



Kaufman County Elections Department

Central Count Station Plan

PURPOSE

Section 127.007 of the Texas Election Code requires the Manager of the central counting station (“CCS”) to “establish and implement a written plan for the orderly operation of the central counting station.” this plan is to be made available to the public on request not later than 5 p.m. on the fifth day before the date of the election. Section 127.007(b) provides that a CCS plan "must address the process for comparing the number of voters who signed the combination form with the number of votes cast for an entire election."

LOCATION

The Kaufman County Central Counting Station will be located at Kaufman County Elections Dept, 3001 S. Washington St., Kaufman, Texas 75142.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following are the roles and responsibilities inside the Central Counting Station, as contained in Sections 127.002-127.006 of the Texas Election Code:

- The Election Administrator (Tandi Smith) will serve as the Central Counting Station Manager to manage the overall administration of the Central Counting Station and the supervision of personnel.
- The Chief Assistant (Lauren Loftin) will serve as the Tabulation Supervisor to operate the automatic tabulating equipment.
- The following personnel will serve as the Assistant Tabulation Supervisors to assist the Tabulation Supervisor: Celeste Franco, Mindy Putman-Neely, employees of ES&S, and other qualified employees (as needed).
- The Presiding Judge (Leah Phillips) will serve to maintain order at the Central Counting Station, administer oaths, and receive ballots to be counted.
- The Alternate Presiding Judge (Bob Brown) serves in the capacity of the presiding judge if the presiding judge is absent. Otherwise, the alternate judge performs the duties assigned by the presiding judge.
- Central Counting Station Clerks may be appointed as needed by the Central Counting Station Manager and the Presiding Judges as outlined Section 127.006 of the Election Code. The clerks perform the duties assigned by the tabulation supervisor and/or the presiding judge. These duties include, but are not limited to, receiving of election media USBs from the regional site designee, duplicating ballots, and assisting with tabulation equipment.

CONVENING OF THE CENTRAL COUNT STATION

Section 87.0241 of the Texas Election Code dictates when an entity is permitted to count ballots.

The Central Counting Station will convene based on the size and type of election as determined by the Central Counting Station Manager and the Presiding Judges to count early voting ballots and provisional or late ballots as may be required.

The Central Counting Station may not begin the process to count early voting ballots until:

1. the polls open on election day; or
2. in an election conducted by an authority of a county with a population of 100,000 or more or conducted jointly with such a county, the end of the period for early voting by personal appearance.

The Central Counting Station will convene for the purpose of receiving, counting, and tabulating Early Voting Mail Ballots, Early Voting In-Person Ballots and Election Day Ballots for the 2023 Joint Election at the following times as needed.

- March 2, 2024 12 pm – until finished
- March 3, 2024, 12 pm – until finished (if necessary)
- March 5, 2024, 4 pm until finished
- March 12, 2023, 1pm until finished

In accordance with Section 127.093 of the Texas Election Code, the second test of tabulating equipment will be conducted prior to beginning the process to count early voting ballots.

The Central Counting Station will begin the process to reconcile all provisional ballots and accepted late ballots no later 10 days after the election.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS

Section 127.0015 of the Texas Election Code prescribes a required oath for all CCS personnel. The administration of oaths will take place prior to those individuals commencing any of their duties at the Central Counting Station.

The Oath for Early Voting Ballot Board and Central Counting Station Personnel (AW 8-3a Sec. 87.006, 127.0015) will be administered verbally to all members of the early voting ballot board and all personnel at the central counting station prior to the performance of any duties by the board or the central counting station.

"I swear (or affirm) that I will objectively work to be sure every eligible voter's vote is accepted and counted, and that only the ballots of those voters who violated the Texas Election Code will be rejected. I will make every effort to correctly reflect the voter's intent when it can be clearly determined. I will not work alone when ballots are present and will work only in the presence of a member of a political party different from my own. I will faithfully perform my duty as an officer of the election and guard the purity of the election."

BALLOT TABULATION

The files from the first Logic and Accuracy test conducted by Central Counting Station staff is used to test the accuracy of the Election Management System (EMS). A pre-determined results report is created.

1. A Zero Report is printed from the EMS.
2. The Media for a second Logic and Accuracy test is uploaded into the correct fields.
3. A Results Report is printed from the EMS.
4. The results from a pre-determined votes report and the EMS report are compared to determine if the test was successful and accurate.
5. The EMS is zeroed out and a Zero Report is printed.
6. The CCS tabulation supervisor verifies readiness for the official tabulation process to begin.
7. The presiding judge shall certify in writing that the 2nd test was successful and the date/hour the test was completed. (Sec.127.098(b))

EARLY VOTING MAIL BALLOTS / PROVISIONAL BALLOTS

The Ballot Board and Signature Verification Committees will process each mail ballot (Sec.87.041) and place them into transfer cases to be delivered to Central Counting Station (CCS) (Sec.87.101). CCS will do the following:

- Accept each transfer case, verify the *seal number* on the transfer case matches the seal number written on the paperwork, and sign the Ballot Board forms.
- Apply a Transfer Case Label to each transfer case and record on each label the Case number, date, and number of ballots in the case as shown on the Ballot Board paperwork.
- Break the seal on the transfer case and place the seal into the transfer case.
- Run the ballots on the DS200 machine, verify the total number of ballots being processed matches the Ballot Board paperwork, and write the number of ballots processed on the Transfer Case Label as the Number of ballots counted by CCS.
- Place the ballots back into the transfer case, re-seal the transfer case with a new seal, and write the new seal number on the Seal Roster.
- Save the DS200 results to a USB, fill out the USB label with the time, date, # of ballots saved, ballot type (Provisional or Mail) and transfer case number.
- Upload each DS200 USB into the Election Management System for Election Night Results

DUPLICATION OF BALLOTS

Certain ballots that are counted with automatic tabulating equipment may have to be duplicated if the ballot is damaged or cannot be read with the equipment.

1. The Ballot Board Presiding Judges, with any assistants they deemed necessary, will duplicate any damaged ballots in accordance with Section 127.126 of the Texas Election Code.
2. All duplication of ballots will be conducted with at least two members of differing political parties.
3. The Central Count Station Manager will print a new ballot for the exact precinct and ballot style as the irregularly marked ballot.
4. The Ballot Board will write (Duped) on the original ballot and write the new ballot serial number on the original ballot.
5. Ballot Board will write the original ballot serial number and the "Dup" on the new ballot.
6. Duplicate the original ballot to indicate the intent of the voter, using team of two BB staff.
7. Place the original ballot back into the transfer case, to be preserved with the other voted ballots in the same transfer case.
8. Place the new ballot on the DS450 machine to be processed.
9. Place the processed new ballot in that transfer case with the other ballots for the rest of the preservation period.

RESOLVING VOTER INTENT

At the direction of the Presiding Judge, EVBB members will resolve any voter intent questions on the ballots as they are duplicated or manually counted, as applicable.

1. Ballots that are not damaged will be resolved in the Central Count System upon successfully capturing the image of the ballot.
2. Ballots that are damaged and cannot be scanned by the Central Count System will be duplicated. Prior to duplicating the ballot, the Presiding Judge, or an appointed ballot board team, with members from differing parties, will determine the way the voter's intent was deciphered.

EARLY VOTING IN PERSON

- The Ballot Board reviews and confirms that EV Roster Forms, Daily Reports (DS200 Public Count), and Voter Registration Logs match.
- The Early Voting Presiding Election Officers or designee delivers the Early Voting location Election Media USB (in sealed pouch) to the Kaufman County Elections Office. This occurs on the last day of Early Voting.
- KCED staff verifies the Early Voting location Election Media USB is present and confirms the USBs are returned. These are locked in Ballot Storage area until the date and time for tabulation.
- At the time of tabulation, the CCS Manager and Tabulation Supervisor verify that the USB is present.
- CCS tabulation supervisor/assistant tabulation supervisors upload all Election Media USBs into the tabulation computer/central accumulator system.
- CCS tabulation supervisor verifies and documents that the *total number of votes* matches the *number of voters* on the reconciliation forms.
- All media bags will be secured and transferred to the ballot storage area for the remaining 60-day preservation period.

ELECTION DAY MEDIA

- Election Judge or designee delivers the Election Media USB (in sealed pouch), voted paper ballots (in sealed ballot box), and election supplies to the Kaufman County Elections Office.
- Intake personnel verify the vote center location information and take custody of Election Media USB, voted ballots, and election supplies.
- Kaufman County staff or designee verify the *total number of check-ins* matches the *number of*

voters on the combination form.

- Kaufman County staff or designee receive Election Media USBs (in sealed pouch) and deliver them to the Central Counting Station. Sheriff deputies take custody of the sealed ballot box and it is taken directly to the ballot storage area.
- CCS Manager and Tabulation Supervisor verify that the USB is present.
- CCS tabulation supervisor/assistant tabulation supervisors upload all Election Media USBs into the tabulation computer/central accumulator system.
- CCS tabulation supervisor verifies and documents that the *total number of votes* matches the *number of voters* on the combination form. This occurs after all Election Media USBs have been uploaded into the central accumulator system.
- All media bags will be secured and transferred to the ballot storage area for the remaining 60-day preservation period.

RECONCILIATION

The process for comparing the number of voters listed as having voted and the number of ballots cast is done in three ways:

1. Early Voting in Person - Compare the number of early voting check-ins from VoteSafe e-poll book, combination forms, and reconciliation logs, to the number of ballots cast.
2. Early Voting by Mail - Compare the number of ballots entered on the "Ballot Transmittal Form" from the early voting ballot board to the number of ballots counted. (87.021, 87.1221)
3. Election Day - Compare the number of election day check-ins from VoteSafe e-poll book, combination form, plus the spoiled ballot log, to the number of ballots cast. (127.007(b))

Additionally, in accordance with Texas Election Code Section 127.131 (f), the Presiding Judge of the central counting station shall provide and attest to a written reconciliation of votes and voters at the close of tabulation for election day and again after the central counting station meets for the last time to process late-arriving ballots by mail and provisional ballots using a form created and rules promulgated by the secretary of state to facilitate compliance with this subsection. Once completed, the form shall be posted on a website maintained by the county along with election returns and results.

PRINTING OF PRECINCT RETURNS AND ELECTION TOTALS

Under Section 127.127, the Tabulation Supervisor and the Tabulation Assistants are the only ones authorized to operate the automatic tabulating equipment or handle ballots that are automatically counted. After the counting of ballots (or accumulation of vote totals) has occurred, the Presiding Judge of the CCS is responsible for preparing the precinct election returns. The Presiding Judge is required to sign the precinct returns to certify their accuracy.

The printed "precinct by precinct" report will be adjusted to include any hand-counted ballots (if necessary) and constitutes our certified precinct returns. (Section 127.127(e)), Texas Election Code.

The unofficial election results shall be released as soon as available after the polls close. Alternatively, the Presiding Judge of the CCS, in cooperation with the Elections Administrator may withhold the release of unofficial results until the last voter has voted. (Section 121.1311, Texas Election Code).

Unofficial election results will be released via Kaufman County's Elections Department webpage, beginning no earlier than 7:00p.m. on Election Day. Election Day results will be released incrementally as processed through acceptance and tabulation until all results are in. (Section 121.1311, Texas Election Code).

REPORTING RESULTS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

For certain elections, including primary elections, the general election for state and county officers, and constitutional amendment elections, the SOS is required to tabulate the unofficial results statewide. (68.001,

Texas Election Code). This information can be reported to the SOS through an online portal established by the SOS or via telephone.

- The Tabulation Supervisor will prepare reports with the requested totals for the Secretary of State.
- The Election Administrator will report the totals to the Secretary of State using the SOS online portal {TEAM} or via telephone as appropriate.

POLL WATCHER RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Poll watchers are entitled to be present during the time the CCS has convened for the “purpose of processing or preparing to process election results and until the election officers complete their duties at the station.” (Sec. 33.055)

1. The poll watcher must deliver their certificate of appointment to the Presiding Judge of the CCS and the Presiding Judge must countersign their certificate.
2. Poll watcher(s) are permitted to stand or sit to observe the counting activities. The Presiding Judge may dictate where the poll watcher(s) may stand and/or sit in order to prevent interference with the duties of the Central Counting Station personnel while still being able to observe all activities.
3. All activities of poll watcher(s) shall comply with Sections 33.055, 33.056, 33.060 and the current Poll Watchers Guide issued by the Secretary of State.

RETENTION OF ELECTION MATERIALS

Records created as part of an election will be retained for twenty-two months. Electronic records shall be secured in a locked container sealed with one or more uniquely identified tamper- resistant or tamper-evident seals and logged.

SECURITY

A Licensed Peace Officer will be posted at the CCS as required (Section 127.1232(a), Texas Election Code).



Tandi Smith, CERA, CPL
Election Administrator