

VAL VERDE COUNTY

2023–2024 Preliminary Election Audit Report



Texas Secretary of State
Elections Division

800-252-VOTE • 512-463-5650
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Overview

The Secretary of State is in the process of conducting the comprehensive audit of all elections held on uniform dates in Val Verde County in 2023-2024. This report contains preliminary audit findings for the November 5, 2024 General Election. The Secretary of State has conducted an extensive analysis of election records and has conducted interviews with county election officials and staff. Though the preliminary findings included in this report have been identified, it is important to note that additional findings, including patterns and trends identified across all elections within the auditable period, may be included in the comprehensive report that will be released at a later date.

Preliminary Findings for November 5, 2024 General Election

In reviewing the documentation and data provided by Val Verde County, the Secretary of State has identified the following preliminary findings resulting from the November 5, 2024 General Election.

Accuracy of the Voter List

Val Verde County does not have written policies and procedures for voter registration responsibilities in place. Though the county voter registrar could speak to daily routines related to the processing of voter registration applications and updates to those records, the office staff could not articulate any processes to validate the county voter registration list for accuracy. During a review of county data and election documentation, numerous issues with the county voter registration list were identified.

Provisional ballots, which may result in voter registration, were not processed in a timely manner. Though the county staff indicated that the provisional ballots were processed immediately upon receipt after the election, a review of the records in the statewide voter registration system did not reflect the registration of the voters when appropriate or the informational updates to the voter records for those that were registered as listed by the voter on the provisional ballots. This is a critical responsibility of the county voter registrar in ensuring the registration of eligible voters and the accuracy of the county voter registration list.

Additionally, the county elections office is not properly following voter registration procedures as outlined by the Secretary of State. The county admitted that when entering registrations, the county is not conducting a countywide search within the state system to properly update registered voter records. Instead, the county staff is simply creating a new voter registration record. Failure to follow this procedure results in voters being registered more than once within Val Verde County. Proper procedures would eliminate the creation of the duplicative records.

Redistricting

Changes to county voting precincts are made regularly to ensure evenly populated voting precincts within a county.¹ Additionally, boundaries for local political subdivisions such as cities and school districts must be maintained in the statewide system if the county is conducting an election on behalf of these local entities.

¹ Tex. Elec. Code § 42.001.

In Val Verde County, jurisdictional maps are created and maintained in the County Engineer's Office. It is the responsibility of the county voter registrar to create and maintain this information in the statewide system to ensure that all voters are receiving the correct ballots to vote on the races that are applicable to their residential address.

Val Verde County has not consistently maintained these jurisdictional boundaries within the statewide system. Failure to accurately maintain these boundaries has resulted in voters receiving ballots that did not include the correct races, or ballot styles, based on their residential address. During elections, upon notification from a voter that their ballot was incorrect, the election workers ask the impacted voter to pinpoint their residential address on a map in order to identify the correct ballot style. This process results in the voter casting a provisional ballot at the polling location.

Due to consistent issues at polling locations with inaccurate assignment of jurisdictional information during the voter registration process, the County Clerk requested assistance from the Secretary of State. In 2023 and 2024, the Secretary of State sent teams to Val Verde County to provide in-depth training on the redistricting process. The state team worked with all offices to ensure that the jurisdictional boundaries were accurately reflected in the statewide system. However, the audit revealed that Val Verde County has not consistently updated this information since the Secretary of State provided assistance last year. Failure to update jurisdictional boundaries in the system has led to increased voter confusion, a large number of voters not receiving the correct ballot styles and a high rate of provisional ballots being cast.

Election Security and Contingency Planning

Technical support services are provided by the Technology Services Department in Val Verde County. This department has a collaborative relationship with the Elections Department and works to provide strong election security and network monitoring capabilities within the county. The county has worked to implement a segmented network for election office and all monitoring is conducted "in-house" by the technology department. Though the Val Verde Information Technology (IT) Director confirmed that the county has an Incident Response Plan (IRP) and his staff has been trained on how to implement the plan if needed, the county does not have a comprehensive written plan in place.

Val Verde County takes a strong approach to ensuring physical security at all county offices. Access to county buildings is limited and continual video surveillance in and around the building is monitored by officers at all times. Likewise, the county prioritizes safety at polling locations during an election. The Val Verde County Sheriff's Office conducts a "Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE)" training course for all election judges and workers. This course overviews emergency situations and what to do in life-threatening situations such as a mass shooting and the correct steps to take to ensure safety. The Sheriff's Office also provides poll workers with a physical layout of each polling location with noted emergency exits to ensure the safety of election workers and voters in Val Verde County.

Training of Election Workers

Val Verde County should conduct a comprehensive review of their training program to ensure that curriculum, instructional presentations, and procedural resources clearly define expectations and promote a depth of understanding for election workers to successfully and securely administer elections within the county. Val Verde County must ensure that all election judges and clerks successfully complete the in-depth hands-on training necessary to properly set up all election equipment and to troubleshoot common operational issues as they arise. Currently, the hands-on training is optional.

Val Verde is encouraged to routinely conduct post-election audits of documentation for procedural compliance to measure the effectiveness of the county training program. A review of chain of custody documentation revealed incomplete paperwork and inconsistencies in documenting seal numbers which is critical to the security of election equipment and supplies. Additionally, polling location paperwork was missing required voter information or was not completed thoroughly.

Val Verde County must ensure that procedures are clearly defined, effective training is provided, and that all processes related to the handling and documenting of provisional ballots, limited ballots and statement of residence are implemented. A post-election audit identifying these discrepancies and inadequacies would provide Val Verde County with the information needed to strengthen the overall training program and improve the administration of elections.

Conclusion

This report offers preliminary findings related specifically to the November 5, 2024 General Election. The Secretary of State is working on a comprehensive report of all elections conducted during the 2023-2024 calendar year. Though this audit report has identified issues across Val Verde County that need to be remediated, it is evident that the Val Verde County Clerk has begun the process of addressing identified issues. However, it is evident that despite on-site training and assistance from the Secretary of State's Office dating back to 2023, the Val Verde County Tax-Assessor repeatedly failed to address critical issues in their voter registration process that have resulted in voters receiving incorrect ballots, registrations being duplicated, and an inability to generate accurate voter registration lists. This has impeded the free exercise of Val Verde County citizen voting rights.

For these reasons, the Office of the Secretary of State is recommending that the Val Verde County Tax-Assessor Collector's Office be placed under Administrative Oversight in accordance with Section 31.017 and 127.351 of the Texas Election Code.

Val Verde County

Val Verde County, located in southern Edwards Plateau in the state of Texas, has a population of 47,999 residents.² The county encompasses a land area of 3,144.75 square miles and includes 59,673 households. The voting age population of Val Verde County, which includes all persons over 18 years of age, is 34,511 (71.9%). The county reported 30,117 registered voters³ for the November 5, 2024 General Election, resulting in a registration rate of 87.27% of the voting age population.



Figure 1: Val Verde County

Val Verde County election functions are handled by two county offices that split the responsibilities of performing elections. Elections are conducted by the County Clerk's Office and Voter Registration is maintained by the Tax Assessor Collector's Office. The County Clerk's Office consists of 10 full time employees (Deputy Clerks), two of which work specifically elections. The County Clerk's Office is located at 400 Pecan Street, Del Rio, Texas 78840. The Tax Assessor Collector's Office has 5 full time employees that are dedicated to voter registration duties. The Tax Assessor Collector's Office is located at 309 Mills Street, Del Rio, Texas, 78840.

November 5, 2024 General Election Statistics

Voter Registration



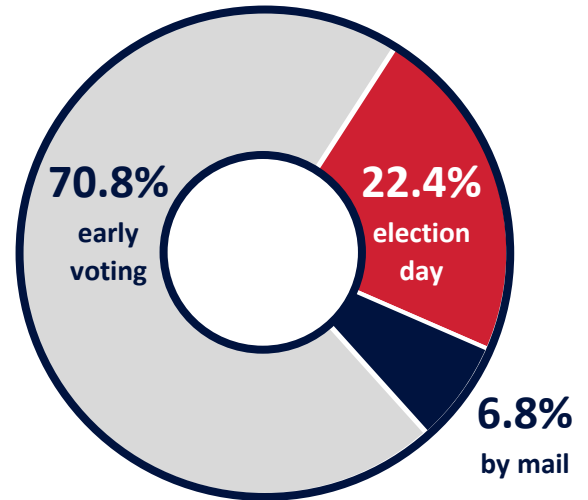
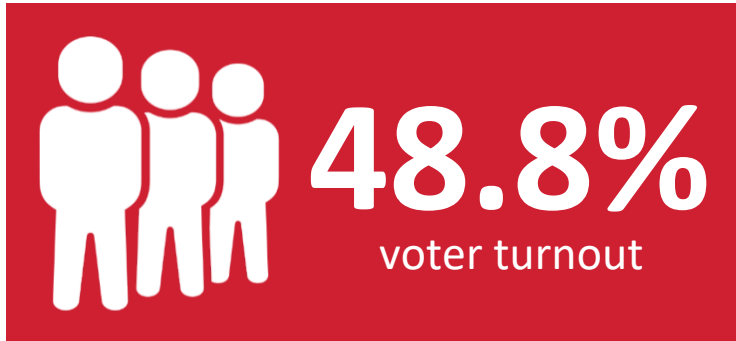
The voter registration numbers stated above include voters with a "suspense" or "non-suspense" voting status. Both of these designations are considered active voters and are afforded full rights to cast a ballot in Texas, if eligible. Voters with a suspense designation are required to complete a Statement of Residence form to confirm their registration address prior to voting.



² "QuickFacts: Val Verde County, Texas." *Census Bureau QuickFacts*, United States Census Bureau, 2024, www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/valverdecountytexas/PST045223. Accessed July 2, 2025.

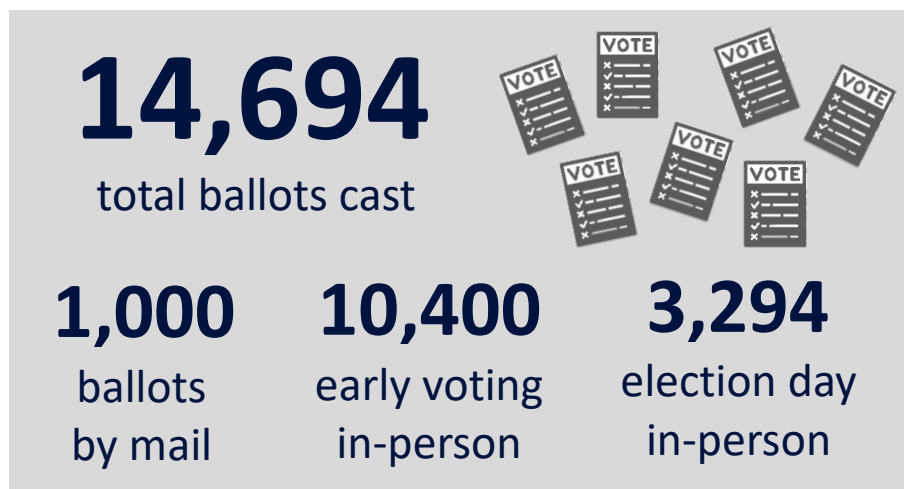
³ "November 2024 Voter Registration Figures." *Texas Secretary of State*, Nov. 2024, www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/nov2024.shtml. Accessed July 2, 2025.

Voter Turnout



voters by voting method

Ballots Cast



Election Workers



Val Verde County Elections

The following is a list of contracted entities for the November 5, 2024 General Election:

- Comstock ISD
- City of Del Rio Special Election

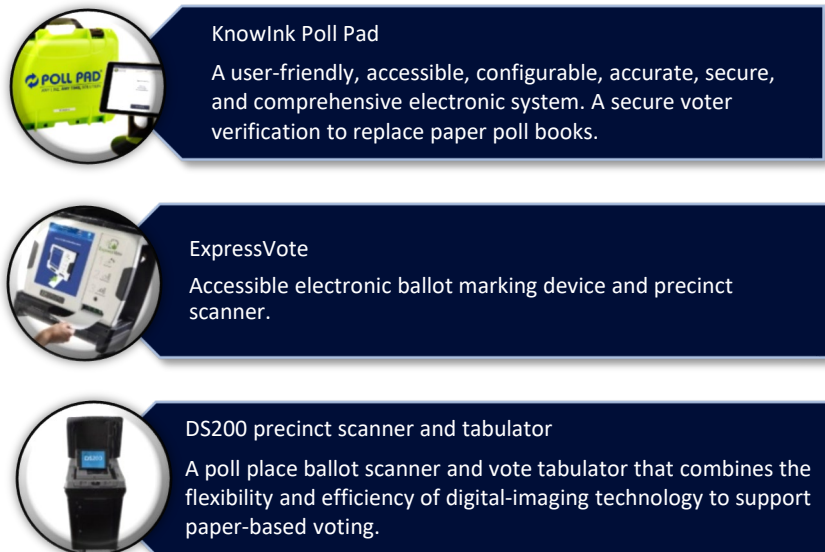
Voting Systems in Val Verde County

For the November 5, 2024 General Election, all election system equipment in use was certified by the Secretary of State. It is the responsibility of the county election officers to ensure that all certified equipment is being used in a manner consistent with the terms of the certification and in accordance with state and federal law.⁴

Val Verde County contracts with Election Systems & Software (ES&S) for its voting system which utilizes the EVS 6.1.1.0 software. The EVS 6.1.1.0 system was certified by the Secretary of State on January 8, 2021. Val Verde uses the ExpressVote ballot marking device, DS200 and DS450 digital scan precinct tabulators.



Figure 2: ES&S ExpressVote, DS200, and DS450



Knowink Poll Pad

A user-friendly, accessible, configurable, accurate, secure, and comprehensive electronic system. A secure voter verification to replace paper poll books.

ExpressVote

Accessible electronic ballot marking device and precinct scanner.

DS200 precinct scanner and tabulator

A poll place ballot scanner and vote tabulator that combines the flexibility and efficiency of digital-imaging technology to support paper-based voting.

Figure 3: Voting Systems Hardware in Use for November 5, 2024

⁴ Tex. Elec. Code § 122.031.

Electronic Pollbook

Val Verde County contracts with KnowInk for the use of the electronic pollbooks. The software version is Poll Pad 3.6. This system was certified by the Secretary of State on August 21, 2024.



Figure 4: KnowInk Poll Pad

Volunteer Deputy Registrars

The Val Verde County website publicizes relevant information for those interested in becoming a volunteer deputy registrar (VDR). The detailed information includes links to an online training and resource guide hosted by the Secretary of State as well as detailed instructions on how to complete the application process for Val Verde County.

Val Verde County had two (2) volunteer deputy registrars during the audit period. The county tracks completion of volunteer deputy registrar training and notifies current volunteer deputy registrars of impending certification expiration dates. The County Clerk confirmed that though they honor reciprocity for training of volunteer deputy registrars in another county, Val Verde County does require the successful completion of an examination.

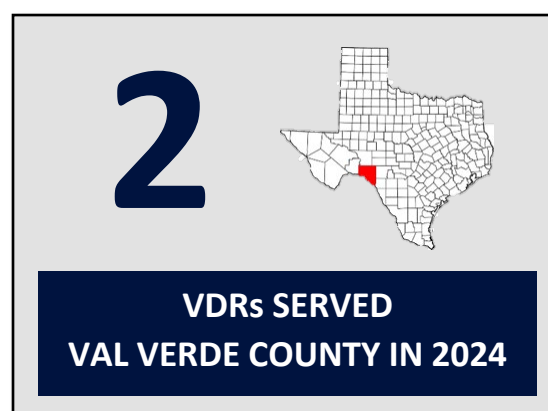


Figure 5: Volunteer Deputy Registrars Serving Val Verde County

State Inspector Reports

The Secretary of State is required to appoint one or more inspectors for an election upon a written request from 15 or more registered voters.⁵ Additionally, the Secretary of State has the discretion to appoint an election inspector to any election.⁶

State inspectors prepare an inspection report identifying any violation of law observed by the inspector to the Secretary of State following the election.⁷ The Secretary of State appointed two state inspectors to observe election day polling locations in Val Verde County for the November 5, 2024 election. The most common concerns cited in the state inspector reports include:

- Voter was standing and assisting another voter while the person was voting;
- Minor was on the phone while the parent was voting;
- Three election workers did not display a nametag; and
- Voter wore inappropriate clothing.

The inspector reports further cited that all reported concerns were handled appropriately by the staff at the polling location.

Complaints

The Texas Election Code requires the Secretary of State to receive complaints of potential violations of Texas law and promptly forward the complaints to the Office of the Attorney General.⁸ Individuals with concerns related to voting operations or violation of the Texas Election Code, can file a complaint with the Secretary of State. There were no complaints filed with the Secretary of State involving Val Verde County elections in 2024.

⁵ Tex. Elec. Code § 34.001(b).

⁶ Tex. Elec. Code § 34.001(a).

⁷ Tex. Elec. Code § 34.002(c).

⁸ Tex. Elec. Code § 31.006.



AUDIT PRINCIPLE

1.0 To ensure that only eligible voters in the State of Texas have the ability to cast their vote with confidence.



FINDINGS

- ★ Val Verde County uses the statewide election management system as the primary voter registration system for their official list of registered voters.
- ★ Val Verde County does not process voter registration updates in a timely manner.
- ★ Val Verde County must accurately create and maintain county and jurisdictional boundaries in the statewide system to ensure that all voters receive the proper ballot based on their residential address.

Official Voter Registration List

Val Verde County uses the Texas Elections Administration Management System (TEAM) that is provided by the Secretary of State as their voter registration system.

A review of voter registration statistical information related to the November 5, 2024 election showed a minor discrepancy between the Val Verde County official reports and the number of registered voters in the statewide voter registration system. The number of registered voters for the November 5, 2024 was a total of 30,116 according to the Summary Results Report from the voting system while the statewide voter registration system showed 30,117 registered voters eligible for the election. This minor discrepancy is likely due to the timing of the reports being generated prior to the election and the programming of the voting system components.


 Statewide Voter Registration Figure	Val Verde County Reports		
	Qualified Voter List	Summary Results Report	Official Reconciliation Report
30,117	30,116	30,116	30,116

Figure 6: Registered Voters Across Reporting Systems

Accuracy of Voter Registration List

The Texas Election Code enumerates the importance of maintaining accurate voter registration lists through defining the acquisition of data from other specified agencies, outlining the procedures and processes required of the Secretary of State and county voter registrars, and identifying the criteria used to match this information with the statewide voter registration list.⁹ The Secretary of State is required to send this information to county voter registrars for further review.

It is the responsibility of the county voter registrar to review these records on the grounds of eligibility and/or to eliminate duplicate records to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the county voter registration list. Additionally, if the county voter registrar has reason to believe that a voter is no longer eligible for registration, the registrar may use any lawful means to investigate a voter's continued eligibility to ensure an accurate list of registered voters.¹⁰

Val Verde County does not have written policies and procedures for voter registration responsibilities in place. Though the county voter registrar could speak to daily routines related to the processing of voter registration applications and updates to those records, the office staff could not articulate any processes to validate the county voter registration list for accuracy. During a review of county data and election documentation, numerous issues with the county voter registration list were identified.

Provisional ballots, which may result in voter registration, were not processed in a timely manner. Though the county staff indicated that the provisional ballots were processed immediately upon receipt after the election, a review of the records in the statewide voter registration system did not reflect the registration of the voters when appropriate or the informational updates to the voter records for those that were registered as listed by the voter on the provisional ballots. This is a critical responsibility of the county voter registrar in ensuring the registration of eligible voters and the accuracy of the county voter registration list.

Ineligibility Due to Death

Based on the defined matching criteria, records that are strong matched¹¹ with the identified data sources are cancelled by the state system. In 2024, 202 strong matched records were cancelled by the state in Val Verde County and an additional 28 weak matched records¹² were provided to the county for further review. Of the records provided to the county for further review, all were cancelled on confirmation of a deceased status or for a failure to respond to an examination letter. Overall, a total of 230 Val Verde County voter registrations were cancelled due to the provision of potential deceased notifications from the statewide system and subsequent investigations.

Ineligibility Due to Felony Conviction

Cancellation reports indicate that Val Verde County had no notifications or cancellations based on felony conviction during the audit period.

⁹ Tex. Elec. Code §§ 18.068, 18.0681.

¹⁰ Tex. Elec. Code § 16.033.

¹¹ Matches that identify the last name, date of birth, and full Social Security number are considered a strong match.

¹² Records that are considered weak matches require an additional review process to be conducted by the counties.

Ineligibility Due to Non-U.S. Citizenship

The Secretary of State is required to conduct a comparative process of the statewide voter registration records to identify any possible non-U.S. citizen records and to provide this information to county voter registrars for further review.¹³ Cancellation reports indicate that Val Verde County had one notification and subsequent cancellation based on non-U.S. citizenship during this audit period.

Duplicate Registration Records

A review of the Secretary of State's cancellation trend reports indicated Val Verde County had 635 duplicate records that were identified and cancelled for voters having a more recent registration in another county. Duplicate records result when the new county of residence enters a new voter registration record rather than updating an existing record within the statewide system. This occurs most often with counties utilizing a third-party voter registration vendor. Though the duplicate voter registration records were entered by another county, a review of these duplications indicates that Val Verde County resolved these issues in a timely manner.

A total of 25 duplicate registration records were cancelled for voters having more than one record in Val Verde County. This indicates that the county office may not be properly following voter registration procedures as outlined by the Secretary of State. The county admitted that when entering registrations, the county is not conducting a countywide search within the state system to properly update registered voter records. Instead, the county staff is simply creating a new voter registration record. Failure to follow this procedure results in voters being registered more than once within Val Verde County. Proper procedures would eliminate the creation of the duplicative records.

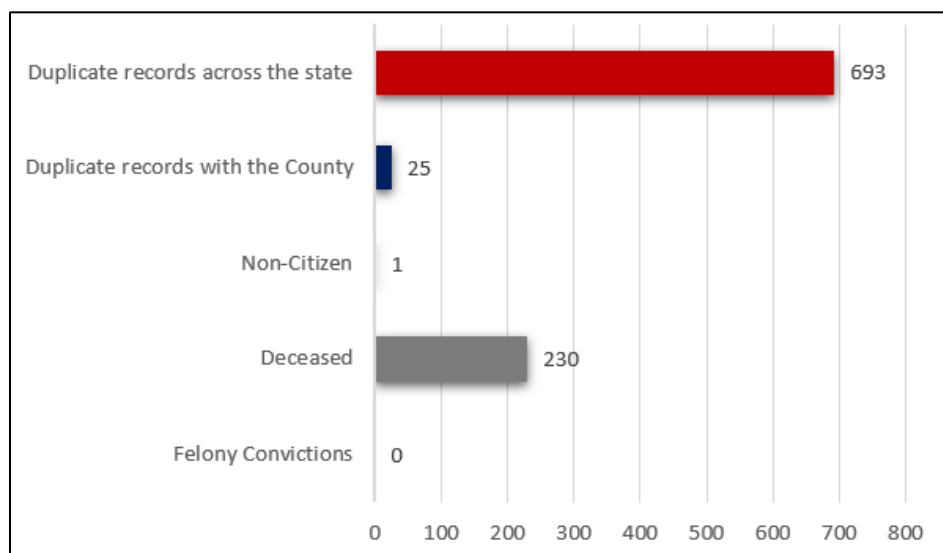


Figure 7: Voter Registration Cancellations

¹³ Tex. Elec. Code §§ 18.068, 16.0332; Tex. Gov't Code § 62.113.

Residency

Val Verde County is tasked with ensuring voter eligibility based on current residency. A review of county data indicated that 553 address confirmation¹⁴ were sent out in 2024. A total of 31 confirmation responses were received from the voters indicating that the individuals no longer lived in the respective county or for whom the voter registration should be cancelled.¹⁵ The voting status for voters who did not respond to the confirmation notices was changed to suspense status.

Redistricting

Changes to county voting precincts are made regularly to ensure evenly populated voting precincts within a county.¹⁶ Additionally, boundaries for local political subdivisions such as cities and school districts must be maintained in the statewide system if the county is conducting an election on behalf of these local entities. In Val Verde County, jurisdictional maps are created and maintained in the County Engineer's Office. It is the responsibility of the county voter registrar to create and maintain this information in the statewide system to ensure that all voters are receiving the correct ballots to vote on the races that are applicable to their residential address.

Val Verde County has not consistently maintained these jurisdictional boundaries within the statewide system. Failure to accurately maintain these boundaries has resulted in voters receiving ballots that did not include the correct races, or ballot styles, based on their residential address. During elections, upon notification from a voter that their ballot was incorrect, the election workers ask the impacted voter to pinpoint their residential address on a map in order to identify the correct ballot style. This process results in the voter casting a provisional ballot at the polling location.

Due to consistent issues at polling locations with inaccurate assignment of jurisdictional information during the voter registration process, the County Clerk requested assistance from the Secretary of State. In 2023 and 2024, the Secretary of State sent teams to Val Verde County to provide in-depth training on the redistricting process. The state team worked with all offices to ensure that the jurisdictional boundaries were accurately reflected in the statewide system. However, the audit revealed that Val Verde County has not consistently updated this information since that time. Failure to do so has led to the increased voter confusion, a large number of voters not receiving the correct ballot styles and a high rate of provisional ballots being cast. This issue is further explained in the Voting in Person: Provisional Ballots section.

¹⁴ If the registrar has reason to believe that a voter's current residence is different from that indicated on the registration records, the registrar must deliver to the voter a written confirmation notice requesting confirmation of the voter's current residence.

¹⁵ Tex. Elec. Code § 15.051.

¹⁶ Tex. Elec. Code § 42.001.

**AUDIT PRINCIPLE**

6.0 Procedures followed or measures taken to ensure the safety of the election equipment, data, records, and process.

**FINDINGS**

- ★ Though the county discussed county procedures and training efforts related to the administration of elections, no written policies and procedures are in place.
- ★ The Val Verde Sheriff's Office conducted a "Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE)" training for all election judges and workers specifically addressing the unique needs of each polling location and provides guidance and strategies to handle security incidents.
- ★ Val Verde Information Technology (IT) staff discussed the county cybersecurity and incident response procedures. However, no Written Information Security Plan (WISP) and no specific procedures for elections are in place.

Policies and Procedures

County election officials are required to implement security measures to ensure that all devices with access to election data comply with the guidance adopted by the Secretary of State to the extent that funds are available.¹⁷ This guidance includes, but is not limited to, the Election Security Best Practices Guide and the Texas Election Security Toolkit which provide county election officials with documentation templates, effective procedures, and industry proven best practices.

According to the Election Security Best Practice Guide, a Written Information Security Plan (WISP) is a set of policies and plans that define how to protect elections from cyberattack and how to respond if an incident occurs. It authorizes employees to quickly perform the described actions without waiting for approval during a security incident. Val Verde County does not have a comprehensive written plan in place. However, they do have correspondence as it relates to emergency procedures such as active shooter, bomb threats and weather-related instances.

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure

The Technology Services Department has a collaborative relationship with the Elections Department in Val Verde County. The Val Verde Information Technology (IT) Director confirmed that the county has an Incident Response Plan (IRP) and his staff has been trained on how to implement the plan if needed. The county network is monitored in-house by county staff. The election office is on a separate dedicated server.

¹⁷ Tex. Elec. Code § 279.003.

Physical Security

Physical security in Val Verde County is an essential part of ensuring secure elections. The elections office keeps doors locked at all times with keys only being distributed to staff members that require access to each room. There is continual video surveillance in and around the building monitored by officers at the information desk on the main floor of the courthouse.

The county has sign-in sheets placed at the entrance of various secure rooms to record access upon entry. These measures help to monitor the security of sensitive information, supplies, and equipment.

Prior to each election, the Val Verde County Sheriff's Office conducts a "Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE)" training course for all election judges and workers. This course overviews emergency situations and what to do in life-threatening situations such as a mass shooting and the correct steps to take to ensure safety. The Sheriff's Office also provides poll workers with a physical layout of each polling location with noted emergency exits for their safety.

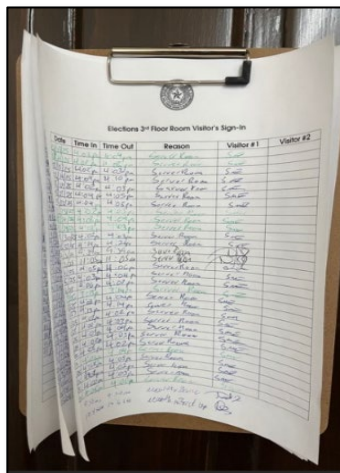


Figure 8: Secure area sign-in sheet

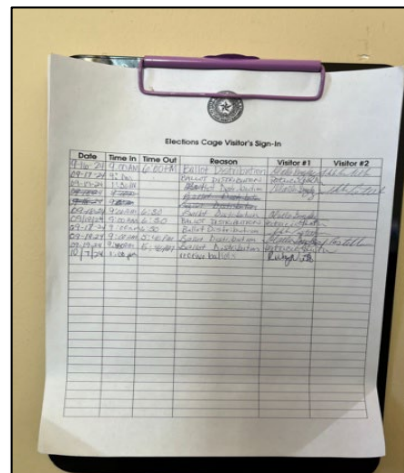


Figure 9: Server room sign-in sheet

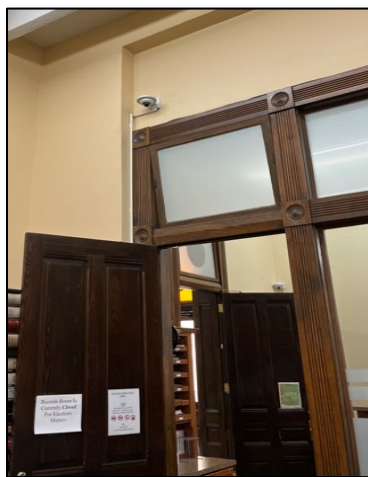


Figure 10: Secure room with electronic media



Figure 11: Camera inside election office



Figure 12: Server room

Records Management

The County Clerk's office showed the audit team that all election records are held in compliance with election law. Only authorized personnel have access to the storage of all election material.



Figure 13: County Clerk's storage of election records room



Figure 14: County Clerk's storage of election equipment

The Tax Assessor Collector's office showed the audit team that all documentation was stored in multiple cabinets. The voter registration documents viewed were voter registration applications, statement of residences, provisional affidavit envelopes, and limited ballot applications.



Figure 15: Tax Assessor Collector's voter records cabinets



Figure 16: Tax Assessor Collector's voter records cabinets



AUDIT PRINCIPLE

3.0 Election officials have the necessary knowledge, tools, and resources to facilitate confidence in the ability to conduct a secure and accurate election.



FINDINGS

- ★ Val Verde County should conduct a comprehensive review of their training program to ensure that curriculum, instructional presentations, and procedural resources clearly define expectations and promote a depth of understanding for election workers to successfully and securely administer elections within the county.
- ★ Val Verde County must ensure that all election judges and clerks successfully complete the in-depth hands-on training necessary to properly set up all election equipment and to troubleshoot common operational issues as they arise.
- ★ Val Verde County is encouraged to routinely conduct post-election audits of documentation and procedural compliance to measure the effectiveness of the county training program.

Training

County election officials are required to provide one or more sessions of training specifically for election judges and clerks appointed to serve in elections ordered by the Governor or a county authority.¹⁸ For election judges, the training must include procedures related to the early voting ballot board and central counting station as applicable. For election clerks, the training must include procedures relating to the acceptance and handling of voter identification. The training is open to the public and the county is required to post a notice of the time and place of each session on the county's website.

The audit team attended training¹⁹ for the November 5, 2024 General Election. The County Clerk's office conducts training prior to each election. The 2.5-hour training was held at the Val Verde County Library and included:

- Voting period dates and times;
- Duties and responsibilities of the election clerks and judges;
- Poll watcher duties and privileges;
- Photo ID laws;
- Curbside voting instructions;
- Executing Oaths of Assistance forms;
- Operating the pollbooks; and
- Layout of each polling location (emergency exits).

¹⁸ Tex. Elec. Code § 32.114.

¹⁹ Tex. Elec. Code § 32.111, 125.009.

The training that the audit team attended did not contain information on how to operate, use, and secure the voting equipment. Direct interaction with the voting equipment was optional at the conclusion of training.

The county notified the audit team that a separate training for election judges had been conducted prior to our visit. They stated that the judge's training included instruction on duties and responsibilities. The audit team was also informed a representative from ES&S was in attendance during this training to demonstrate the voting equipment.



Figure 17: Voting Equipment

**AUDIT PRINCIPLE**

5.0 The chronological documentation or paper trail that records the sequence of packaging, custody, control, transportation, transfer, analysis, storage, and disposition of physical or electronic evidence.

**FINDINGS**

- ★ A review of polling locations and chain of custody forms in Val Verde County indicated there were incomplete documents or missing documents.
- ★ Val Verde County seal logs are used to document the secure transport and use of the DS200s. However, the county does not adequately track the chain of custody for any other election equipment or elections supplies.
- ★ The county is encouraged to review all election documentation and polling location forms upon receipt for compliance and completion.

Overview

Establishing a detailed and transparent chain of custody documentation trail for election systems and ballots is critical to the security and integrity of the entire election process. Election officials must develop a procedure for tracking the custody of election system equipment and electronic storage media from storage location, to programming, through the entire election process, and final return to storage.²⁰

The audit team conducted a comprehensive examination of the chain of custody documentation used in Val Verde County for the November 5, 2024 General Election by reviewing all locations throughout the entire election process. Val Verde County had one polling site for early voting and 5 polling sites for election day.

Early Voting Polling Location

Del Rio Civic Center

Election Day Polling Locations

Del Rio Civic Center

St. Joseph Church

Joe Ramos Center

Comstock Comm Center

Northside Baptist Church

*Figure 18: Polling Locations Selected
for Chain of Custody Review*

Methodology

For the purpose of this analysis, the audit team grouped the election activities into six categories. In auditing each phase of the election, the team inspected the chain of custody documentation provided by Val Verde County to ensure compliance with the law as well as the implementation of best practices related to election security to protect the integrity of voting system equipment, ballots, and election results.

²⁰ Tex. Elec. Code § 129.051.

The six categories include:

- Pre-Election Testing
- Distribution of Equipment and Supplies
- Opening the Polls
- Securing the Polls
- Closing the Polls
- Return of Equipment and Supplies

The audit team reviewed all documentation provided by Val Verde County relating to the assigned polling place equipment and supplies which included:

- ES&S DS200 ballot scanner and tabulator
- ES&S ExpressVote ballot marking device
- Tenex Precinct Central ePollbooks

Additionally, the audit team collected and inspected all polling location reports and procedural forms that track the location and security of this equipment throughout the election process. Documents reviewed include, but were not limited to, the following:

- Register of Official Ballots/Ballot and Seal Certificates
- Seal Logs
- Zero Reports
- Results Reports
- Audit Logs
- Electronic Storage Media Reports
- Ballot Distribution Logs
- Chain of Custody Forms

Pre-Election Testing

Val Verde County provided documentation that their public logic and accuracy (L&A)²¹ test was successfully completed on September 18, 2024 at 5:24 p.m. at 400 Pecan St., Del Rio, Texas. Certification notes that hash validation was performed as well.²² Val Verde County conducted L&A testing on two ExpressVote ballot marking devices, one DS450 and one DS200 ballot tabulating devices. Public notice for the L&A test was posted.

Figure 19: Certification of L&A

Figure 20: L&A Tapes

²¹ Tex. Elec. Code § 129.023.

²² "Election Advisory No. 2022-30." Texas Secretary of State, Sept. 19, 2022, www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/laws/advisory2022-30.shtml. Accessed July 2, 2025.

Once testing is done, the equipment is distributed to the polling location. Inventory lists are used to keep track of the equipment and supplies assigned to each location. Val Verde County provided seal logs confirming delivery of the DS200s from the county office to all polling locations except the Del Rio Civic Center on election day. The seal logs do not track or document the express votes, pollbooks, or ballot stock.

3-3
 Provided by Secretary of State
 Section 21.036, Texas Election Code
 800201

Serial #7786474
 Date 07/25/2013

EARLY VOTING BALLOT SEAL RECORD

Name of Election: Val Verde County General Election

Date of Election: 11 / 05 / 2024

Polling Location Name: Del Rio Civic Center (All Precincts)

Number of Ballots Enclosed	2,580

Serial Range of Ballots	
From: <u>0001</u>	To: <u>4375</u>

(See attached ballot distribution sheet)

Signature of Authority

Signature of Authority Responsible for Distributing Election Supplies
 Teresa Esther Chapoy, Val Verde County Clerk

Printed Name of Authority Responsible for Distributing Election Supplies

Instructions:
 The election official receiving the official ballots should review the totals being delivered and verify that all ballots are present.

Once the review has been completed, the official receiving the ballots should sign this form.

Return this form to the general custodian of records.

_____/Judge

_____/At. Judge

*Figure 22: Early Voting
Ballot Seal Record*

On election day, judges and election clerks begin the process of opening the polls. The equipment is secured with serial numbered seals to ensure the machines have not been tampered with. To keep track of this, the county utilizes seal bags and transfer receipts. Val Verde provided seal logs that corresponded to the equipment assigned but did not document the seals upon opening the DS200. The audit team reviewed envelopes for early voting and election day that contained written serial numbers; however, those serial numbers did not correspond to any documentation. All polling location zero tapes were reviewed and were printed and signed as required.

Val Verde County
2024 General Election
November 5, 2024

Val Verde County
2024 General Election
November 5, 2024
St Joseph Parish Hall
K9
DS260

Val Verde County
2024 General Election
November 5, 2024
Carmelita Community
Center
DS260

Val Verde County
2024 General Election
November 5, 2024
EV Data Rpt Card
Center
DS260

Val Verde County
2024 General Election
November 5, 2024
EV Data Rpt Card
Center
DS260

Figure 25: USB Drive Media Sticks

Val Verde County utilizes a DS200 Seal log that documents the verification of serial numbers on each day of early voting and on election day. The election worker must sign and validate the numbers on the serial log as part of the opening and closing verification of seals and public count on the DS200. Of the 5 locations, only the Joe Ramos Facility documented seal verification and public count for opening and closing of both DS200s assigned.

Figure 26: DS200 Seal Log

Once the polls have closed and all voters have cast their ballots, the ballot boxes are transported to the central count station. Val Verde provided documentation for the election day ballot box seals and the early voting ballot seals. The central count checklist is also a part of securing the polls. Additionally, the election judge prints a voting results tape that provides how many votes were cast. All Results Tapes were provided for all polling locations and appropriately signed. The DS200 Seal logs are used to document the DS200 seals after closing; however, the Joe Ramos Facility was the only polling location to have a completed log.

Figure 27: Early Voting Ballot Seal Record

Figure 28: Results Tape

Return of Equipment and Supplies

The last step to chain of custody is when the equipment is returned to the warehouse. Once the equipment is accounted for, it is returned to the facility to store the machinery when there are no elections taking place.

Val Verde County provides the central counting station judge a checklist to record and document the supplies delivered to central count on election night. The supplies include a USB media bag, emergency slot bag, polling location keys, ballot boxes and election equipment keys, provisional ballot bag, register of official ballots, and various polling location forms.

GENERAL ELECTION
NOVEMBER 5, 2024

PCT. 10, 11, 12 & 13 LOCATION: JOE RAMOS CENTER TIME: 7:24

- ✓ 1. SEALED MEDIA BAG WITH SEAL
Delivered by: Crystal Cedillo Time: 7:24 Seal # 5955925
- ✓ 2. SECRECY SLOT BALLOT BAG WITH SEAL
Delivered by: Crystal Cedillo Time: 8:26 Seal # 5934402
- ✓ 3. KEYS:
Polling Location ☒ DS200 ☒ Express Vote ☒
- ✓ 4. BALLOT BOXES AND KEYS:
Ballot Box #3 ☒ (Voted Blue Ballot Boxes from DS200)
Envelope of key for County Judge ☒ Envelope of key for County Clerk ☒
(Please be sure to place one key from Ballot Box #3 in each envelope.)
Ballot Box #4 ☒ (Unmarked/Unused Ballots) Supply Box ☒
- ✓ 5. STATEMENT OF COMPENSATION
SIGNED TIMESHEETS (2 PER EMPLOYEE)
- ✓ 6. WERE THERE ANY VOTERS ON A REGISTER OMISSIONS LIST?
☒ YES ☐ NO HOW MANY? 1
- ✓ 7. REGISTER OF OFFICIAL BALLOT
(To be placed in Ballot Box #4 with unvoted ballots)
- ✓ 8. PROVISIONAL BALLOT BAG WITH SEAL ☒ Yes ☐ No
Seal # 161051 Number of Provisional Ballots 3
- ✓ 9. OATH OF JUDGE(S) & ASSISTANCE (SIGNED)
- ✓ 10. STATEMENT OF OFFICER & OATH OF OFFICE
(ONE FOR EACH JUDGE AND CLERK SIGNED)
- ✓ 11. ENVELOPES 1, 2 & 4 (JUDGE KEEPS #3 - PINK ENVELOPE)

[Signature]
CENTRAL COUNTING STATION JUDGE
DATE: 11-5-2024 TIME: 8:41

Figure 29: Joe Ramos
Central Counting Station Checklist

Precinct No. (Núm. de Precincto)	Authority Conducting Election (Autoridad Administrando la Elección)	Date of Election (Fecha de Elección)	Type of Election (Tipo de Elección)
10, 11, 12 & 13	Valverde County	November 5, 2024	General Election

RECEIPT FOR TRANSFER CASE

I, the undersigned presiding judge of the central counting station, do hereby acknowledge receipt of the transfer case for precinct 10, 11, 12 & 13. The transfer case was delivered by Crystal Cedillo and Don A. Andujar, two authorized election officers of that precinct and the seal of the transfer case was unbroken/broken (circle one) at the time of delivery.

[Signature]
Signature of Presiding Judge or designated representative

ES&S Form TR-ATTC-01 (Version 03/07)
as prescribed by Secretary of State
Revised 1/27/08 Texas Election Code
Article 16.001, Section 16.001

Figure 30: Receipt for Transfer Case

**AUDIT PRINCIPLE**

4.0 Verify that the processing of mail-in ballots is completed with a focus on accuracy and security.

**FINDINGS**

- ★ Val Verde County must confirm that ballot transmittal forms are completed by the early voting ballot board with required signatures prior to the delivery of balloting materials to the central counting station.
- ★ Val Verde County must accurately report the current status of all mail ballots from receipt of an application through the final determination of a mail ballot in the statewide system.

Applications for Ballot by Mail

Based on the statewide report provided by Val Verde for the November 5, 2024 General Election, the county received 1,193 applications for ballots by mail (ABBM). Three applications were rejected. From the 1,193 applications, Val Verde accepted 1,176 applications for ballot by mail.

Beginning in 2022, Texas counties were required to report this information to the statewide system to allow voters the opportunity to utilize the Ballot by Mail Tracker²³ developed and maintained by the Secretary of State to track the status of their application or ballot and, in some circumstances, correct missing or incorrect personal identification numbers. Though the rejected applications were reported, data indicates that no voters utilized the online tracker to correct their applications for ballot by mail for the November election.

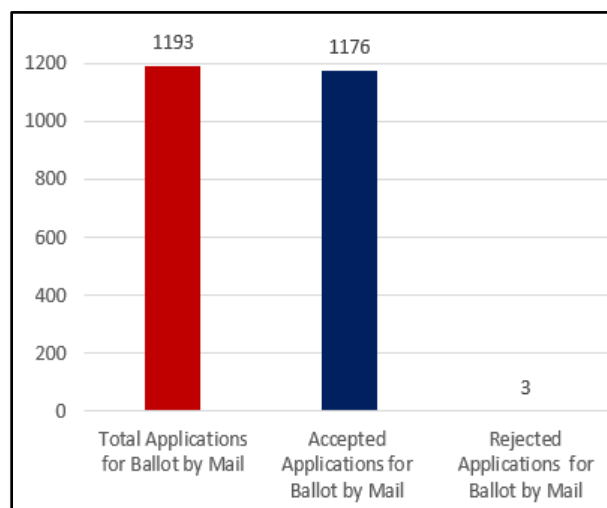


Figure 31: Applications for Ballot by Mail

²³ Tex. Elec. Code § 86.015.

Reasons for Voting by Mail

The audit team reviewed a sample of 99 applications for ballot by mail to determine the reasons associated with the requests to vote by mail. The applications revealed that the largest reason for voting by mail was expected absence from the county.



Over 65
38



Military/Overseas
5



Out of County
52



Unknown
4

Ballots by Mail

Of the 1,176 requested ballots by mail, 985 were accepted, 18 were rejected, 3 returned as undeliverable, and 17 surrendered their ballot to voter in person.

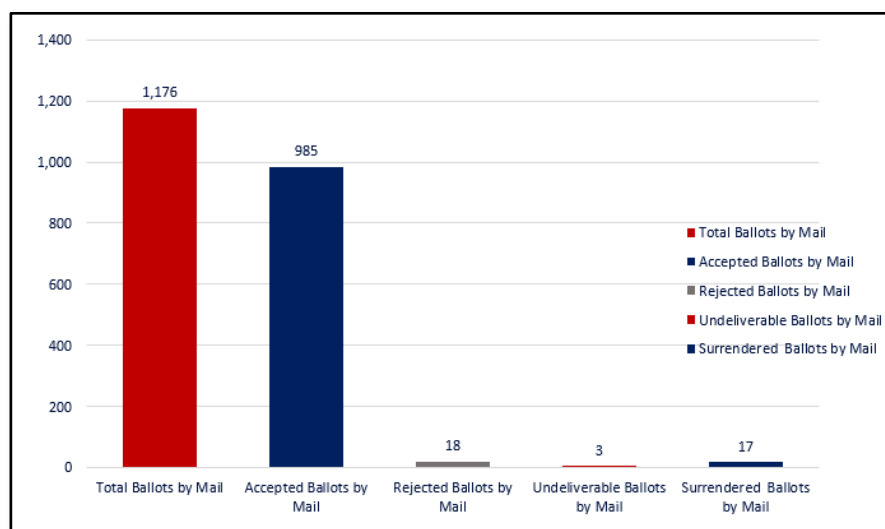


Figure 32: Ballots Mailed

Accepted and Rejected Ballots by Mail

Based on information provided by Val Verde County, the number of accepted mail ballots from the statewide system shows 985 and the Election Reconciliation report shows 1,000. The number of rejected mail ballots from the statewide system shows 18 and the Election Reconciliation report shows 5. The county attributed the discrepancies to technical difficulties when attempting to enter the data into the statewide system. However, no other Texas counties reported the same technical difficulties entering data into the statewide system.

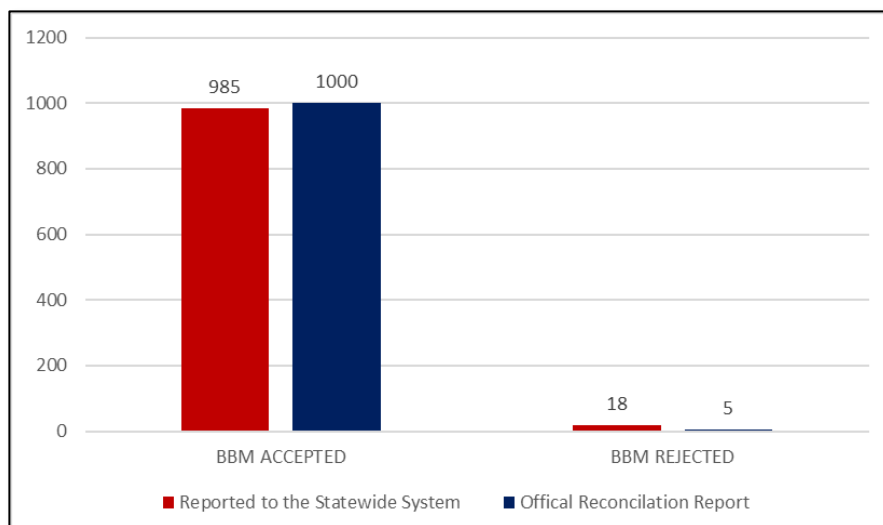


Figure 33: BBM Accepted vs. BBM Rejected

Early Voting Ballot Board

Prior to convening the early voting ballot board (EVBB), a county must post a public notice of the date and time of the meeting.²⁴ Val Verde County provided public notice for the convening of the board in accordance with state law. The EVBB convened a total of 8 times.

General Election Postings	
September 18, 2024 - 1st L&A Test of Tabulating Equipment for General Election November 5, 2024	
October 2, 2024 - Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) 1st Convene for General Election November 5, 2024	
Notice of Delivery of Ballots Voted By Mail to EVBB	
October 9, 2024 - Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) 2nd Convene for General Election November 5, 2024	
October 19, 2024 - Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) 3rd Convene for General Election November 5, 2024	
October 23, 2024 - Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) 4th Convene for General Election November 5, 2024	
October 28, 2024 - Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) 5th Convene for General Election November 5, 2024	
November 2, 2024 - Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) 6th Convene for General Election November 5, 2024	
November 4, 2024 - Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) 7th Convene for General Election November 5, 2024	
November 13, 2024 - Final Convene of the Early Voting Ballot Board for General Election November 5, 2024	

Figure 34: Posted Notices of EVBB

Opportunity to Correct Certain Defects

If the early voting ballot board reviews a carrier envelope that does not comply with the applicable requirements, the board must send the voter a Notice of Defective Carrier Envelope.²⁵ For certain defects, the board must permit the voter to correct this information using the Ballot by Mail Tracker.

Based on a review of documentation and data provided by Val Verde County, four voters were notified of defects on their carrier envelopes. The voters were mailed corrective action forms, but they did not respond to the notice. A review of the identified defects revealed that these ballots would not have been subject to correction by the Ballot by Mail Tracker. All four ballots were finally rejected.

²⁴ Tex. Elec. Code § 87.0222(b).

²⁵ Tex. Elec. Code § 87.0411.

[illegible]

Figure 35: Roster of Voters with Defective Carrier Envelopes Form

Delivery of Mail Ballots to the Central Counting Station

The early voting ballot board must deliver the accepted mail ballots to the central counting station to be counted by automatic tabulating equipment. The early voting ballot board shall complete a mail ballot transmittal form showing the number of accepted mail ballots that were transferred to the central counting station for counting.

Val Verde County provided documentation of the delivery of ballot boxes to the central counting station with transmittal forms. However, the transmittal forms did not document, accepted, rejected and does not account for all of the ballots that were transmitted to the EVBB.

10-5
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Sections 89.05036, 127.004, 127.006, Texas Election Code
9/30/08


Val Verde County
EVBB - 3rd Convene
Saturday, October 19, 2024
Unverified Absentee Box

RECEIPT OF SEALED EARLY VOTING BALLOT BOX


I, the Presiding Judge of the Early Voting Ballot Board for the General Election Nov. 5, 2024
Election, do hereby certify that the early voting ballot was delivered to me in a locked and
sealed condition.

I further certify that the serial number of the seal used to seal the ballot box to prevent
unauthorized opening of the box was 0359688


I also certify that the serial number of the plastic seal used to prevent unauthorized deposit
of ballots in the box was 0359683



Signature of Early Voting Ballot Board Judge




Signature of Clerk of Early Voting Ballot Board



Signature of Poll Watcher (if present)

Signature of Poll Watcher (if present)



Attach a copy of this receipt to the Record of Early Voting Ballot Seals and return to the general
custodian of the records.

10-5
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Sections 89.05036, 127.004, 127.006, Texas Election Code
9/30/08


Absentee Ballot Box

RECORD OF EARLY VOTING BALLOT BOX SEALS


I, the Early Voting Clerk for the Val Verde County - General
Election, do hereby certify that the following is a true and correct list of the paper seals used to
seal the seal of the early voting ballot box at the end of each day of early voting.

Date	Serial Number	Date	Serial Number
09/23/24	0359777 (3)	10-4-2024	0359745 OK (10)
09/24/24	0359780 (1)	10-7-2024	0378091 OK (57)
09/25/24	0378762 (17)	10-8-2024	0378043 OK (22)
09/26/24	0370400 (4)	10-8-2024	0338561 OK (4)
09/30/24	0370325 (4)	10-21-2024	0359683 OK (34)
OK 10/1/24	0378273 (32)	10-22-2024	0359683 OK (34)
OK 10/2/24	0361827 (17)	10-27-2024	0359683 OK (34)
OK 10/3/24	0359682 (3)		

I further certify that the number of the seal used to detect unauthorized opening of the box
was 0370392 10/1/24. This seal was placed on the early voting ballot box
prior to the beginning of early voting.



Signature of Early Voting Clerk



Signature of Poll Watcher (if present)

(none)




Figure 36: Record of Early Voting Ballot Box Transmittal Forms and Seals



AUDIT PRINCIPLE

6.0 Procedures followed or measures taken to ensure the safety of the election equipment, data, records, and process.



FINDINGS

- ★ Val Verde County must ensure that procedures are clearly defined, effective training is provided, and that all processes related to the handling and documenting of provisional ballots, limited ballots and statement of residence are implemented.
- ★ Val Verde County has not maintained the correct boundaries and jurisdiction within the statewide system. This has caused various issues impacting voters and elections in Val Verde County.

Polling Locations

All voters in Val Verde County voted at the Del Rio Civic Center during the early voting period. For election day, Val Verde County uses traditional precinct-based voting. The county is required to post notice of all polling locations for each election. Val Verde County provided notice of all polling locations for the November 5, 2024 election as required.

Of the five (5) buildings used as a polling location, only one (1) had previously received concerns about accessibility related issues. The Comstock Community Center is a county owned building that was in the process of making improvements to the parking lot. These improvements will eliminate the previous concerns.

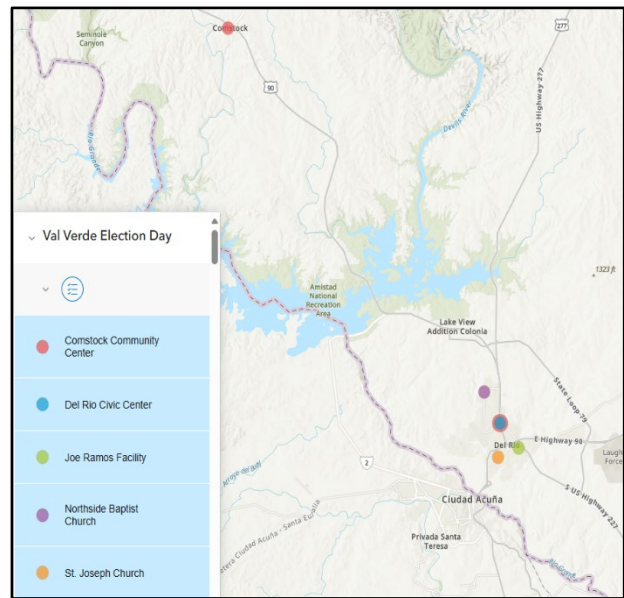


Figure 37: Polling Location Map

Early Voting

The period for early voting in person begins on the 17th day before an election day and continues through the 4th day before election day. For the November 5, 2024 General Election, the early voting period began Monday, October 21, 2024 and ended Friday, November 1, 2024. Val Verde has a single early voting location for all registered voters, regardless of precinct. The polling location was open over the weekend and had extended business hours to accommodate their voters.

Election Day

On election day, all voters in Val Verde County may only cast a ballot at the polling location located in their registered precinct. There were 5 polling locations open on election day.

Voter Assistance

Val Verde County provided an ePulse Assistance Voters Report from the pollbook management system. According to the Texas Election Code, election workers may take the Oath of Assistance but are not required to do so. The ePulse report showed there were a total of 224 assistants including 154 assistants during early voting and 70 assistants on Election Day.

The county also provided the Oath of Interpreter forms for review. The Oath of Interpreter form for Northside Baptist Church polling location was undated; however, this location was only open on election day. All other Oath of Interpreter forms were filled out properly, showing that there were 33 interpreters assisting voters during early voting and 37 on election day, for a total of 70.

Spoiled Ballots

If a voter mismarks, damages, or otherwise spoils a ballot in the process of voting, the voter is entitled to receive a new ballot by returning the spoiled ballot to the election officer.²⁶ Val Verde County had a total of 55 spoiled ballots. Out of those 55 spoiled ballots, 38 were spoiled during early voting and 17 were spoiled on election day. A review of the documentation revealed that 7 of the 38 early voting spoiled ballots were marked as limited ballots.

The county used the Register of Spoiled Ballots to document spoiled ballots. The spoiled ballot forms were not completed properly, partially due to the fact that the county used an outdated form. The Register of Spoiled Ballots form was updated by the Secretary of State in September 2023. When addressed with the county, the staff stated that they had become aware of the issue and are now making changes to their inventory accordingly.

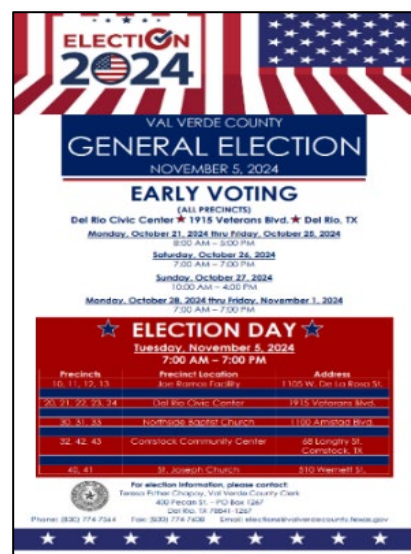
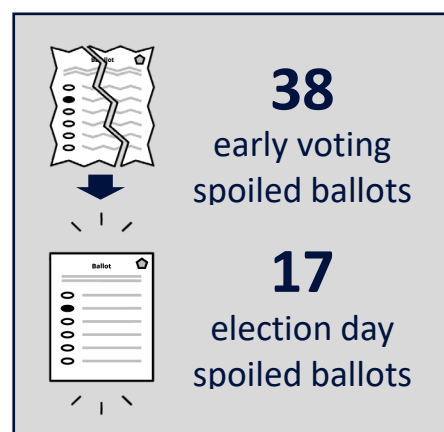


Figure 38: Polling Location Schedule for November 5, 2024



²⁶ Tex. Elec. Code § 64.007.

The reasons for the use of spoiled ballots were not provided. Some of the voter names were missing, reasons were not listed, and the presiding judge signature was missing on three forms. The spoiled ballot logs for two election day polling locations were not provided. Due to the inconsistencies in documentation, the reasons for the spoiled ballots are unclear.

Reasonable Impediment Declarations

If a voter does not possess one of the forms of acceptable photo identification,²⁷ and cannot reasonably obtain such identification, a voter may execute a Reasonable Impediment Declaration (RID) and provide one of several forms of supporting documents.²⁸ Val Verde County provided one RID form for review from the November 5, 2024 General Election. The reasonable impediment declaration was submitted during Early Voting at the Del Rio Civic Center. The voter stated they were unable to provide a form of identification from list A due to family responsibilities.

Statements of Residence

The Val Verde County Clerk's office receives Statement of Residence (SOR) forms on election night in designated envelopes. The County Clerk's office hands those SOR forms over to the Tax Assessor Collector's office to be processed. Once processed, a new voter registration certificate is sent to the voter reflecting the updated information. The forms are retained in the registration records retention files.

The Val Verde County Clerk's office provided a pollbook report that listed 311 voters whose registration was in suspense and voted during the election. These individuals would need to execute a SOR prior to casting their ballot. The Tax Assessor Collector's office provided 21 SOR forms for the November 5, 2024 election. Of the 311 voters on the pollbook report, seven executed a statement of residence to update their information. No documentation was provided for the remaining 304 suspense voters who voted and cannot confirm if a statement of residence was executed prior to them casting a ballot.

A further review of the 21 SORs provided and compared to the data input into the statewide system identified that six voters did not have the correct address input correctly in the statewide system, two did not reflect updated name changes, two were used to register as new voters, and three were not processed in the statewide system. All voter registration forms must be processed and changes reported to the statewide system within seven days of receipt. These were processed by the Tax Assessor Collector's office on February 6, 2025. The Tax Assessor Collector's office advised that SORs are processed immediately after each election. After reviewing the data, it is apparent there was an unnecessary delay in the processing of these records.

Limited Ballots

A registered voter who has moved from the Texas county in which he or she is registered, to a new county of residence in Texas, and who will not be registered to vote in the new county on or before election day, may be eligible to vote a limited ballot.²⁹ A Limited Ballot Application also serves as a voter registration application. The voter's registration would be transferred to the county in which the limited ballot is being voted.

²⁷ Tex. Elec. Code § 63.001(b).

²⁸ Tex. Elec. Code § 63.001(i).

²⁹ Tex. Elec. Code § 63.001(i).

Limited ballot voters must have a voter registration record verified in a Texas county other than the county they are attempting to cast a limited ballot in. Val Verde County provided limited ballot applications for 96 voters who cast a limited ballot in the county for the November 5, 2024 General Election.

The audit team reviewed the limited ballot applications and compared that to the data input in the statewide system. The data showed that 10 applications had not provided the address on the application. When speaking to the County Clerk's office about how they are able to determine the ballot style to give the voter, the County Clerk's office indicated that they would ask the voter verbally what the address was or ask them to provide documentation of the address in question. This verbal communication is not documented on any form.

The limited ballot applications are processed by the Tax Assessor Collector's office after the election. In the interview process, the audit team asked the Tax Assessor Collector's office how they process the application when the address is missing or incomplete. The audit team was advised that they reach out to the voter and ask them what their address is and process this information in the statewide system. This verbal communication is not documented on any form.

Of the 96 limited ballot applications, two voters were registered at a business address, two voters had listed name changes, but the information was never updated, two had no history of being processed, and 10 voters had new registrations created instead of transferring their record. This could cause the voters to have duplicate voter registration records.

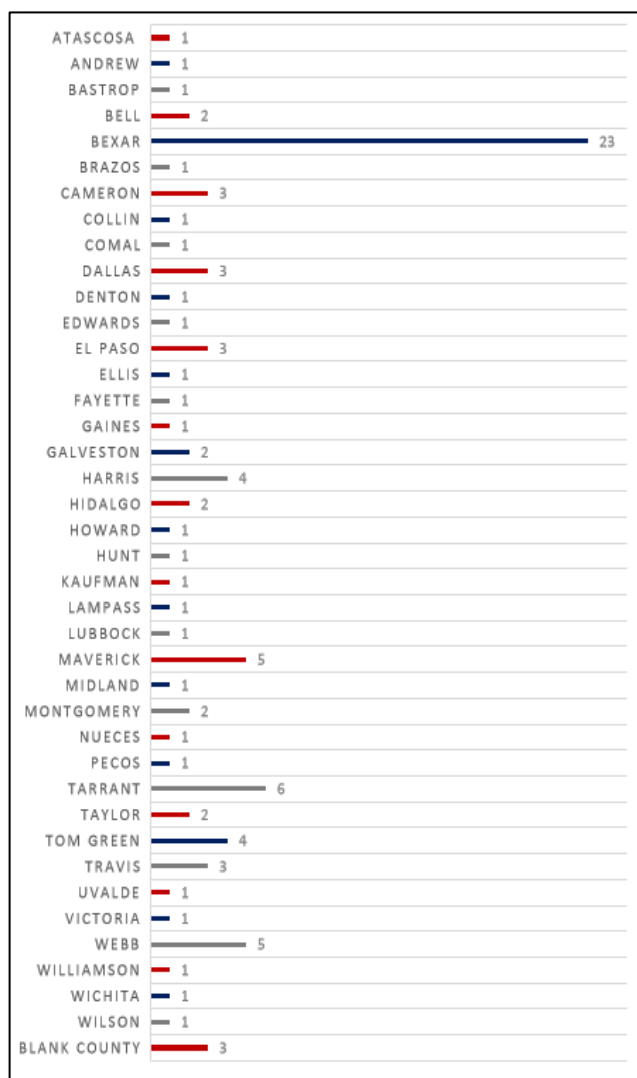


Figure 39: Limited Ballots by Previous Registered County

The limited ballot applications were comprised of voters from 40 different Texas counties. The largest number of voters voting a limited ballot were previous residents of Bexar County (23).

Provisional Ballots

Voting provisionally ensures that the voter has the opportunity to cast a ballot while their eligibility is determined. Voters complete an Affidavit of Provisional Voter. This Affidavit of Provisional Voter serves as a voter registration form for voters who are not registered; this form will register the voter for any future elections.

Based on the data provided, the audit team was able to generate a list of the reasons provided for the use of a provisional ballot and the total accepted and rejected provisional ballots.

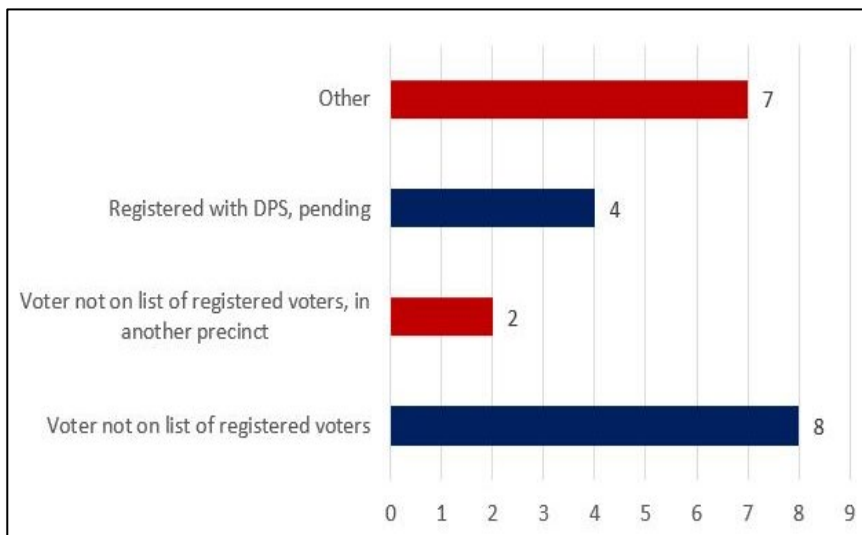


Figure 40: Reason for Necessitating a Provisional Ballot

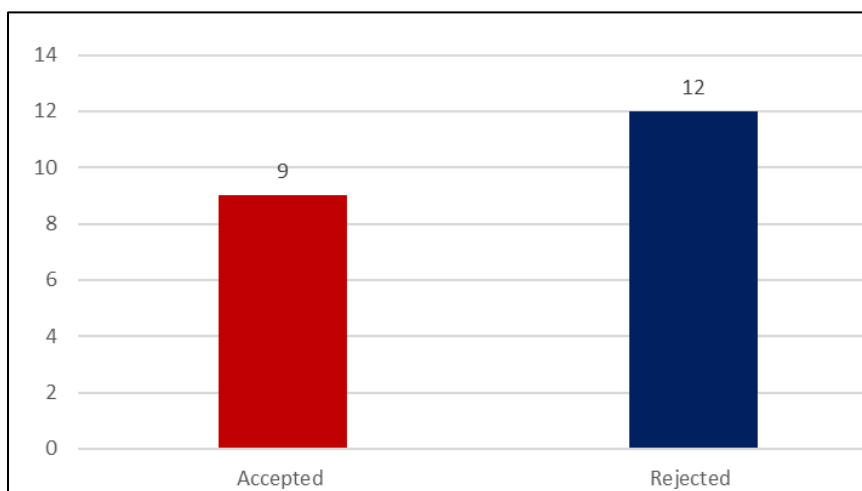


Figure 41: Total Provisionals Accepted vs. Rejected

As addressed previously, the use of provisional ballots is problematic in Val Verde County. Because of the county's failure to maintain accurate county precinct and jurisdictional boundary lines in the statewide voter registration system, many voters are not listed in the correct jurisdictions for current elections. This has led to a large number of voters receiving a ballot that did not include the correct races, or ballot styles, based on their residential address. During elections, upon notification from a voter that their ballot was incorrect, the election workers ask the impacted voter to pinpoint their residential address on a map in order to identify the correct ballot style. This process results in the voter casting a provisional ballot at the polling location and has a direct impact on the elections conducted in Val Verde County.

Val Verde County provided documentation of 21 provisional affidavit envelopes. The audit team reviewed the data on the affidavit envelopes with the data input into the statewide system. The review of these records identified that the rejected provisional records had not shown any update to their registration on the statewide system. Of the 21 provisional voters, 7 still remain not registered in Val Verde County. This will potentially result in the voters having to vote provisionally again in the future if they do not apply for registration before the next election deadline. This demonstrates a failure of the county to complete their statutorily required duties.



AUDIT PRINCIPLE

7.0 Verify that voting results are accurate by completing reconciliation processes to verify the accuracy of the election results and outcomes.



FINDINGS

- ★ Val Verde County did not post Notice of Convening of Central Counting Station or have a Central Counting Station Plan outlining the procedures of the Central Counting Station and tabulation of all ballot in compliance with law.
- ★ The county is compliant with all election results reporting requirements and publicly displays those reports on their county website for current elections as well as all historical election data and reporting.
- ★ The county conducted the second and third certification of the tabulation equipment as required.

Notice of Convening of Central Counting Station

A central counting station³⁰ is a location where ballots are counted, vote totals are accumulated, and unofficial election results are generated on election night.



Val Verde County did not post notice for the convening of the central counting station.

Central Counting Station Plan

The manager of the central counting station is required to develop a written plan for the orderly operation of the central counting station.³¹

The plan must include the location of central count; key personnel and associated duties; poll watcher procedures; intake process for ballots, media, and supplies; reconciliation of election night results; printing of required precinct results; and reporting results to the state.



The county does not have a central counting station plan, but is in the process of creating one for future elections.

³⁰ Tex. Elec. Code § 127.001.

³¹ Tex. Elec. Code § 127.007.

Unofficial Results

County election officials must transmit election night returns to the Secretary of State on election night.³⁵

The Secretary of State requests that county election officials submit the unofficial results for early voting in person and early voting by mail as soon after 7:00 p.m. as possible. Additionally, the office requests that counties provide periodic updates throughout the evening as election day votes are tabulated by polling location. No results may be submitted prior to 7:00 p.m.



Val Verde County complied with updating their early voting totals. The county's final unofficial vote totals for eighteen (18) precincts and six (6) polling locations were submitted on November 5, 2024 at 11:22 p.m. The data, as submitted through the statewide system, reported a total of 14,588 votes cast and 48.44% voter turnout.

Registered Voters

30,117

Votes Cast

14,588

Voter Turnout

48.44%

³⁵ Tex. Elec. Code § 68.034.

RECONCILIATION

10



AUDIT PRINCIPLE

7.0 Verify that all voting results are reconciled to guarantee accurate and timely election results and outcomes.



FINDINGS

- ★ The preliminary and official reconciliation of election results were completed and posted to the county's website as required for the November 5, 2024 General Election.

Preliminary Reconciliation

The presiding judge of the central counting station on election day must attest to an unofficial written reconciliation after counting has been completed for the night. It compares the number of voters who cast valid ballots with the number of ballots counted by the tabulation system. After being completed, it is signed by the presiding judge and posted to the county website.



Val Verde County posted the unofficial reconciliation report on the county website on November 5, 2024.³⁶

Final Reconciliation

The presiding judge of the central counting station must attest to an official written reconciliation after all counting has been completed for an election. It compares the number of voters who cast valid ballots with the number of ballots counted by the tabulation system. After being completed, it is signed by the presiding judge and posted to the county website.³⁷



Val Verde County completed and posted the final reconciliation report on November 12, 2024.

³⁶ Tex. Elec. Code § 127.131(f).

³⁷ Tex. Elec. Code § 127.131(f).

Votes Cast vs. Votes Counted

The audit team conducted an analysis of Val Verde County data to reconcile the number of voters who checked in to vote at each polling location compared to the number of votes reported by each polling locations through the respective media drives. This reconciliation included a detailed analysis of several reports produced by the KnowInk ePollbook and the ES&S System as well as the Val Verde County final reconciliation report. The reports included the:

- ES&S Election Audit Events Report
- ES&S Media Status Report
- KnowInk Pollbook Check-in Report
- ES&S Summary Results Report
- Official Reconciliation Report

The comparison between multiple reports confirmed that the Election Audit Events Report, Media Status Report, Summary Results Report, and Official Reconciliation form all showed the same total number of ballots cast.

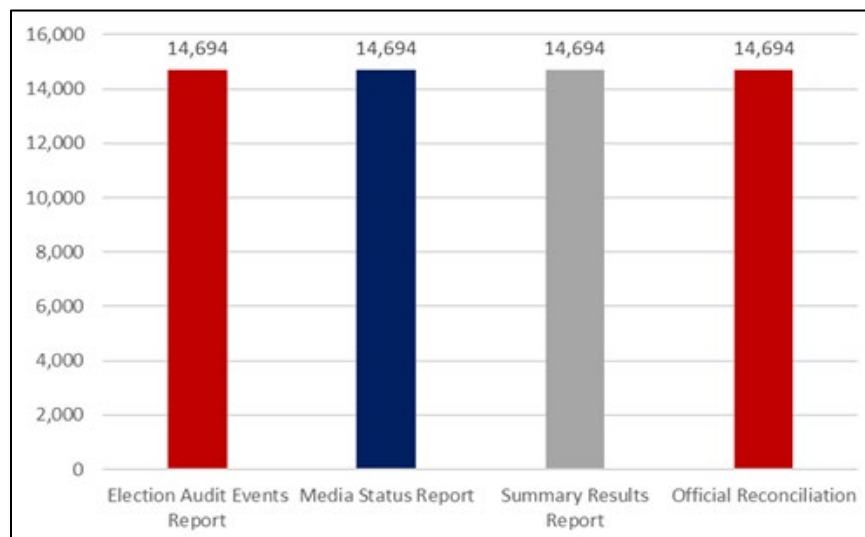


Figure 42: Comparison of Ballots Tabulated in Different Reports

The KnowInk ePollbook Check-In Report, as compared to the ES&S Election Audit Events Report, reflected a discrepancy of 25 more voters checked in than votes cast. The county explained the discrepancy was due to curbside ballots. Val Verde County utilizes paper ballots for curbside voters. If the ballot is not able to be read into the DS200 at the polling location due to damage or writing, the ballots are sealed in an emergency ballot slot bag and taken to the Early Voting Ballot Board who will recreate the ballots to be tabulated at the Central Counting Station.

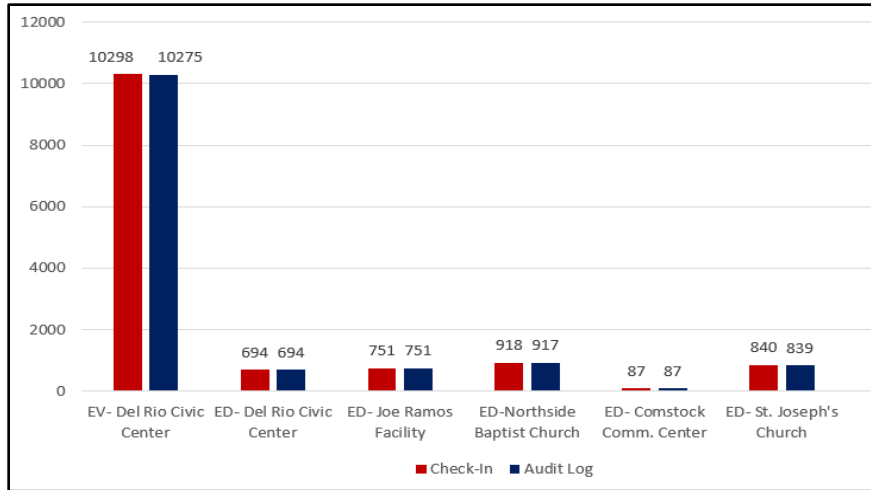


Figure 43: Pollbook Check-In Report vs. Audit Events Report (Audit Log)



AUDIT PRINCIPLE

7.0 Verify that all voting results are reconciled to guarantee accurate and timely election results and outcomes.



FINDINGS

- ★ A review of the partial manual count identified minor discrepancies between the recorded hand tallies with the summary report, results tapes, and the final totals submitted to the Secretary of State. No explanation of the variance was documented.
- ★ The partial manual count was submitted to the Secretary of State within the required timelines.

Partial Manual Count

To ensure the accuracy of the tabulation of electronic voting system results, the general custodian of election records must conduct a partial manual count of selected races in at least one percent of the election precincts or in three precincts, whichever is greater, in which the electronic voting system was used. The partial manual count includes all applicable paper voting system ballots that were counted through an optical or digital scanner and reported as part of the unofficial results on election night. This count encompasses all early voting in person, by mail, and election day ballots that were counted using a precinct scanner or central scanner.³⁸

Counties are required to post a notice of the date, hour, and place for the partial manual count.³⁹ A review of documentation submitted by Val Verde County confirmed the public notice was provided. The notice indicated that the partial manual count was held within the statutory timeframe at 207 E Losoya St., Del Rio, Texas 78840.

14-19
Prescribed by Secretary of State
Section 127.201, Texas Election Code
10/2024

NOTICE OF PARTIAL MANUAL COUNT
(Notificación de Conteo Manual Parcial)

Notice is hereby given that a partial manual count for the General Election (election name) will be conducted on the following dates and times:
(Por lo presente se da aviso que se llevará a cabo un conteo manual parcial para la elección de General en las siguientes fechas y horas: (nombre de la elección))

Partial Manual Count Location (Sitio de Conteo Manual Parcial):
Location (Sitio): Old County Court at Law
207 E. Losoya St.
Del Rio, TX 78840

Times (Horas): 9:00 AM

Dates (Fechas): Thurs. Nov. 21, 2024 & Fri. Nov. 22, 2024



General Custodian of Election Records
November 13, 2024
Date

Figure 44: Notice of Partial Manual Count by Val Verde County

Val Verde County submitted results of the partial manual count to the Secretary of State's office.

³⁸ Tex. Elec. Code § 127.201.

³⁹ Tex. Elec. Code § 127.201(c).

While conducting the review of documentation, minor discrepancies were identified between the tally sheets and the summary report completed by Val Verde County. For the manual count, the precincts selected by the Secretary of State for the audit were precincts 20, 24, and 33; the county selected additional precincts 22, 40, and 43.

For early voting, a difference of 3 votes was identified between the individual tally sheets created by the three-person team as compared to the summary report. In precinct 24, the tally sheets reflect two less votes for Elodia "Loly" Garcia by tally taker 2. For precinct 33, the tally sheets reflect one less vote for Maricar Ortega Chattler and Elodia "Loly" Garcia by tally taker 1. For precinct 40 the tally sheets reflect one less vote for Maricar Ortega Chattler by tally taker 1.

Early Voting					
Precinct	Candidate	Electronic Count	Tally Sheet Results	Summary Results Report	PMC Submission
24	Maricar Ortega Chattler	229	229	229	229
	Elodia "Loly" Garcia	217	219	217	217
33	Maricar Ortega Chattler	762	761	762	762
	Elodia "Loly" Garcia	371	370	371	371
40	Maricar Ortega Chattler	663	662	663	663
	Elodia "Loly" Garcia	922	922	922	922

Figure 45: Early Voting Partial Manual Count Results

For Election Day, a difference of 1 vote was identified between the individual tally sheets. For precinct 24, the tally sheets reflect one less vote for Elodia "Loly" Garcia by tally taker 1.

Election Day					
Precinct	Candidate	Electronic Count	Tally Sheet Results	Summary Results Report	PMC Submission
24	Maricar Ortega Chattler	84	84	84	84
	Elodia "Loly" Garcia	115	114	115	115

Figure 46: Election Day Partial Manual Count Results

No discrepancies were identified between the tally sheets and the summary report for the audit of mail ballots.

11-B
Prescribed by Secretary of State
65.004 Texas Election Code
10/2024

TALLY SHEET FOR A HAND COUNT

Name of Election: General Election Date of Election: November 5, 2024
Precinct Number: 24 Category: (circle one) EV Mail (E-Day) Presiding Judge: Margaret Hutto
Polling Location: Del Rio Civic Center

Printed Name of Tally: Idalia Castellanos Printed Name of Tally: _____
Printed Name of Tally: Olivia Gonzalez Printed Name of Tally: _____
Printed Name of Tally: _____ Printed Name of Tally: _____

Candidate/Proposition Choice	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100	Total
Maricar Ortega Chattler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	24
Elodia "Loly" Garcia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	114

I hereby certify that the within and foregoing is a true and correct tally for the above described election.
Signature of Tally that completed this sheet: Olivia Gonzalez Date: 11/1/2024

Figure 47: Election Day Partial Manual Count Results

The county indicated that if there were any irregularities in results, the ballots would be recounted by hand by a new team and the ballots would be checked again for any that were missed. Val Verde County did not include any additional information related to the partial manual count to further explain these differences or document any irregularities.

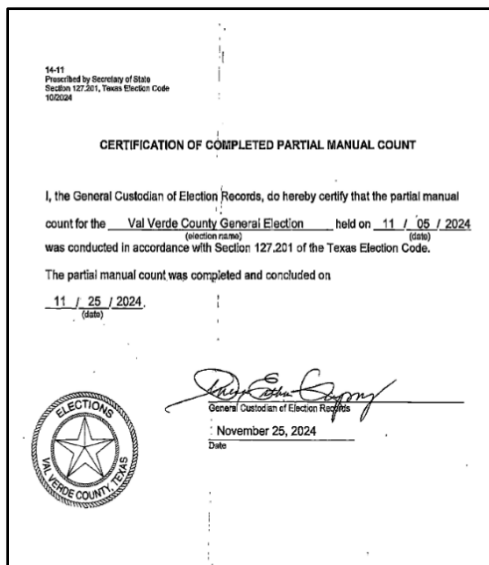


Figure 48: Certification of Completed Partial Manual Count

Canvass

No later than 24 hours after completion of the local canvass, the County Clerk must submit the official results to the Secretary of State.⁴⁰ Val Verde County submitted the county official canvass for all races on November 15, 2024. The documents were signed by the County Clerk and included the county seal as required.

Texas Secretary of State		
Canvass Report		
2024 NOVEMBER 5TH GENERAL ELECTION		
November 05, 2024		
VAL VERDE	Total # of Voters Voted:	14894
	Provisional Votes Counted:	0
PRESIDENT/VICE-PRESIDENT		
Donald J. Trump/Mike Pence	REP	9192
Kamala D. Harris/Tim Wirth	DEM	5282
Chase Oliver/Alto Ter Maat	LIB	72
Jill Stein/Rudolph Wey	GRE	61
Shiva Ayastoraa/Crystal Ellis	WRN	1
Jessie Corder/Wesley Loney	WRN	0
Cristina De La Cruz/Karina Garcia	WRN	3
Cherunda Fox/Isabel Moya	WRN	0
Peter Donald/Lauren Orest	WRN	3
Corina West/Melina Alzubaidh	WRN	3

I, CYNTHIA REYES VAL VERDE County Clerk-EV (Seal) do hereby certify the returns as shown on the official canvass

Cynthia Reyes 11-15-2024
Signature Date

Page 1 of 20

Figure 49: Val Verde County Canvass for the November 5, 2024

⁴⁰ Tex. Elec. Code § 67.007.

Precinct by Precinct Report

After each election for a statewide office or the office of the United States representative, state senator, or state representative, a district office, a county office, or a precinct office, the county clerk or election administrator must prepare a report of the number of votes received in each precinct for each candidate for each of those offices. The report must reflect early voting votes cast by personal appearance, received in each precinct for each candidate for each of those offices.⁴¹ The county clerk or election administrator must deliver the report to the Secretary of State not later than the 30th day after election day in an electronic format. Val Verde County submitted the required precinct by precinct reports.⁴²

Voting History Report

Not later than the 30th day after the date of the primary, runoff primary, or general election or any special election ordered by the governor, the general custodian of election records shall electronically submit to the Secretary of State the record of each voter participating in the election.⁴³

This information is submitted to the Secretary of State through the statewide voter registration system. As part of this process, using a comparative report available in the system, county officials are encouraged to reconcile the total number of voter history records with the total number of voters voting in each election.

Val Verde County submitted all final voting history reports as required. A review of the comparative report for the November 5, 2024 election indicates a difference of twenty-two (22) between the number of votes cast as reflected in the canvass report and the number of voting history files entered in the statewide system by Val Verde County. The audit team determined this discrepancy was likely due to inconsistencies with the information entered in the statewide system related to ballot by mail activity, limited and provisional ballots, and inconsistent voter registration procedures.

Additional Vote History Reporting

The early voting clerk must maintain a roster of voters who vote by mail, in-person during the early voting period, and on election day. Additionally, for general elections for state and county officers, this information must be submitted to the Secretary of State to be posted on the Secretary of State's website by 11:00 a.m. the following day in a downloadable format.

Early voting and election day rosters are submitted to the Secretary of State through the statewide system. Therefore, all counties must submit updated voting history records within 24 hours after receipt of a mail ballot and within 24 hours after a person has cast a ballot during the early voting period or on election day.⁴⁴

Val Verde County completes the entry of this information immediately after the receipt of a mail ballot and at the conclusion of each day of early voting and on election day and was compliant in all reporting requirements.

⁴¹ Tex. Elec. Code § 67.017.

⁴² Tex. Elec. Code § 67.017.

⁴³ Tex. Elec. Code § 18.069.

⁴⁴ Tex. Elec. Code § 87.121.

Voting Participation Review

The Secretary of State, in collaboration with other states, conducts a thorough review of voters who may have voted in more than one state or jurisdiction as well as those who may have been deceased at the time of the election. The voter participation review for the November 5, 2024 General Election did not identify any potential deceased voters or voters from Val Verde County who may have cast a ballot in another state or in another county within Texas.

Conclusion

Following the review of the November 5, 2024 General Election conducted in Val Verde County, the audit team identified the following areas of needed improvement:

Accuracy of the Voter List

Val Verde County does not have written policies and procedures for voter registration responsibilities in place. Though the county voter registrar could speak to daily routines related to the processing of voter registration applications and updates to those records, the office staff could not articulate any processes to validate the county voter registration list for accuracy.

Though the county staff indicated that the provisional ballots were processed immediately upon receipt after the election, a review of the records in the statewide voter registration system did not reflect the registration of the voters when appropriate or the informational updates to the voter records for those that were registered as listed by the voter on the provisional ballots. This is a critical responsibility of the county voter registrar in ensuring the registration of eligible voters and the accuracy of the county voter registration list.

Additionally, the county office is not properly following voter registration procedures as outlined by the Secretary of State. The county admitted that when entering registrations, the county is not conducting a countywide search within the state system to properly update registered voter records. Instead, the county staff is simply creating a new voter registration record. Failure to follow this procedure results in voters being registered more than once within Val Verde County. Though the county addressed the records in a timely manner, proper procedures would eliminate the creation of the duplicative records.

Redistricting

Val Verde County has not consistently maintained these jurisdictional boundaries within the statewide system. Failure to accurately maintain these boundaries has resulted in voters receiving ballots that did not include the correct races, or ballot styles, based on their residential address. During elections, upon notification from a voter that their ballot was incorrect, the election workers ask the impacted voter to pinpoint their residential address on a map in order to identify the correct ballot style. This process results in the voter casting a provisional ballot at the polling location. Failure to update jurisdictional boundaries in the system has led to increased voter confusion, a large number of voters not receiving the correct ballot styles and a high rate of provisional ballots being cast.

Election Security and Contingency Planning

Technical support services are provided by the Technology Services Department in Val Verde County. This department has a collaborative relationship with the Elections Department and worked to provide strong election security and network monitoring capabilities within the county. The county has worked to implement a segmented network for election office and all monitoring is conducted “in-house” by the technology department. Though the Val Verde Information Technology (IT) Director confirmed that the county has an Incident Response Plan (IRP) and his staff has been trained on how to implement the plan if needed, the county does not have a comprehensive written plan in place.

Training of Election Workers

Val Verde County should conduct a comprehensive review of their training program to ensure that curriculum, instructional presentations, and procedural resources clearly define expectations and promote a depth of understanding for election workers to successfully and securely administer elections within the county. Val Verde County must ensure that all election judges and clerks successfully complete the in-depth hands-on training necessary to properly set up all election equipment and to troubleshoot common operational issues as they arise. Currently, the hands-on training is optional.

Val Verde is encouraged to routinely conduct post-election audits of documentation for procedural compliance to measure the effectiveness of the county training program. Val Verde County must ensure that procedures are clearly defined, effective training is provided, and that all processes related to the handling and documenting of provisional ballots, limited ballots and statement of residence are implemented. A post-election audit identifying these discrepancies and inadequacies would arm Val Verde County with the information needed to strengthen the overall training program and improve the administration of elections.

Recommendations

Based on complaints received by The Secretary of State’s office and upon request of the Val Verde County Clerk who expressed significant concerns regarding the accuracy of the voter registration records and jurisdictional boundaries, the Secretary of State’s Office sent representatives to assist with updating and maintaining these boundary lines to ensure accurate voter registration records in both 2023 and 2024. During the audit, it became evident that despite this personal on-site assistance and training, Val Verde County has not maintained accurate voter registration records. This repeated failure to address critical issues in their voter registration process has resulted in voters receiving incorrect ballots, registrations being duplicated, and an inability to generate accurate voter registration lists. This has impeded the free exercise of Val Verde County citizens’ voting rights.

For these reasons, the Office of the Secretary of State is recommending that the Val Verde County Tax-Assessor Collector’s Office be placed under Administrative Oversight in accordance with Section 31.017 and 127.351 of the Texas Election Code.



Texas Secretary of State
Elections Division

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