

Setting Up a Polling Location

35th Annual Election Law Seminar for Cities, Schools and Other Political Subdivisions

November 29th - December 1st 2023



During visits to multiple counties, our team of Election Security Trainers observed poll workers as they opened and closed polling locations.

Multiple layouts were observed as part of a project focused on how poll workers can effectively administer secure elections.

New laws have been enacted creating several requirements for setting up the polling place.



Outside Setup



- “Vote Here” signs
- Distance markers
- Curbside voting
- Door postings



- Signs can be laminated and attached to a pole and inserted into cones.
 - Weather-proof and clearly visible
- Consider making 100 ft. string to send out to measure the distance.



- All polling locations must provide curbside voting.
Sec. 64.009, Texas Election Code
- Signage requirements for curbside voting were changed effective June 18, 2023.
- New requirements include:
 - Designating an area, not smaller than the size of one parking space, for curbside voting.
 - The designated space may not be specifically designated for persons with disabilities.



Supplies:

- Clipboard
- Cart to hold supplies to take outside
- ePollbook
- Pens
- Ballot Stock
- Electrical Cords
- Umbrella

Forms:

- Combo Form, if applicable
- Statement of Residence
- Reasonable Impediment Declaration
- Oaths of Assistance and Interpreter
- List of Acceptable Forms of ID
- "I Voted" Stickers
- Information of Person that Provided Transportation to Seven or More Voters for Curbside Voting Form



The area for curbside voting must be clearly marked with a sign:

- Indicate that the space is reserved for a voter who is unable to enter the polling place; AND
- Display in large, easily readable font a phone number to **call or text** to request assistance from an election officer

OR

- Provide a button or intercom to request assistance from an election officer



Inside Setup



- Check-in station
- Voting booths
- Ballot box
- Signs and postings



The Lead Deputy Early Voting Clerk or the Election Day Judge should have a good view of the entire polling location at all times.

- It is their job to preserve order and maintain the polling place.
- Exercise efficient use of pollworkers, space and equipment.
- Promote safety and security of personnel, equipment and ballots.
 - The ballots, ballot boxes, and envelopes used for provisional ballots at a polling place shall be in plain view of at least one election officer from the time the polls open for voting until the precinct returns have been certified. (**Sec. 61.005, Texas Election Code**)

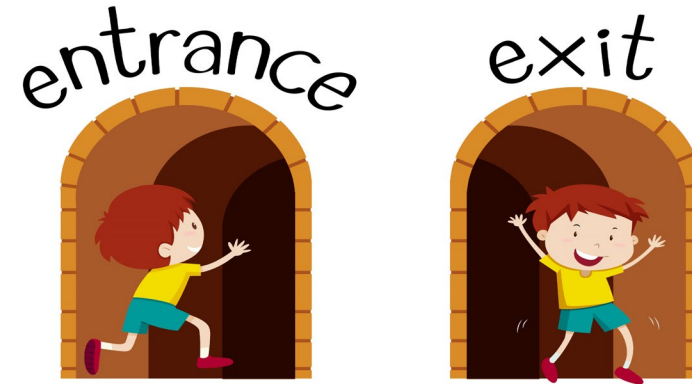


Ensure the layout allows poll workers to see the voting booths

- Monitoring the voting booths prevents fleeing voters
- Allows election workers to see if a voter needs help in the booth more readily
- Provides the voter with the best customer service



- Have a dedicated entrance and exit, if possible.
- Clearly state where the voter goes to check-in.
 - Consider signage that says, “Start Here.”
- Place the check-in station near the entrance.
 - Arrange the table so there can be a forms table aside from the main check-in station.
- Place the ballot box or scanner near the exit.
 - Post a dedicated clerk to ensure the ballots are being deposited before the voter exits.
- Place the accessible unit away from the check-in station to avoid unnecessary noise.
- Prepare a designated place or area for poll watchers, if needed.

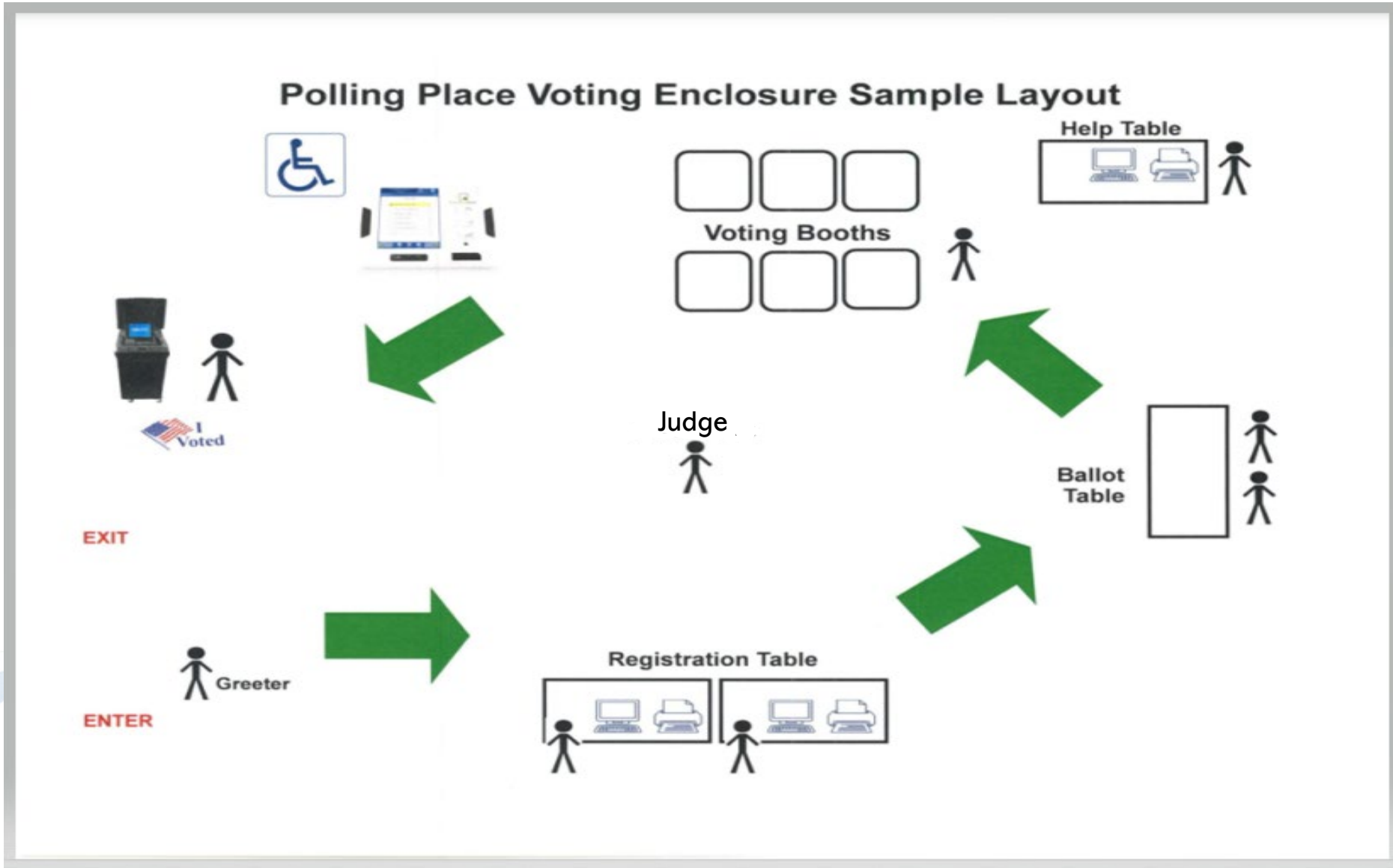


- Some locations can be very particular about tape on the wall and/or they may not have enough wall space for all the postings.
 - Always ask if there are limitations about what can be placed on walls or what furniture can be moved.
- We recommend using pre-filled pop-up kiosks or a large tri-fold cardboard display to place on a table to fulfill the posting requirements.
- The required postings are found on the SOS Opening Polls Checklist. Please contact our office if you do not have a copy. electionsecurity@sos.texas.gov
- Please restore the room after voting ends.
- We are guests in the polling place, so please take care of it.



- Use signage to instruct the voter where to begin, and where to deposit his or her ballot before leaving. This is generally near the exit with a clerk attending to the ballot scanner or ballot box.
- Have a clerk at the scanner/ballot box to ensure ballots have been correctly deposited.
 - Avoids fleeing voters
 - Answers voters' questions





Forms at the Check-in Table

- Statement of Residence
- Reasonable Impediment Declaration Form
- Oath of Assistance and Interpreter
- List of Acceptable Forms of ID
- “I Voted” Stickers
- Certificates of Party Affiliation (Primary Election Only)
- Affidavits of Non-Participation and Affiliation (Primary Runoff Election Only)
- Notice of Party Convention Handouts (Primary Election Only)

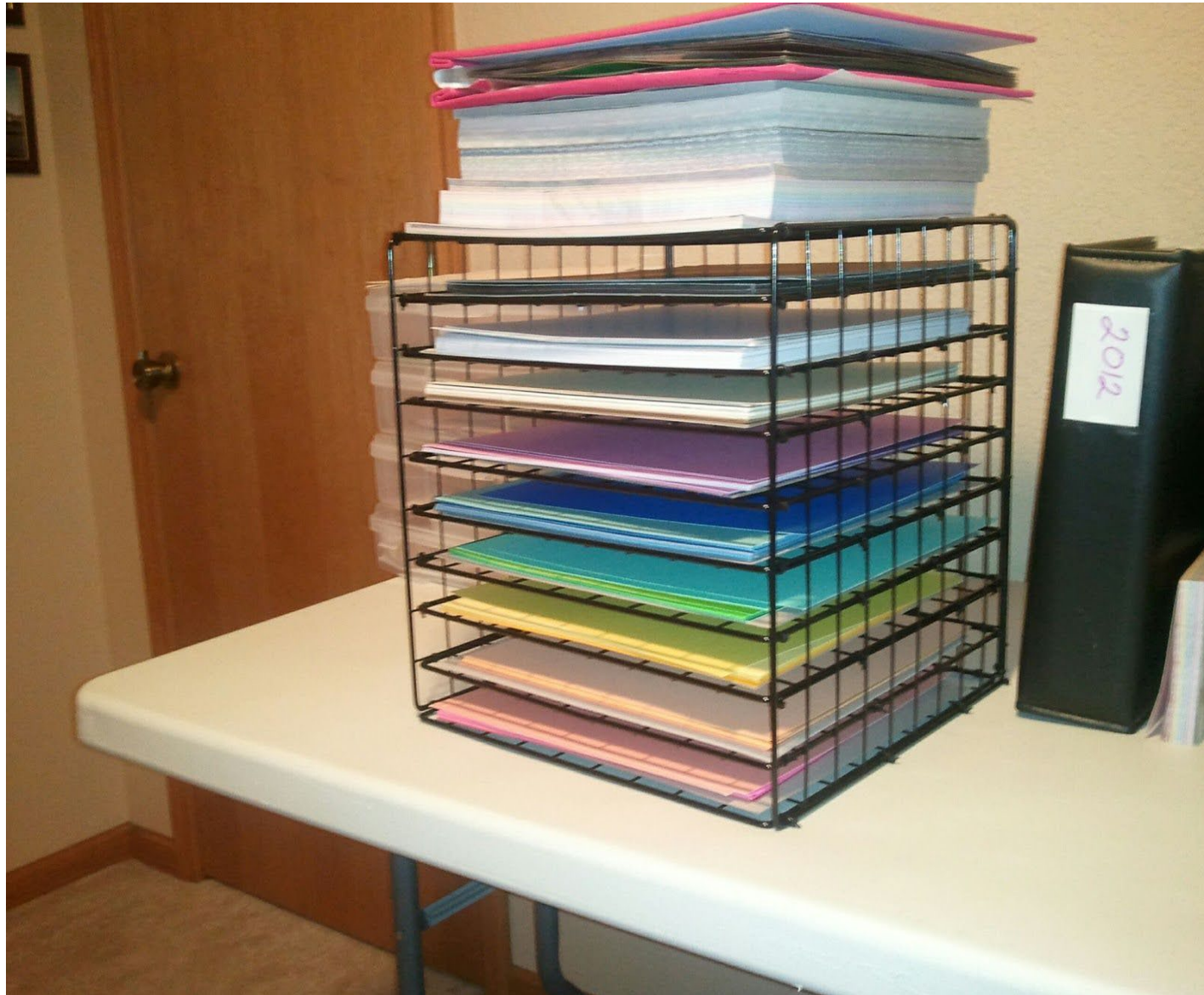


Forms at the Resolution Table

- Provisionals:
 - Affidavit of Provisional Voter Envelope
 - Notice to Provisional Voter
 - Notice to Provisional Voter for ID Voters
 - Secrecy Envelope
 - List of Provisional Voters
- Request to Cancel Ballot by Mail for Use in the Polling Place
- Standard Affidavit
- “I Voted” Stickers
- Chain of Custody Form(s)
- Statement of Compensation and Oaths/Timesheets
- Poll Watcher Name Tags
- Register of Official Ballots
- Ballot and Seal Certificate
- Combined Register of Official Ballot / Ballot and Seal Certificate (if applicable)
- Register of Spoiled Ballots
- Register of Surrendered Ballots by Mail
- Registration Omissions List
- Problem Log Sheet
- Envelope for Spoiled Ballots
- Envelope for Requests and Cancelled Ballots
- Secure container for Provisional Ballot Affidavit Envelopes







For each booth:

- Privacy shield
- All necessary instructions
- If using hand marked paper ballots, an **indelible** instrument to mark the ballots
- Certified write-in candidate list



If your county/entity delivers any equipment prior to Early Voting or Election Day, make sure that the chain of custody is documented and preserved:

Create paperwork to record who accepted the equipment with his or her phone number

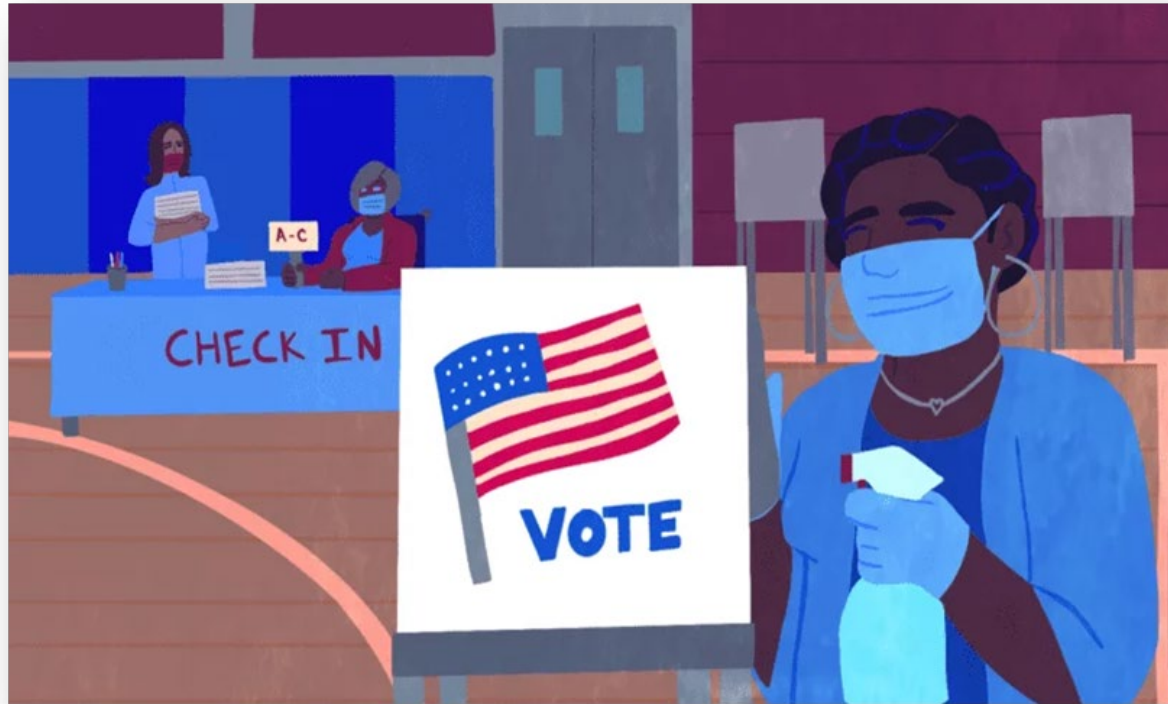
- Note where the equipment is being stored, if not stored in the room reserved for voting

Train your workers to inspect the equipment for:

- Tampering
- Intact seals and correct seal numbers on chain of custody form(s)
- The number of devices on chain of custody form(s)
- What to do if there are issues/last minute room changes



Poll Workers



Double Check Supplies

- Forms and supplies
- Equipment and peripherals
- Ballot stock and marking instruments
- Envelopes and ballot boxes



It is recommended to provide setup checklists for the poll workers that are specific to your processes.

- Polling place layouts/diagrams
- Instructions for turning on the equipment
- Contact lists for poll workers to reach:
 - The main office
 - The polling place point of contact
 - Each other
 - Anyone else they may need to reach

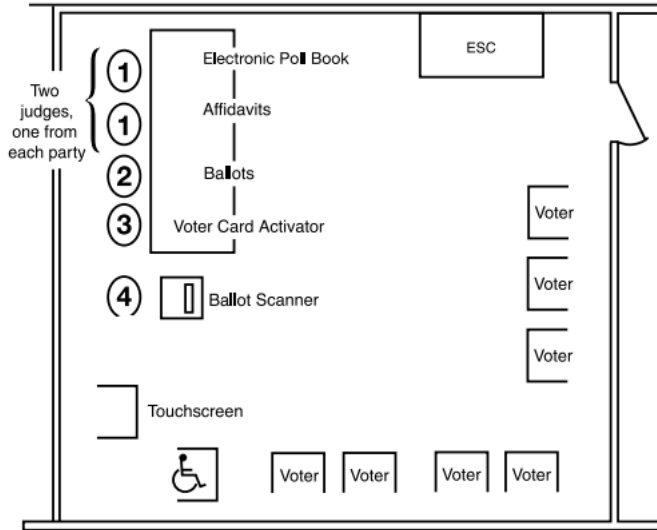


ROLES



- Make sure the workers know where everything is
- Direct them to inspect all equipment and supplies for tampering, and verify that seals are intact.
- Instruct them to use the chain of custody form.
- Have the workers check for good Wi-Fi connection and power.
- Make sure the workers are monitoring supplies, and to call if they need more (ballot paper, “I Voted” Stickers, pens, etc.)





We recommend you provide diagrams of each polling location to the workers. Similar to the first one on the left, but also include where the electrical outlets are as well as any special instructions.



Reminder! After you complete your site surveys, don't overload the space with equipment. It may no longer be accessible or manageable.



- Allow ample time for set up before voting begins.
- Assign Tasks
 - Signs and postings
 - Inside
 - Outside
 - Set up the check-in table
 - Set up ePollbook and voting equipment



Choosing Polling Locations



- A location that is not used for any other purpose during voting
- Good cell phone/radio network reception or a reliable landline
- Clear lines of sight throughout the voting area –open plan rather than multi-room
- Separate entrances and exits that allow voter flow and can be easily monitored
- ADA compliant (ramps, door sizes, walkways, etc.)
- Sufficient parking, including designated curbside spaces
- Emergency exits that allow quick clearance of the voting area
- Confirm locations at least 6 months in advance, if possible



We recommend that you visit all of your polling locations before **each election**

- Check for accessibility requirements. Here's the link to the ADA Checklist for Polling Places: <https://www.ada.gov/votingchecklist.htm#toc3> or scan QR code.
- Measure to see how much equipment will fit in the polling place while still keeping it accessible.
- Make adjustments to the space if needed:
 - Temporary ramps
 - Battery operated doorbells
 - Cones under obstacles





- Conduct speed tests to ensure connectivity.
- Ensure all devices, “MiFi’s”, hotspots, etc., are communicating with your ePollbook, if applicable.
- Make sure there is cellphone service/reception if there is no landline.
 - In an area with poor connection, consider using cell phone boosters.



- Check the number of electrical outlets and test that they work. Don't forget about extension cords and surge protectors.
- Is there sufficient parking?
- Reach out to the site's point of contact.
- Ensure you have access – key or lock box code.
 - If you do not have a key or code, borrow one for the election or make a schedule with the contact person.



Don't forget the "I Voted" stickers!



Questions?

elections@sos.texas.gov

electionsecurity@sos.texas.gov

1-800-252-8683

