



# Cochise County Elections Department

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Interim Director

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RE: Board of Supervisors Canvass of November 5, 2024, General Election - Special Meeting

Madam Chair and Members of the Board,

Before you is the canvass of the November 5, 2024, General Election. This election was conducted in accordance with statutory requirements and the procedures of the Elections Procedures Manual, 2023 edition. There were 82,242 registered voters in this election with a turnout of 59,501, or 72.35%.

Some abnormalities and incidents occurred, and corrections issued as noted below.

## 1. Abnormalities, Incidents and Corrections

- a. UOCAVA/SV USD Ballot Initiative Error: On September 25, 2024, Cochise County Elections announced the discovery of an error affecting the ballots that were mailed to voters under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) that reside in the Sierra Vista Unified School District Precinct (292 voters in total). Specifically, two local ballot initiatives were omitted from that district's UOCAVA printed ballots.
  - i. Impacted voters were notified and a new corrected ballot mailed. The Recorder's Office ensured that all returned ballots from these voters were held securely, and that only one ballot was counted for each affected voter. If both the incorrect and corrected ballots were returned, the corrected ballot was counted, and the incorrect ballot was not tallied.
- b. County Board of Supervisors District 2 Race Ballot Error: Precinct 50 (DO Grand) ballots had to be corrected after it was discovered the County Supervisor District 2 race was missing from ballots in this precinct.
  - i. In total, this precinct had 117 active voters/ 18 inactive voters.
  - ii. 78 voters in this precinct received early ballots and were mailed a new ballot along with directions on the process for voting the new ballot.
  - iii. 61 voted the ballot with Supervisor race.
  - iv. 17 voted the ballot without the Supervisor race.

- v. The Arizona Secretary of State's office performed a second L&A test on October 24, 2024, due to this error. The testing was successful with all votes accurately tabulated by all equipment.
- c. Tabulation Machine Zeroed Out: On November 4, 16,080 ballots were zeroed out from the tabulation machine due to a misunderstanding regarding how hesitation marks are processed by the machine. All the affected ballots were then re-tabulated.
- d. Election Day Wait Times: All Vote Centers opened promptly at 6:00 am and were closed once the final voter in line at 7:00 pm had an opportunity to vote. Overall, 13,009 voters came in-person to vote at the 18 Vote Centers on election day. Several Vote Centers experienced longer than normal waiting times with the longest reported wait of 2.5 hours. Elections phone bank staff kept a detailed log of wait times throughout the day and were able to direct callers to Vote Centers with shorter lines.
- e. Bomb Threat: Cochise County received a bomb threat on election night and had to evacuate the nearby buildings which included the Elections department, Records office and Vote Center 2 – Bisbee, Board of Supervisors Hearing Room. All elections equipment and ballots at the Vote Center were secured by law enforcement. The Elections Department was able to maintain contact with all other Vote Centers throughout the incident.
- f. DS-850 Tabulation Tray Error:
  - i. On November 7, the Cochise County DS-850 tabulation machine began to experience an intermittent tray failure. ES&S was immediately contacted, and an ES&S technician was dispatched to Cochise County. They were unable to pinpoint the failing component and started the process to send a loaner DS-850 to Cochise County.
  - ii. On November 8, the Cochise County DS-850 tray failure went from intermittent failures to full failure which allowed the technician to pinpoint the failed tray sensor and get it replaced.
  - iii. On November 9, the ES&S loaner machine arrived, was installed, and configured for Cochise County elections.
  - iv. On November 10, the loaner machine successfully passed the Secretary of State L&A test.
- g. Power Outage: On November 13, Cochise County experienced an APS power outage that impacted Bisbee and Douglas. Counting was delayed until power was restored.
- h. Hand Count Audit: On November 10, the hand count was completed. The results of the Hand Count Audit were compared to the machine-determined results, and discrepancies found were within the acceptable margin of error. On November 19, it

was discovered that the number of early votes hand counted should have been 425 instead of 200.

## 2. Other Areas of Note

- a. Final unofficial results were posted at 3:29 pm on November 17, 2024, with all official write-in candidates assigned.
- b. Blank Ballot Numbers: The results statistics show 611 blank ballots. The early ballots consisted of two sheets. The high number of blank ballots reflects voters that left the second sheet blank.
- c. Post L&A Test: The Post L&A test was performed on November 17, 2024, and produced the same results as the Pre-L&A test performed on October 2, 2024.
- d. County Employees Used as Election Workers: Below is a tally of additional county employees utilized to administer the election.
  - i. 6 for delivery/pickup of voting equipment and U-Haul trucks
  - ii. 12 troubleshooters on election day
  - iii. 11 phone bank responders on election day. The phone bank opened at approximately 4:25 am on election morning and ran through 11:00 pm with approximately 191 calls, which was typical on election day.
  - iv. 18 as couriers
  - v. 8 worked at Vote Centers as poll workers
  - vi. 8 assisted with Early Board
- e. Jurisdictional Elections: The Elections department conducted jurisdictional elections for Council Members for Huachuca City and Sierra Vista. Sierra Vista and Douglas had propositions for their General Plan. Huachuca City and Tombstone had an Alternative Expenditure Limitation Proposition. The department also conducted elections for four Special Districts: Mescal - J6 Fire, San Simon Fire, San Simon Water, and Pomerene Water Districts. In addition, the department conducted elections for Cochise College District 5, and Benson, San Simon and Sierra Vista Unified School Districts.
- f. Early Board: Elections received 34,099 early ballots prior to election day. The Early Board convened on October 15, 2024, for training and to begin processing ballots received from the County Recorder's Office. They were excused November 16, 2024.
- g. Early Voting and Provisional Ballots Activity from the Recorder's Office:
  - i. 58,497 voters were mailed an early ballot at their request or through the Active Early Voting List (AEVL).

- ii. 3,516 early ballots were dropped off on election day at the Vote Centers.
- iii. The Recorder's Office utilized 5 drop box locations: Bisbee, Benson, Douglas, Willcox, and Sierra Vista County Service Centers. These boxes were available during normal business hours only. In addition, the Recorder's Office was open two Saturdays at two locations for in-person early voting. 12,262 ballots were dropped off.
- iv. 4,036 people voted in-person at the Recorder's Office from October 9 through November 4.
- v. 79 people utilized Emergency Voting on Monday, November 4 at the Recorder's Office.
- vi. 651 provisional ballots were cast and 328 were accepted by the Recorder.
- h. Six poll worker training classes were held, and 220 poll workers trained from October 16 - 23 using a mock election model.

### **3. Recommendations for Improvement in Future Elections**

- a. Purchase a new tabulation machine to improve redundancy in the event of a tabulator failure.
- b. Improve the process for proofing ballots prior to printing.
  - i. One candidate recommended having the candidates as part of the review process.
  - ii. Emphasize to special districts and municipalities their role in the proofing process.
- c. Increase the number of Early Board members to account for an increase in early voter turnout.
  - i. The lack of early board members impacted the pace for preparing early ballots for tabulation.
  - ii. Assign and fully train several Cochise County employees as Early Board alternates. This will allow the elections department to quickly add to the early board when it is needed.
- d. Improve the physical layout of the elections department.
  - i. The existing space can be more efficiently utilized. Plans should modify the currently unused public facing front area into the tabulation room with an observation space. This will allow observers to see the process directly rather than through monitors.

- ii. Moving the tabulators will also provide space in the elections warehouse to allow for separate cages for ballots in various stages of processing. This will create a more streamlined and secure process.

It takes a huge team effort in ensuring that all elections are conducted securely, accurately, fairly, and efficiently for voters because there are so many moving parts. There are many rules and procedures that must be followed. Everyone wants results on election night, which is important, but it is also important that every eligible vote be processed and counted.

I believe this election was conducted within the legal requirements and the results should be certified by this Board of Supervisors.

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