

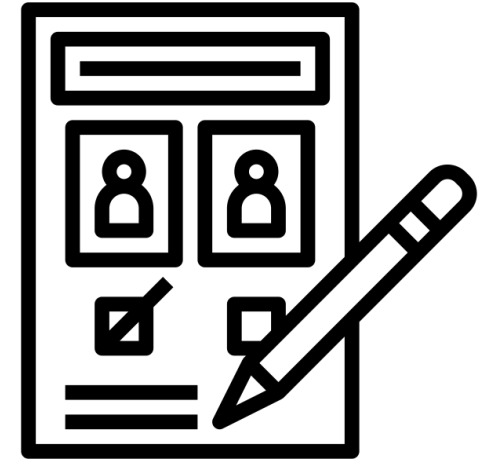
Proofing and Testing the Ballot

Lance Gossen and Debbie Abrego



Proofing Is Vital

- Ballot proofing is the process for ensuring accurate ballots.
- Any errors **must** be corrected before the electronic ballot is locked down or paper ballot is sent to the printer.
 - It's one of the most important things to complete in the election process.
- Take part in the proofing process whether you are conducting your own election or contracted with the county.



Remember: Getting it right is more important than being fast.



Failing to Proof Is Costly

ELECTION

6,000 [REDACTED] getting corrected mail ballots after error discovered

VOTE TEXAS

Processing error sends multiple ballots to hundreds of [REDACTED] County voters

[REDACTED] said that only the first ballot returned by voters will be counted. Any duplicate ballots that are received are null and void.

POLITICS

Election worker fired over mistake on nearly 900 ballots in [REDACTED] County

A review by the county showed that nearly 900 ballots were incorrectly programmed.

NEWS

Texas ballots accidentally feature Chilean flag

ELECTIONS

[REDACTED] County officials say some voters were given ballot for wrong precinct

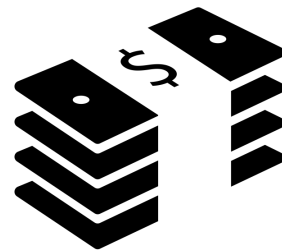
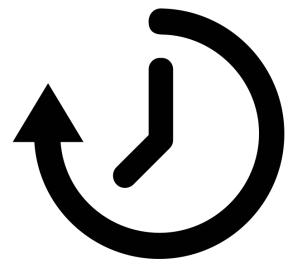
[REDACTED] County election administrator [REDACTED] said his office became aware of the issue in the second week of early voting.

Man receives City of [REDACTED] ballot while voting in [REDACTED]



Significant Costs

- Time to correct mistakes
 - Certified write-in candidates
- Reprogram and retest electronic voting system equipment
- Costs to reprint and mail corrected ballots, inserts, and destroying incorrect ballots
- Labor to remake ballots if voters submit uncorrected ballots
- Reduces voter confidence
- Damages election officials' reputations
- Potential legal challenges



What Should You Proof?*

- Ballot styles for proper district and precinct association
- Instructions
- Position on the ballot (federal, state, county, city, and district)
- Order of names on the ballot (drawing)
- Candidate names and spellings
- Ballot audio and phonetic pronunciations
- Ballot measure text
- List of certified write-in candidates
- Translations



*List is not exhaustive

When Should You Proof?

Paper Ballot

- When the list of candidates or measures is assembled after the ballot drawing
- After the vendor sends the electronic/paper proof
- Before the information is submitted to the ballot printer
- After the ballot proof is created by the printer
- After the official ballots are received
- Before BBM are sent to voters
- Before sample ballots are sent to polling locations

Electronic Ballot

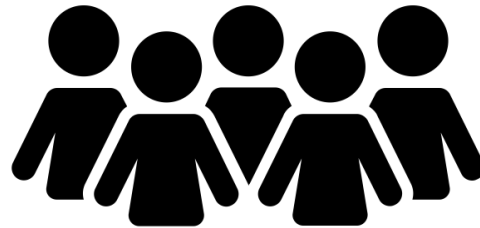
- When the list of candidates or measures is assembled after the ballot drawing
- After the ballot is programmed into the electronic system
- After the vendor sends the electronic proof
- During a proofing L&A pretest before the public L&A test
- Before BBM are sent to voters
- Before sample ballots are sent to polling locations



Who Should Proof?

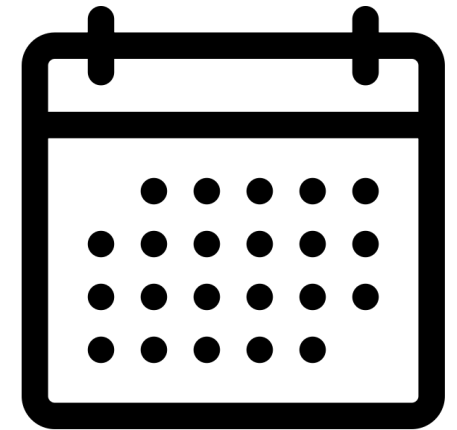
- Multiple people should review the ballot:
 - Election staff
 - Entity or political subdivision staff
 - Vendors
 - Language experts
 - Candidates and political parties

Best Practice: Require ballot approval in writing.



Set Deadlines

- Ballots must be prepared, finalized, and tested in time for mail ballots to be mailed in compliance with Section 86.004 of the Texas Election Code, UOCAVA, and the MOVE Act.
- You should create and share a calendar with deadlines.
 - Incorporate the Election Law Calendar.



Remember: The proofing process may involve multiple rounds.



Ballot Corrections

- A ballot correction is necessary when the error(s) on the ballot have the potential to affect one or more choices the voter will make in a given election.
 - Many situations that involve a correction will be fact-specific.
- Ensure redistricting is complete and all precincts and ballot styles are provided before programming takes place.
 - **If contracting with the county**, work closely with your county elections officer.
 - **If running your own election**, work with the county voter registrar.



Correction Process

Notice of Ballot Correction 3-10 (52.0061)

- Must be filed with the Secretary of State **no later** than 24 hours after the authority's determination to reprint the ballots.

3-10
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Section 52.0061, Texas Election Code
9/2023

NOTICE OF BALLOT CORRECTION

To: Secretary of State

I, _____, the authority responsible for having the official
(printed name of authority)
ballots printed for the _____ Election, to be held
(name of election)
on ____/____/____, have determined that the official ballots must be reprinted
to correct a defect in the original ballots. I understand that failure to deliver this notice to
the Secretary of State within 24 hours after making the determination to reprint the official
ballots is a Class A Misdemeanor.

Please explain the nature of the correction to be made

Give name, address and telephone number of the vendor who will reprint the ballots

Signature of Authority Responsible for Ordering Ballots

Printed Name of Authority Responsible for Ordering Ballots

Name of Political Subdivision

Step 1



Correction Process

Notice of Destruction of Ballots 3-11 (52.0064)

- Informs the public that ballots will be destroyed.
- Anyone can be present when the incorrect ballots are destroyed.

3-11
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Section 52.0064, Texas Election Code
9/2023

NOTICE OF DESTRUCTION OF BALLOTS

To the Registered Voters of _____
(name of political subdivision)

New ballots have been prepared for the _____
(name of election)

Election to correct a mistake on the original ballots. The original election ballots prepared for the _____ Election will be destroyed on _____ at _____ at _____.
(date) (hour) (location)

Any interested person may be present at the destruction of the ballots.

Signature of Authority Responsible for Preparing Ballots

Date

AVISO DE LA DESTRUCCIÓN DE BOLETAS

A los Votantes Registrados de _____
(nombre de subdivisión política)

Con el fin de corregir un error sobre las boletas originales, se han preparado boletas nuevas para la Elección _____
(nombre de la elección)

Las boletas originales que fueron preparadas para la Elección _____ estarán destruidas el _____ a la(s) _____ en _____.
(fecha) (hora) (ubicación)

Cualesquier persona interesada podrá estar presente durante la destrucción de las boletas.

Firma de la Autoridad Encargada de Preparar las Boletas

Fecha

Print Reset

Step 2



Correction Process

Record of Ballot Destruction 3-12 (52.0064)

- Accounts for all ballots that were destroyed.
- Form must be kept for at least 22 months after election day.



3-12
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Section 52.0064, Texas Election Code
9/2023

RECORD OF BALLOT DESTRUCTION

I, _____, the authority responsible for preparing the official ballots for the _____ Election to be held on _____, affirm that the following serial range of ballots was destroyed after new ballots were printed.

Total Number of Ballots Originally Ordered	_____
Number of Ballots Distributed Prior to Destruction	_____
Total Number of Ballots Destroyed	_____

Ranges of Serial Numbers of Ballots Destroyed	
From: _____	To: _____
From: _____	To: _____
From: _____	To: _____
From: _____	To: _____

Signature of Authority Responsible for Preparing Ballots

Printed Name of Authority Responsible for Preparing Ballots

Date / / _____



Correction Process

Notice of Ballot Reprint Order 3-13 (52.0062, 52.0063)

- Notifies the Secretary of State that ballots will be reprinted due to error(s) in the original ballot.

3-13
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Sections 52.0062, 52.0063, Texas Election Code
90093

NOTICE OF BALLOT REPRINT ORDER

To: Secretary of State

Notice is hereby given that the company stated below has been sent a request to reprint the official ballots for _____ Election to correct a defect in the originally printed ballots. (name of election)

Give name, address and telephone number of the person ordering the corrected ballots.

Please explain the nature of the correction to be made.

Give name, address and telephone number of the vendor who will reprint the ballots.

The election is to be held on ____/____/____ and will be conducted in _____. (date) (name of County)

The corrected ballots will be shipped/mailed/delivered to the requestor on _____. (date)

I understand that failure to deliver this notice not later than 48 hours after receiving the print request is a Class A misdemeanor.

Signature of Vendor's Representative _____

Printed Name of Vendor's Representative _____

Print Reset

Step 4



Correction Process

Notice of Correction to Ballot by Mail 3-14 (86.009(b))

- Notifies the voter of a correction to the original ballot that was sent. This letter is included with the corrected ballot.



3-14
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Section 86.009(b), Texas Election Code
9/2023

NOTICE OF CORRECTION TO BALLOT BY MAIL

I have enclosed for your use a corrected mail ballot. The original ballot mailed to you has been changed in a way that affects the choices of candidates for whom you may vote.

If you have not marked and mailed your original ballot, please destroy it and the carrier envelope provided to you for its return.

If you have already marked and mailed your original ballot, please mark and mail the corrected ballot. Your corrected ballot will be counted if it is received by the early voting clerk prior to 7:00 p.m. on election day. If you are voting from outside the United States, the late counting ballot rules may apply to you. Otherwise, your original ballot will be counted.

If you have any questions about the corrected voting materials, please contact me at:

(phone number)

Early Voting Clerk

Date _____

AVISO DE UNA CORRECCION SOBRE LA BOLETA VOTADA POR CORREO

Incluyo una boleta corregida que usted podrá usar para votar adelantada. La primera boleta que le enviamos por correo se ha alterado de manera que afecta la selección de los candidatos por los cuales puede votar.

Si usted todavía no ha marcado y enviado la primera boleta, favor de destruir esa boleta con el sobre cargador que le enviamos para que devolviera su boleta.

Si usted ya marcó y envió la primera boleta, favor de marcar y enviar por correo la boleta corregida. Se contará su boleta corregida si el secretario de la votación adelantada la recibe antes de las 7 de la noche el día de la elección. Si esto votando fuera de los Estados Unidos las reglas de contar boletas pueden aplicar a Usted. Si no, se contará su primera boleta.

*Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre los materiales electorales con correcciones, favor de comunicarse conmigo al: _____
(número de teléfono)*

Secretario(a) de la Votación Adelantada

Fecha _____



Correction Process

List of Voters Mailed a Corrected Ballot 3-15 (86.009(d))

- Lists the name, address, and mailing date for voters sent corrected ballots.
- Form must be kept for at least 22 months after election day.

3-15
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Section 86.009(d), Texas Election Code
9/2023

LIST OF VOTERS MAILED A CORRECTED BALLOT

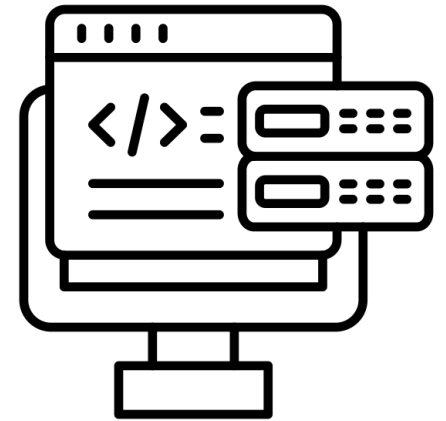
Name of Voter	Address Corrected Ballot was mailed to:	Date Mailed
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Step 6



Testing Your Voting System

1. Hardware Diagnostic Test (129.022)
2. Hash Validation/Logic and Accuracy Test (129.023)
3. Testing of Tabulation Equipment (127.091)
 - Three tests are required for those that use a Central Counting Station
4. Post-Election Audit (Partial Manual Count) (127.201)



Logic and Accuracy Testing

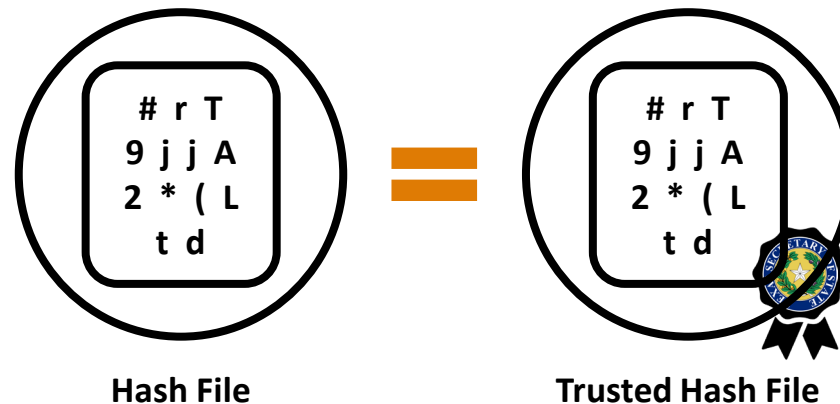
- Provides you an opportunity to identify and correct errors in ballot format and layout.
- Ensures you have correct paper stock and that memory cards are properly wiped of data and reformatted for the current election.
- Demonstrates to voters, media, candidates, and political parties that the county or political subdivision is prepared for the election and voting system counting equipment has been tested.

Remember: If there are any changes to the ballot or voting equipment, the L&A test must be repeated until successful.



What Is Hash Validation?

- Hash validation is the process for verifying the integrity of the source code in a specific voting system.
- Both the hash generated by your voting system and the trusted hashes provided by the Secretary of State or EAC (Election Assistance Commission) must be identical.



Obtaining Trusted Hashes

- If upgrading or making changes to your voting system, request the trusted hashes. If there are no changes to your voting system, you can use the same trusted hashes from the initial hash request.
- Email electionsecurity@sos.texas.gov to request the files from our office. Please include:
 - Your entity or political subdivision name
 - Voting system vendor (Hart or ES&S)
 - Vendor specific software version, e.g., Verity 2.X or ESS 6.X.X.X

Note: The Elections Division keeps tracks of all hash requests.



Hash Validation Process

1. Download the encrypted, password protected folder to a computer or external storage device. Enter the password to access the trusted hashes.
2. Generate hash values provided from your voting system.
3. Compare both sets of hashes through either a visual comparison or using a comparison tool.

Remember: You are not required to generate hashes from every individual voting device, but you are required to perform a hash validation of a representative sample of your voting system equipment.



Testing ePollbooks

- Prepare ePollbooks for the current election.
- Test the connectivity.
- Test check-in activity workflows.
- Ensure the accuracy of the voter data on each device.
 - Verify the correct ballot style is issued.
- Clear the test data.

**Remember: ePollbooks should be tested during L&A.
Don't make it an afterthought.**



Testing BBM

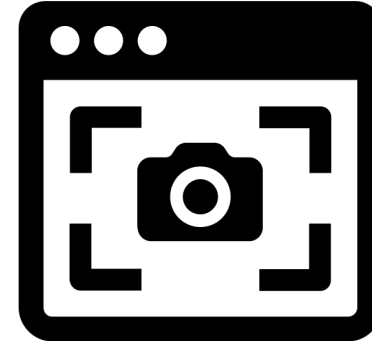
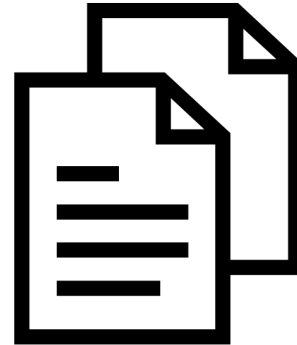
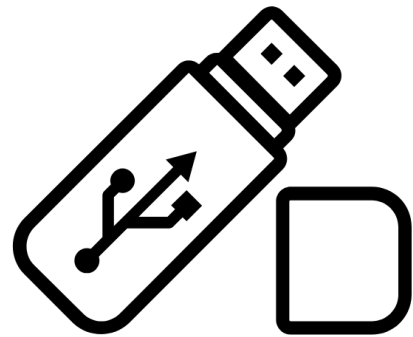
- Ballots should be prepared, finalized, and tested in time for mail ballots to be mailed in compliance with Sec. 86.004 of the Texas Election Code, UOCAVA, and the MOVE Act.

The collage displays several types of ballot materials:

- Travis County Joint General and Special Elections:** A ballot for the date of May 4, 2024, featuring various contests such as City of Leander, City of Lakeway, and City of Round Rock.
- Sample Ballot (County of Masonry):** A ballot for the date of May 4, 2024, with contests including the City of Round Rock Proposition A and the Board of Trustees.
- Official Election Mail Envelope:** A carrier envelope for an early voting ballot, including instructions for voters and return addresses, and a QR code for more information.

Records Retention

- All test materials, including results of the hash validation, should remain sealed by election officials for at least 22 months after election day.



Label for Records Retention

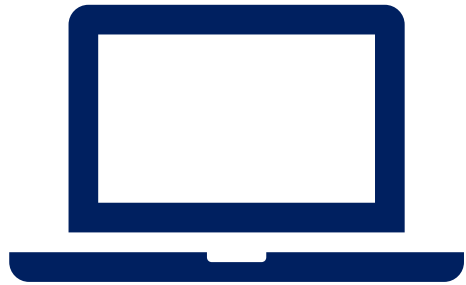
Election Name: _____
Box # _____ of _____
Contents:

Prepared by: _____ Election Date: _____
Printed Name
Prepared by: _____ Destruction Date: _____
Printed Name

Exemplar



Available Support



WEBINARS



TRAINING



RESOURCES

ELECTIONS DIVISION
elections@sos.texas.gov
800-252-8683
ELECTION SECURITY TRAINERS
electionsecurity@sos.texas.gov

