



**Date:** November 18, 2022

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### NOVEMBER ELECTION 2022: WHERE WE STAND, WHAT'S NEXT:

We are we in what's called the "official canvas period." The "**semifinal** official canvas" of the vote happened when the polls closed on election day. That included tallying the early-returned vote-by-mail ballots and the ballots cast in each of the County's precincts on election day. The numbers posted late on election night were the vote-by-mail ballots that came in during the days prior to the election and all ballots cast at polling places by voters who surrendered their vote-by-mail ballots and cast theirs the traditional way.

The processing and counting that has happened since election day have been the approximately 60,000 Vote-By-Mail ballots received the day before, the day of and the days following election day. We have issued two updates in election numbers during this process.

After our last update on Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> we had to stop processing and counting Vote-By-Mail ballots to complete the mandated 1% manual tally to check the accuracy of our machine vote tallying system. This involves conducting a hand count of the ballots cast in one (1) percent of the precincts, chosen at random by the elections official.

We are now in the "official canvas". It is open to the public and will continue daily until completed. Though California Election code says that Saturday, Sundays and holidays are exceptions, we have counted on holidays and weekends. The official canvass must be complete no later than December 8<sup>th</sup>.

The official canvass includes the following processes:

- **Vote by Mail Ballots:** Processing Vote-By-Mail ballots has multiple steps. Please keep in mind that we have received approximately 60,000 Vote-By-Mail ballots.
  - **First Step –Ballot Sortation and Signature Verification**
    - Returned vote by mail ballot envelopes are scanned on a sorter which endorses the envelope. Envelopes that are unable to be read are out sorted and handled manually.
    - Scanned envelopes are stored unopened in trays until they are verified.

- All scanned envelope images are imported into the Election Management System, where staff that have been trained on the criteria in state regulations for verifying signatures, review the signatures to determine if they match each voter's signature on file.
  - If the staff determines the signatures do not match, the ballot envelope will be challenged as "In-Review".
  - Any ballot envelopes flagged as "In-Review" will be provided to a supervisor for further inspection. If it is still determined that the signature does not match, the challenge code will be updated to "Sig Non-Match" and the elections office will outreach the voter, who will then have until 5:00 pm two days prior to the certification of the election to submit a Signature Verification Statement. If a Signature Verification Statement is received timely with a matching signature, then the ballot can be counted. If no curing statement is returned, the ballot status will remain challenged.
- **Second Step – Extraction**
    - "Good" ballots are manually extracted from their return envelopes. The emptied envelopes are boxed for storage, and the ballots are kept in their tray to be examined for damage and prepared for counting.
- **Third Step – Flattening and Inspection**
    - A batch of ballots (total of 50 ballots makes a batch) is given to a staff member who inspects the ballots for any tears, identifying marks such as signatures or initials, red ink and pencil. The staff member also flattens the ballot by back bending the ballot at the folds and faces the ballot the same direction. Ballots that need to be remade so that they can be read by the tabulator, are given to the lead staff for replacement ballots so that the number of ballots in a batch remains at 50.
- **Fourth Step – Remaking Ballots (Duplication)**
    - For ballots that need to be duplicated there will be three staff members who will participate as the Duplication Board. One board member will hold the original ballot and call out every vote that the voter had marked. Another board member will mark the same vote choice on a "new" ballot. The final board member will observe the original vote that was called and the corresponding "new" vote choice that is made to ensure that they match. These ballots will then be bundled in batches of 50 and will be prepared for tabulation.
- **Postmarked Vote by Mail Ballots:** Under California law, ballots may be counted even if they arrive after Election Day, as long as they are received by mail no later than 7 days after the election and are postmarked on or before Election Day. These ballots will be processed just like

the other Vote By Mail ballots.

- **One Percent Manual Tally**

- “One percent manual tally” is the public process of manually tallying votes in 1 percent of the precincts, selected at random by the elections official, and in one precinct for each race not included in the randomly selected precincts. This procedure is conducted publicly during the official canvass to verify the accuracy of the automated count.
- The County of San Luis Obispo performs a two-part public manual tally, which includes both of the following:
  - (a) A public manual tally of the ballots canvassed in the semifinal official canvass, not including vote by mail or provisional ballots, cast in 1 percent of the precincts chosen at random by the elections official.
  - (b) A public manual tally of not less than 1 percent of the vote by mail ballots canvassed in the semifinal official canvass. Batches of vote by mail ballots shall be chosen at random by the elections official.
- In addition to the 1 percent manual tally of the Vote By Mail ballots, the elections official shall, for each race not included in the initial 1 percent manual tally of vote by mail ballots, count one additional batch of vote by mail ballots. The manual tally shall apply only to the race not previously counted.

- **Conditional Voter Registration and Provisional Ballots:** These are the last ballots counted because they must be researched and verified; it may take a few weeks, but every valid vote will be counted. Voters that did not register by the close of registration have the option to register and vote a Conditional Voter Registration Provisional Ballot. As these voters registered after the Rosters are printed, they are processed and counted at the end of the canvass period.

Provisional ballots are processed by checking the voter registration file to verify the voter’s eligibility to cast the ballot, confirming that the signature on the provisional ballot envelope matches the voter’s signature on their registration record, confirming the voter cast the ballot in the correct precinct, and confirming the voter has not returned a ballot by any other means in SLO County and any other County in the State of California. Once verified and approved for opening, the ballot is added to the official count.

With all of these processes left to do, we will certify the election, meaning finalize counting all the ballots, by the December 8, 2022, deadline.

Here is a simple breakdown of numbers **as of today**:

Number of SLO County Registered Voters: **182,291**

Vote By Mail Ballots Counted Prior to Election Day: **51,200**

Voters that voted at the polls on Election Day: **6,896**

Voters that voted provisionally: approx. **927**

Voters that returned their Vote-By-Mail ballot by mail or at an official ballot drop box, polling place or the election office the day before and on Election Day: approx. **59,812**

Total of Vote by Mail ballots counted since election day: **33,600**

Total of Vote by Mail ballots unprocessed: approx. **27,940**

All updates are posted on our website [www.slovote.com](http://www.slovote.com).

### **Extended Hours**

We will be conducting the observable processes explained above on Saturday, November 19, 2022, from 9:00am – 1:00pm. **PLEASE NOTE:** The County Government Building will be closed. Those that wish to observe will need to call 805-781-5228 that day so that a member of the Clerk-Recorder team can escort you in the building.

I hope you find this information helpful. Should there be any questions, please contact Elaina Cano, County Clerk-Recorder at [ecano@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:ecano@co.slo.ca.us).

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