



Cameron County

2021-2022

Comprehensive Election Audit Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

In 2021, the Texas Legislature enacted [Senate Bill 1](#) (87th Leg., 2nd Called Special Session), which included a provision requiring the Office of the Secretary of State to conduct audits in four randomly selected counties. [Section 127.351](#) of the Texas Election Code provides that the Secretary of State shall conduct an audit of the elections held in the preceding two years after the most recent November uniform election occurring in an even-numbered year. On July 28, 2022, the Secretary of State conducted a drawing to determine which counties would be audited for the 2021-2022 election period. In this drawing, Cameron County, along with Eastland, Guadalupe and Harris counties, was selected as one of the counties to be audited in the 2021-2022 election cycle.

Comprehensive Findings

The audit of all elections conducted for the 2021-2022 election period revealed, as cited in this report, both election-specific concerns and broader patterns within the administration of elections in Cameron County. These findings identify areas in which the county is consistently meeting legal requirements and areas of needed improvement.

Notable Findings

Training of Election Workers

Cameron County has developed an in-depth election worker training program that provides both legal and procedural training as well as hands-on training with all election equipment. The two-part training begins with the legal requirements for election documentation, legally required signage, and detailed explanations of county election procedures. The training also highlights safety protocols to ensure the safety of election workers and voters within the polling place and guidance on how to most effectively assist voters with disabilities. The final part of the training provides hands-on practice with the election equipment to allow the election judges and clerks the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the operation of the equipment. This portion of the training includes effective strategies to troubleshoot and resolve issues in case of equipment failure.

Additionally, the county training and instructional materials provided to all election judges and clerks include detailed explanations of all polling location forms and specific examples of how to complete the paperwork correctly. As a result of an effective training program, documentation was thorough, complete, and accurate.

Election Security & Contingency Planning

Cameron County has established written policies and procedures related to the county technology and security services including an Incident Response Plan and an IT Continuity of Operations Plan. The technology team clearly articulated the efforts in place including data security protocols, network monitoring, and threat prevention for all offices in Cameron County. Additionally, the technology staff explained security measures currently in place to ensure a higher level of monitoring and security specifically related to the administration of elections in the county. The county completed an election security assessment and is working with several state and federal agencies to complete additional assessments of the county infrastructure and security posture. Furthermore, Cameron County has instituted numerous measures to ensure the physical security of all election facilities, voting equipment, and voted ballots.

As a result of their geographic location, Cameron County has extensive experience with natural disasters and unexpected events that can impact the election process. The county is in constant communication with other county offices, local law enforcement, as well as state and federal agencies to ensure successful operations of elections in emergency circumstances.

Voter Registration & List Maintenance

Cameron County uses a third-party vendor to operate the county voter registration system. All counties utilizing a third-party vendor are required to submit data to the state system daily and to conduct a system synchronization at least once a month to ensure accuracy between the two systems. Cameron County has consistently complied with these requirements.

As of November 2022, the county reported 227,694 registered voters¹ eligible to vote in the November 8, 2022 General Election resulting in a registration rate of 87.9% of the voting age population. During the audit period, the county saw a 3.4% increase in voter registration.

Both state and federal law require counties to continuously update their voter registration lists to ensure that only eligible voters are registered to vote in the county in which they reside. Cameron County consistently performs list maintenance activities and retains all required voter registration records in accordance with state law. During the audit period, the county cancelled 5,368 voter registrations following a county review of voters who may have been deceased and 197 voter registrations were cancelled due to non-citizenship. There was one cancellation due to felony conviction. A total of 6,816 voter registrations were cancelled for duplicate registration records for voters who may have moved to other Texas counties. The county cancelled 4 voter registrations following an effort to confirm residency in Cameron County.

Cameron County should continue processing voter registration applications and record updates in a timely manner. Likewise, the county should continue to prioritize all list maintenance activities to ensure that only eligible voters are able to cast a vote in Cameron County.

¹ <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/nov2022.shtml>.

Areas for Improvement

Ballot by Mail Reporting

Beginning in 2022, Texas counties were required to report application for ballot by mail and subsequent mail ballot activity to the statewide system to allow voters the opportunity to utilize the Ballot by Mail Tracker to track the status of their application or ballot and, in certain circumstances, correct missing or incorrect personal identification numbers. Though Cameron County provided notice to the impacted voters and tracked these rejections and corrective actions at the county level, the county did not report the appropriate information to the statewide system for the rejected applications. Therefore, the rejected applicants were not offered the opportunity to check the status of their applications through the Ballot by Mail Tracker. Likewise, the county did not send the appropriate information to the statewide system that would provide the voters the opportunity to correct their ballots through the Ballot by Mail Tracker. A review of elections conducted since the audit period indicates that Cameron County is now in compliance with this reporting requirement.

Election-Specific Security Planning

Though the county has numerous security measures currently in place as previously referenced, the county does not have a comprehensive Written Information Security Plan (WISP) related specifically to supporting and securing elections in Cameron County. This plan should include incident response planning and continuity of operations considerations. Likewise, a vendor risk management plan should be in place with all vendors providing services for the county election office and accessing sensitive and confidential voter registration and election data.

Conclusion

Cameron County has implemented numerous election security measures and physical security protocols to support and secure the elections in the county. The county voter registration program and the election worker training program have proven effective across the elections in this audit period. Making necessary improvements, in the areas identified above, will not only further safeguard their elections but will demonstrate to the voters of Cameron County that they can have confidence in their election process and outcomes.