



## Here Comes Another Election 2026 Doing Your Part - Ballot Processing Observation - Part 2



[Ballot Processing Observation: Part 1](#) guided you through the ballot processing steps of Intake, Signature Verification, Extraction and Inspection.

But the ballot's journey is far from over, and perhaps the most vital steps for observation are yet to come.

#### 4. Ballot Duplication (Remaking)

Ballots determined to be damaged (torn, crumpled, punctured, stained, containing personally identifying information) as well as marked sample ballots must be duplicated, or re-made.

Ballots faxed from overseas (UOCAVA ballots) and Remote Accessed Vote by Mail ballots (ballots emailed to handicapped voters for marking, printing and return from home) also require remaking.

Every county handles the duplication process differently. The basics, however, are the same:

- Ballots must be duplicated accurately, exactly as the voter marked them.
- Duplication must be done through a two-person process so there is a double-check on the work.
- The original ballot and the duplicate must be labeled with identical numbers so they may be re-married in case of audit.

- Observers must be allowed to observe in such a way that they can clearly see the markings on the original ballot and on the duplicate to ascertain the accuracy of the process.
- Observers may challenge the procedures as necessary to maintain legality.

**EIPCa suggests making duplication observation a priority.**

There are far more ballots duplicated than might be expected. Great care must be taken to ensure that each of them is ultimately tabulated so they are faithful to the voter's intent.

In the last few elections, serious concerns with overseas ballots have emerged.

**Your comments on your observations are immensely valuable.**

**5. Tabulation and Adjudication**

- A ballot's final step is the tabulation machine.
- The tabulation area is highly restricted, but accommodations should be made for Observers to see as much as possible through large windows or plexiglass walls.
- Ballots are fed in batches into the tabulator. If all ballots in the batch are readable, the machine will make a scanned copy of each ballot, tabulate the results of the votes, and release the totals only after all county polls are closed.
- If the batch contains any ballot on which the voter's intent is not clear, the scan of those ballots will be set aside for adjudication, and the remaining ballots will be sent through the tabulator again.
- Do not be concerned if a batch is sent through multiple times. That does not mean they're being counted more than once. If one or more ballots are slightly askew in the batch, the entire batch will have to be realigned and re-scanned.
- The machines are very sensitive. If there is paper dust or other dust detected, the machine will need to be cleaned before the batch can be re-scanned.

**What to look for:**

- Careful handling of ballots
- Secure bundling, labeling and storage of counted ballots
- Presence of individuals who do not appear to belong (no ID tags)
- Non-employees alone in the room (techs/consultants from the voting system company, for example)

- Flash drives inserted or removed from equipment
- Writing implements of any kind (not allowed)
- Vote by Mail ballots that appear not to have been folded

## **6. Adjudication**

Voters sometimes fail to follow directions in marking their ballots. They make Xs or check marks, or draw circles around instead of filling in the bubbles. Sometimes they make small marks by mistakes and then fill in a different bubble. There is an unending list of voter errors that make it impossible for the tabulator to discern the voter's intent.

The scans of such ballots are sent to computers to be evaluated by human adjudicators. Usually, the voter's intent is clear under human scrutiny, and the adjudicator digitally alters the scan of the ballot to equal the intent.

Adjudicators have a great deal of potential power. They have access to making any changes they choose on the ballots sent to them, and there will be no record of the action. For this reason, adjudicators need oversight.

### **What to look for:**

- Visual access for Observers
- Access to supervisor for Observer questions
- 2-person adjudication
- Accuracy of work

We have now reached the end of the lengthy journey of a vote by mail ballot. It should be clear that journey is fraught with vulnerability and danger all along the way. With more and more voters choosing to mark their mail-in ballots, seal them in the envelope and mail or submit them for all this processing, citizens need to “be there” to protect those ballots as they pass through hundreds of hands and vulnerabilities.

**Those ballots, those voters count on people like YOU.**

EIPCa looks forward to hearing encouraging reports that California citizens stepped up in heroic numbers and provided the oversight all elections deserve.

**EIPCa looks forward to providing you  
assistance and advice through our HOTLINES.**

**EIPCa wishes you an  
encouraging, productive and satisfying election season.**

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