



## VOTE BY MAIL PROCESSING

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Vote by Mail (VBM) Ballots are returned by mail, in-person to a secure official ballot drop box, office or at a polling location.

VBM Ballots are entered by the return location and indicate the date they were received. VBM Ballots go through a number of steps to be validated and prepared for counting.

### **First Step - Ballot Sortation and Signature Verification**

- 1) 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.
- 2) Scanned envelopes are stored unopened in trays until they are verified.
- 3) 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.
- 4) If the staff determines the signatures do not match, the ballot envelope will be challenged as "In-Review".
- 5) 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 a voter fails to sign their ballot return envelope, a challenge code of "No Signature" will be entered and the voter will be outreached to complete an Unsigned Ballot Statement which must be returned to the election's office no later than 5:00 pm two days prior to the certification of the election.

Ballots requiring either statement will remain challenged with the appropriate status until the curing statement has been received by our office and the ballot disposition is changed to "Good". If no curing statement is returned, the ballot status will remain challenged.



## **Second Step – Extraction**

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“Good” ballots are manually extracted from their return envelopes by batch. 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**

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A batch of ballots 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)**

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Three staff members 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.