



Glossary of Election Terminology



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Purpose

This glossary contains nearly 1,300 terms and phrases used in the administration of elections in the United States. The main purpose of the glossary is to provide election officials with a comprehensive resource of common words and phrases used in the administration of elections. The establishment of uniform election terminology is beneficial for ensuring consistency when communicating with the public about elections and voting. However, because election procedures and terminology vary by jurisdiction, it is best to always refer to state and local election officials when a term differs with the definitions in this glossary.

Glossary of Election Terminology

A

Abandoned Ballot

Ballot that the voter did not place in the ballot box or record as cast on a direct electronic recording device (DRE) before leaving the polling place.

Absentee Application

An application to receive an absentee ballot.

Absentee Ballot

A ballot cast by a voter other than in-person on election day. Some jurisdictions use the term synonymous with mailed ballots while other jurisdictions use the term synonymous with early voting.

Absentee Ballot Request Form

A form used by a voter to request an absentee ballot.

Absentee Mail Process

A series of actions or steps taken when voting using an absentee ballot.

Absentee Procedures

The established series of actions taken by an election official to process absentee ballots.

Absentee Vote

A vote cast using an absentee ballot.

Absentee Voter

A voter who uses an absentee ballot to vote.

Absentee Voter Status

A term used by election officials when determining whether a voter is eligible for, applied for or voted using an absentee ballot.

Absolute Majority

More than 50%.

Acceptance Testing

Examination of a voting system by the purchasing election jurisdiction to validate the performance of delivered devices to ensure they meet procurement requirements, and that the delivered system is, in fact, the certified system purchased. This usually happens in a simulated-use environment.

Access Control

The process of granting or denying specific requests to obtain and use information, and related information processing services, and enter specific physical facilities.

Access Board

Independent federal agency whose primary mission is accessibility for people with disabilities and a leading source of information on accessible design.

Accessibility

Measurable characteristics that indicate the degree to which a system is available to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities. The most common disabilities include those associated with vision, hearing and mobility, as well as cognitive disabilities.

Accessibility Requirements

The set of laws, statutes and procedures that govern the voting process to ensure that voting is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Accessible Facility

A location that meets all of the laws and statues to ensure that it is available and usable by individuals with disabilities.

Accessible Voting Station

Voting station equipped for individuals with disabilities.

Accreditation

Formal recognition that a laboratory is competent to carry out specific tests or calibrations.

Accreditation Body

(1) Authoritative body that performs accreditation. (2) An independent organization responsible for assessing the performance of other organizations against a recognized standard, and for formally confirming the status of those that meet the standard.

Accuracy

(1) Extent to which a given measurement agrees with an accepted standard for that measurement. (2) Closeness of the agreement between the result of a measurement and a true value of the particular quantity subject to measurement. Accuracy is a qualitative concept and is not interchangeable with precision.

Accuracy For Voting Systems

Ability of the system to capture, record, store, consolidate and report the specific selections and absence of selections, made by the voter for each ballot position without error. Required accuracy is defined in terms of an error rate that for testing purposes represents the maximum number of errors allowed while processing a specified volume of data.

Activation Device

Programmed device that creates credentials necessary to begin a voting session using a specific ballot style. Examples include electronic poll books and card activators that contain credential information necessary to determine the appropriate ballot style for the voter.

Active Registered Voter

A voter whose record is current with the appropriate election authority and is eligible to vote.

Active Status

A term used by election officials when a voter's record shows that the voter is eligible to vote. Active status may not be accurate if the facts have changed since a voter last updated their record.

Adjudication

Process of resolving cast ballots to reflect voter intent. Common reasons that ballots require adjudication include: write-ins, overvotes, marginal machine-readable mark, having no contest selections marked on the entire ballot, or the ballot being unreadable by a scanner.

Adjudicated Ballot

A voted ballot that contains contest selections that required adjudication.

Advance(d) Ballot

A ballot cast prior to election day.

Advisory Board Member

A member of an advisory board or panel.

Advisory Panel

A group of individuals and organizations that provides non-binding strategic advice to the management of a corporation, organization, or foundation.

Affidavit

A written statement confirmed by oath or affirmation.

Affidavit For Absentee Ballot

A form used by a voter to request an absentee ballot that is confirmed by oath or affirmation.

Affidavit of Circulator

A written statement confirmed by oath or affirmation by a person who gathered voters' signatures on a petition.

Affidavit of Identity

A document containing personally identifiable information used to verify your identity or signature.

Affidavit of Registration

A document containing personally identifiable information used to verify your identity or signature.

Affiliation

Officially associated with an organization. In terms of voting, this usually refers to voters registering to vote and formally associating themselves with a recognized political party.

Air gap

A physical separation between systems that requires data to be moved by some external, manual process. Denotes no connection to the internet or other digital networks.

Alert time

The amount of time that a voting device will wait for a detectable voter activity after issuing an alert, before going into an inactive state requiring election official intervention.

Alternative Format

Providing a different way of accessing information, such as an accessible ballot.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

Anonymous Contributions

Financial contributions made to an organized campaign, that do not require disclosure of the person or organization that made the contribution.

Appeal

(1) When parties to an action request that a higher authority review a formal decision. (2) A formal process by which the EAC is petitioned to reconsider an Agency Decision.

Appeal Authority

The individual or individuals appointed to serve as the determination authority on appeal.

Appeals Process

The process in which decisions are reviewed after an appeal to a decision has been requested.

Application for Ballot By Mail (ABBM)

A document used to request a ballot be mailed to a voter.

Appointed At Large

A member of a governing body who is appointed to represent a whole membership or population (notably a city, county, state, province, nation, club or association), rather than a subset.

Appointed Incumbent

A candidate who is currently serving in an office they were appointed to, and they are a candidate for election to the same office.

Appointed Member

A member of Congress who holds an office they were appointed to, and they are a currently a candidate for election to the same office.

Appointed To Serve Until Next General Election

A person who has been appointed by a governing authority to fill a vacancy in a public office, that will be on the ballot in the next General election.

Appointee

A person who has been appointed to a position in government by an appointing authority.

Appointing Authority

An officer or agency having power to make appointments to positions of public service.

Apportionment

Process of dividing membership or voters.

Appropriation

A sum of money or total of assets devoted to a special purpose.

Approval Voting

An electoral system where each voter may select any number of candidates, and the winner is the candidate approved by the largest number of voters. It is distinct from plurality voting, in which a voter may choose only one option among several, whereby the option with the most votes is chosen.

Assembly

The name given to various legislatures, especially lower houses or full legislatures in states in federal systems of government.

Assembly District

One of a fixed number of districts into which a state is divided, each district electing one member to the lower house of the state legislature.

Assembly Member

A person elected or appointed to the lower house of a state legislature.

Assistance to Vote

Voters with disabilities are allowed assistance from a person of their choice with limited exceptions.

Assistant of Voters

A poll worker or individual chosen by a voter to assist in the voting process.

Assistive Technology

An item used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.

Asymmetric Cryptography

Encryption system that uses a public and private key pair for cryptographic operation. The private key is generally stored in a user's digital certificate and used typically to decrypt or digitally sign data. The public key is used typically to encrypt the data or verify its digital signatures. The keys could be used interchangeably as needed, that is, a public key can be used to decrypt data and the private key can be used to encrypt the data.

At Large

The whole membership or population (notably a city, county, state, province, nation, club or association), rather than a subset.

Attest

Be a witness to or formally certify.

Audio Ballot

A ballot in which a set of offices is presented to the voter in spoken form.

Audio Format

A ballot display format in which contest options and other information are communicated through sounds and speech.

Audio Function with Headset And Earphones

A ballot display format in which contest options and other information are communicated through sounds and speech.

Audio-Tactile Interface (ATI)

Voter interface designed to not require visual reading of a ballot. Audio is used to convey information to the voter and sensitive tactile controls allow the voter to communicate ballot selections to the voting system.

Audit

(1) Systematic, independent, documented process for determining the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled. (2) A review of a system and its controls to determine its operational status and the accuracy of its outputs.

Audit Device

Device dedicated exclusively to independently verifying or assessing a voting systems' performance.

Audit Trail

Information recorded during election activities to reconstruct steps followed or to later verify actions taken with respect to election procedures and voting systems.

Audit Trail for Direct-Recording Equipment

Paper printout of votes cast, produced by direct-recording electronic (DRE) voting machines, which election officials may use to cross-check electronically tabulated totals.

Auditor

A person who is performing an audit of any part of the election process.

Authentication

Verifying the identify of a user, process, device, or component of a system, often as a prerequisite to allowing access to resources in an information system but can also refer to verifying the authenticity of voter or ballot.

Authorized Poll Agent

In certain states, a chairperson of an organized party committee, candidate or precinct committee who is appointed to observe an election.

Automated Voter Registration

Voter registration system whereby eligible voters are given the option to register to vote electronically whenever they interact with government agencies.

Automatic Voter Registration (AVR)

Under an automatic voter registration system, eligible voters are automatically registered to vote whenever they interact with government agencies (e.g., departments of motor vehicles).

Availability

The percentage of time during which a system is operating properly and available for use.

B

Ballot

The official presentation of all of the contests to be decided in a particular election. Either in paper or electronic format, the mechanism for voters to show their voter preferences.

Ballot Access

The ability to mark, cast, and verify a ballot privately and independently.

Ballot Board

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities and charged with control of elections and voting procedure.

Ballot Box

A sealed container that holds ballots cast by voters.

Ballot Card

A card or a number of cards upon which are printed, or identified by reference to the ballot, the names of candidates for nomination or election to one or more offices or the ballot titles of one or more measures.

Ballot Cast

The final action a voter takes in selecting contest options and irrevocably confirming their intent to vote as selected. Examples include when a ballot has been deposited by the voter in the ballot box, mailbox, drop box or electronically submitted for tabulation.

Ballot Configuration

Particular set of contests to appear on the ballot for a particular election district, their order, the list of ballot positions for each contest, and the binding of candidate names to ballot positions.

Ballot Counter

Feature in a voting device that counts the votes cast in an election. This can also refer to a person who counts vote by hand.

Ballot Counting Logic

The software logic that defines the combinations of voter choices that are valid and invalid on a given ballot and that determines how the vote choices are totaled in a given election.

Ballot Data

A list of contests and associated options that may appear on a ballot for a particular election.

Ballot Designation

A description, name or formal title printed under a candidate's name on a ballot. May also include a candidate's political party or incumbent status.

Ballot Drop Box

A locked container, either indoor or outdoor, where voters can return an absentee ballot for collection directly by an election official.

Ballot Envelope

The official inner and outer envelopes used to transport absentee and mailed ballots.

Ballot Exhaustion

Refers to processing a ranked choice voting contest on a cast ballot, when that ballot becomes inactive and cannot be advanced in the tabulation for a contest because there are no further valid rankings on the ballot for continuing contest options.

Ballot Fatigue

Phenomenon where voters opt not to vote on races or issues appearing further down the ballot.

Ballot Format

The concrete presentation of the contents of a ballot appropriate to the particular voting technology being used. The contents may be rendered using various methods of presentation (visual or audio), language or graphics.

Ballot Harvesting

The act of collecting ballots, typically by a political party or nonprofit organization, for multiple voters and returning those ballots to an elections office on behalf of those voters. The legality of this practice varies by state, with some states allowing the practice, limiting who can return ballots on behalf of others or banning the practice completely.

Ballot Image

Electronically produced record of all votes cast by a single voter. Also, can mean a digital image of a voted ballot captured by a voting system or ballot tabulation device.

Ballot Instructions

Information provided to a voter that describes the procedures for marking the ballot. This information may appear directly on the paper or electronic ballot or may be provided separately.

Ballot Label

The portion of voting materials that contains information about voters, candidates, ballots, contests or other election data.

Ballot Layout

The concrete presentation of the contents of a ballot appropriate to the particular voting technology being used. The contents may be rendered using various methods of presentation (visual or audio), language or graphics.

Ballot Manifest

A catalog prepared by election officials listing all the physical paper ballots and their locations in sequence. This is a requirement for a Risk Limiting Audit but can be used to track ballot inventory and create an audit record for other types of audits.

Ballot Marking Device

A device that permits contest options to be reviewed on an electronic interface, produces a human-readable paper ballot, and does not make any other lasting record of the voter's selections.

Ballot Measure

(1) A question that appears on the ballot for approval or rejection. (2) A contest on a ballot where the voter may vote yes or no.

Ballot on Demand

A process that produces a paper ballot of the required ballot style with the contests and candidates specific to a voter. This process requires a system with a printer that can create paper ballots that can be tabulated on a voting system and device with all of the data needed to print a ballot style associated with a specific voter. Note: "ballot on demand" is a registered trademark of ES&S, but it is a term that is commonly used for similar systems.

Ballot Order

(1) The order in which contests and candidates appear on a ballot. The order candidates and issues appear on the ballot vary by state. (2) The term used when an election official requests a ballot printer to print a specific number of ballots.

Ballot Pamphlet

Official information about your ballot issued from an elections office, often referred to as a voter information guide.

Ballot Pickup

Refers to the act of collecting an absentee or mailed ballot, instead of returning it via drop box, through the mail, or delivery.

Ballot Position

A specific place in a ballot where a voter's selection for a particular contest may be indicated. Positions may be connected to row and column numbers on the face of a voting machine or ballot, particular bit positions in a binary record of a ballot (for example, an electronic ballot image), or the equivalent in some other form. Ballot positions are bound to specific contests and candidate names by the ballot configuration.

Ballot Preparation

Selecting the specific contests and questions to be contained in a ballot format and related instructions; preparing and testing election-specific software containing these selections; producing all possible ballot formats; and validating the correctness of ballot materials and software containing these selections for an upcoming election.

Ballot Production

Process of generating ballots for presentation to voters, for example, printing paper ballots, or configuring the ballot presentation for an electronic display.

Ballot Question

Proposals to enact new laws or constitutional amendments that are placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Ballot Remake

A ballot substituted for a damaged or partially invalid ballot -- usually remade by a regulated process where the votes from the damaged or partially invalid ballot are duplicated onto another ballot that can be tabulated by a scanner.

Ballot Rotation

Process of varying the order of the candidate names within a given contest. This practice varies by state.

Ballot Scanner

Device used to read the voter selection data from a paper ballot or ballot card.

Ballot Secrecy

A set of rules and procedures to establish the fundamental right of voters in the United States to cast a secret ballot. These procedures ensure that no ballot can be associated with a voter, thereby allowing voters to mark their ballots freely and without fear of repercussion or reprisal.

Ballot Stub

A small strip, usually located at the top of a ballot, that is perforated with information about the ballot such as a serial number, the date of the election, and jurisdiction where the election is being held.

Ballot Stuffing

The act of casting illegal votes or submitting more than one ballot per voter when only one ballot per voter is permitted.

Ballot Style

A ballot with a specific set of contests and candidates for a particular precinct. Ballot styles vary based on which combination of contests and which party affiliation (in primary elections), that voters are eligible to participate in. Ballot style varies based on the contests voters are eligible to vote on and, during primary elections, their party affiliation.

Ballot Title

(1) The official short summary of a ballot measure that appears on a ballot. (2) The ballot title typically includes the election date and type (Special, Primary, or General) of election.

Ballot Types

A ballot with a specific set of contests and candidates for a particular precinct. Ballot styles vary based on which combination of contests and which party affiliation (in a primary election), that voters are eligible to participate in.

Barcode

An optical and machine-readable representation of data as a sequence of bars and spaces that conform to accepted standards. A QR code is an example of a barcode.

Barcode Reader

Device used to scan barcodes and convert the encoded information into a usable format. Barcode readers are used to scan codes on a variety of election materials including ballots, driver's licenses, voter ID cards, voter information packets, envelopes, and other election documents.

Baseline Voting

A vote variation in which the candidate with the most votes wins. In single-seat contests, the voter may only select one contest option. In multi-seat contests, the voter may select up to the number of contests specified on the ballot.

Batch

A collection of paper ballots gathered as a group for tabulation and auditing.

Batch-fed scanner

- An electronic voting device that:
- accepts stacks of hand-marked or BMD-produced paper ballots and automatically processes them until the stack is empty;
- is usually used at an election jurisdiction's central location;
- is mostly commonly used to process absentee ballots;
- usually has input and output hoppers for ballots;
- scans a ballot and rejects it if either unreadable or un-processable;
- detects, interprets, and validates contest selections;
- detects and sorts (either digitally or physically) ballots that are unreadable or unprocessable, or that contain undeterminable selections, marking exceptions, or write-ins; and
- tabulates and reports contest results as required.

Benchmark

Quantitative point of reference to which the measured performance of a system or device may be compared.

Bicameral

A legislative body having two branches or chambers.

Biennial

Taking place every other year. Federal elections take place biennially in even-numbered years.

Biennium

A specified period of two years.

Bilingual Requirements

The list of laws and regulations that determine which election materials need to be available in languages other than English.

Blank Ballot

An issued ballot without any selections made.

Blank Space

An area on the ballot typically used by voters to write in a name that is not already pre-printed with the other candidate's name on the ballot for that contest.

Blanket Primary

Primary election wherein a voter may vote for candidates from any party, regardless of the political party affiliation of the voter or candidates.

Blind

Very limited or lack of vision.

Block Voting

A system in which a voter can select as many candidates as there are open seats.

Board (Election)

A group of individuals working together to complete an elections task. Examples include Precinct Boards, Canvassing Boards, Auditing Boards, among others.

Board of Canvassers

A group of individuals working together, following specific rules and procedures, to compile, review, and validate election materials.

Board of Commissioners

The governing body of a county in many U.S. states, especially in the Midwest and the East, consisting of members elected by the voters.

Board of Directors

A board that manages the affairs of an institution or local government.

Board of Elections

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities, and charged with control of elections and voting procedures.

Board of Registrars

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities and charged with control of elections and voting.

Board of Supervisors

The governing body of a county in many U.S. states, especially in the West, consisting of members elected by the voters.

Bond

A debt in which the authorized issuer owes the holders a debt and is obliged to repay the principal and interest at a later date. Bonds questions may be placed on local ballots to approve or deny a bond and, if approved by voters, the bond may be repaid through the collection of property taxes within a determined jurisdiction, school district, or special district. Ballot questions may be placed on Statewide ballots and, if approved by voters, the bond is repaid with taxes or fees collected by the State.

Bond Election

An election where a proposal to allow a state or local government to approve additional spending in which a debt and obligation are repaid with interest appears on the ballot for voters to decide on.

Bond Issue

A proposal to allow a state or local government to approve additional spending in which a debt and obligation are repaid with interest.

Bond Proposition

When a state or local government places a question before the voters as a ballot measure, asking them to approve additional proposed spending using a bond.

Bond Referendum

A proposal to repeal a law authorizing a bond that was previously enacted by a governing body, and that is placed on the ballot to be approved or rejected by voters.

Borough

A town, village, or part of a large city that has its own government.

Boundary Line

The line that divides a precinct, city, or other political unit from another.

Braille Voting Instructions

Voting instructions written in characters that are represented by patterns of raised dots which are read through touch.

Butterfly Ballot

A ballot that has the names of candidates down both sides of a ballot, with a single column to mark choices down the middle.

C

Call an Election

When an authorized government authority proclaims that an election will take place at a particular time.

Campaign

A series of democratic activities to influence a political vote for or against candidates or ballot questions.

Campaign Contributions

Anything of value given, loaned or advanced to influence a political vote for or against candidates or ballot questions.

Campaign Disclosure

The act of reporting campaign contributions.

Campaign Expense Report

Report that details political expenses required to be filed by a governing authority.

Campaign Finance

The act of raising and spending funds for political purposes.

Campaign Finance Disclosure Statements

Reports that detail political contributions and expenses required to be filed by a governing authority.

Campaign Finance Laws

A set of laws that detail the rules and regulations for raising and spending funds and contributions for political purposes.

Campaign Finance Report

Reports that detail political contributions and expenses required to be filed by a governing authority.

Campaign Finance Reporting Requirements

A set of requirements that detail the rules and regulations for raising and spending funds and contributions for political purposes.

Campaign Materials

The documents, resources and other materials used to influence a political vote for or against candidates or ballot questions. Campaign materials may include t-shirts, buttons, bumper stickers, yard signs, and other printed materials.

Campaign Signs

A sign advertising a particular vote.

Cancellation Notices

Written messages to voters informing them they have been removed from voter registration lists.

Cancellation of Registration

The act of removing a voter from a voter registration list.

Cancelled Voter Status

A term used by election officials when a voter's record shows that the voter has been removed from the voting rolls.

Candidacy

The state of being a candidate.

Candidate

A person who is seeking nomination or election to a specified office and who either has met the legal requirements to have his/her name printed on the ballot or is eligible to have his/her name written in on the ballot and counted as the voter's choice for the contest. Note - federal campaign finance and some states do not require a person to have filed petitions to be considered a candidate. Raising money alone can make you a candidate.

Candidate Committee

A group of individuals organized for political purposes to support or oppose candidates for public office.

Candidate Nomination Procedures

The official procedures to propose an individual to be considered for public office.

Candidate Petitions

A formal written document signed by registered voters to request the names of candidates be placed on election ballots .

Candidate Registration

The act of completing the required paperwork to become a certified candidate for public office.

Candidate Roster

A formal list of candidates.

Candidate Statement

A written summary of information about a candidate for public office for the purposes of influencing voters.

Candidate Withdrawal

When a person announces a candidacy or files for an election but later decides—by their own choice—not to appear on the final ballot.

Candidate Withdrawal Periods

The time frame when an individual may remove their name from the list of candidates for public office.

Candidates List

Official listing of all qualified candidates for a public office up for election.

Canvass

(1) Aggregating or confirming every valid ballot cast and counted, which includes absentee, early voting, Election Day, provisional, challenged, and uniformed and overseas citizen. (2) Solicit votes.

Canvass Report

A detailed report of activities and information about the canvass of an election.

Canvassing Board

A group of individuals working together, following specific rules and procedures, to compile, review and validate election materials.

Carry an Election

To win an election.

Cast

The final action a voter takes in selecting contest options and irrevocably confirming their intent to vote as selected.

Cast Ballot

A ballot has been deposited by the voter in the ballot box, mailbox, drop box or electronically submitted for tabulation.

Cast Vote Record

Permanent record of all votes produced by a single voter whether in electronic, paper or other form. Also referred to as ballot image when used to refer to electronic ballots.

Cast Your Ballot (Cast Your Vote)

The act of a voter to place their completed paper ballot in a ballot box, to confirm and record their choices on a touch screen voting device at a voting location, to place a completed ballot in the mail or a drop box or to send a completed ballot through electronic transmission to an elections office. Once a ballot is cast, it usually cannot be changed.

Catastrophic System Failure

Total loss of function or functions, such as the loss or unrecoverable corruption of voting data or the failure of an on-board battery of volatile memory.

Caucus

(1) A closed meeting of a group of persons belonging to the same political party or faction usually to select candidates or to decide on policy. (2) A group of people united to promote an agreed-upon cause.

Caucus Election

A meeting at which local members of a political party register their preference among candidates running for office or select delegates to attend a convention.

Caucus System

Rules and regulations that determine the process for a meeting at which local members of a political party register their preference among candidates running for office or select delegates to attend a convention.

Central Absentee Precinct

A central absentee precinct (CAP) is a precinct established in the courthouse or other public building in a county or city for the receiving, counting, and recording of absentee ballots cast in the county or city.

Central Committee

The organization of the central or executive committees of the political parties in a county, state, or other political subdivision.

Central Count

An act of tabulating ballots from multiple precincts at a central location.

Central Count Process

The rules and regulations followed when tabulating ballots from multiple precincts at a central location.

Central Count Voting System

A voting system that tabulates ballots from multiple precincts at a central location. Voted ballots are placed into secure storage at the polling place. Stored ballots are transported or transmitted to a central counting place which produces the vote count report.

Central Counting Station

A site used to check in, process or tabulate ballots from multiple precincts as a central location.

Central Reporting Device

Electronic voting device that consolidates and reports vote totals from multiple precincts at a central location.

Central Voter Register List

A list of voters maintained in a single, uniform, official, computerized statewide database of registered voters.

Centralized Voter Registration Database (CVR)

A single, uniform, official, computerized statewide database of registered voters.

Certificate

An official document attesting a certain fact.

Certificate of Circulator

A written statement confirmed by oath or affirmation by a person who gathered voter's signatures on a petition.

Certificate of Election

A written statement confirming that a candidate was elected to public office.

Certificate of Error

A written statement detailing an election error.

Certificate of Nomination

A written statement confirming that a candidate received one of the highest numbers of votes for public office, usually indicating they will be moving on to a general or run-off election.

Certificate of Permanent Disability

A form completed by a licensed or certified health professional, or designated agency attesting to an individual's disability.

Certificate of Registration

An official, sworn statement by an elections office to attest that a citizen is a registered voter.

Certificate of Restoration

A certificate issued by a judicial system to restore voting rights.

Certification

Procedure by which a third party gives written assurance that a product, process, or service conforms to specified requirements.

Certification of Election

A written statement attesting that the tabulation and canvassing of the election is complete and accurate.

Certification of Official Election Results

A written statement attesting that the election results are a true and accurate accounting of all votes cast in a particular election.

Certification of Signatures

A written statement attesting that the number of signatures on a petition counted as valid or rejected is a true and accurate accounting of the facts.

Certification Requirements

The laws and regulations that govern the conditions that are essential elements to certify an elections or voting process.

Certification Testing

Testing performed under either national or state certification processes to verify voting system conformance to requirements.

Certified Election Results

Final vote tallies that have been attested as true and accurate by the official responsible for confirming their accuracy.

Certify

The act of a third party giving written assurance that a product, process or service conforms to specified requirements.

Chad

A small piece of wastepaper produced by punching a hole in punched card or tape.

Chain of Custody

A process used to track the movement and control of an asset through its lifecycle by documenting each person and organization who handles an asset, the date/time it was collected or transferred, and the purpose of the transfer.

Challenge

Questioning the eligibility of a voter to cast a ballot, or to accept a ballot for counting.

Challenged Ballot

Ballot voted by an individual whose eligibility to vote has been questioned by another (typically an election official). The ballot is held until the reason for the challenge is resolved.

Challenged Voter

A voter whose eligibility to cast a ballot has been questioned.

Challenger

An individual or official who questions the eligibility of a voter to cast a ballot, or to accept a ballot for counting.

Change in Political Affiliation

The act of a voter re-registering to vote with a different political preference or association.

Change of Address

The act of a voter re-registering to vote to update their residence or mailing address. Voters can also update their address at approved government agencies such as the Department of Motor Vehicles and the United States Postal Service.

Change of Party

The act of a voter re-registering to vote with a different political preference or association.

Charter

A written document by a legislative authority, such as a City or County, that defines the laws and regulations of that body.

Charter Amendment

An amendment to a written document that has been adopted by a legislative authority, such as a City or County, that modifies its organizing charter.

Check the Box

The act of marking a vote on a ballot.

Chief Election Officer

The official responsible for overseeing elections in a jurisdiction.

Chief Inspector

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Chief State Election Officer

The official responsible for overseeing elections in a state.

Circulate

The act of attempting to gather signatures from voters for initiatives, referendums, or candidates.

Circulation

The process of gathering signatures for initiatives, referendums or candidates.

Circulator

A person who presents petitions to voters to gather signatures for initiatives, referendums, or candidates.

Circulator Statement

A written statement confirmed by oath or affirmation by a person who gathered voter's signatures on a petition.

Citizen

A person who, by place of birth, nationality of one or both parents, or naturalization is granted full rights and responsibilities as a member of a nation or political community, including the right to vote if not otherwise ineligible.

Citizen Initiatives

The procedure by which citizens can propose a law directly to a governing body.

City

An incorporated local government body within a state.

City Charter

A written document by a City that defines the laws and regulations of that body.

City Clerk

A city official who is responsible for election administration for a city.

City General Municipal Election

A regular election of candidates and measures within a city.

City Ordinance

A law passed by a city.

City Special Municipal Election

An election held other than a regularly scheduled primary or general election within a city.

Claim of Conformance

Statement by a vendor declaring that a specific product conforms to a particular standard or set of standard profiles; for voting systems, NASED qualification or EAC certification provides independent verification of a claim.

Clerk

An official responsible for administering an election or an election process.

Clerk of Absentee Voting

An official responsible for overseeing absentee voting or a portion of the absentee voting process.

Close of Registration

The last day that a citizen can register to vote or update their voter registration before an election.

Closed Primary

Primary election in which voters receive a ballot listing only those candidates running for office in the political party with which the voters are affiliated. In some states, non-partisan contests and ballot issues may be included.

Code of Conduct

A set of rules outlining the norms, rules, and responsibilities or proper practices of an individual or organization.

Code of Conduct of Elected Officials

A set of rules outlining the norms, rules, and responsibilities or proper practices of election officials.

Combined Precinct

Two or more precincts treated as a single precinct for a specific election.

Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS)

Software, firmware, device, or component that is used in the United States by many different people or organizations for many different applications other than certified voting systems and that is incorporated into the voting system with no manufacturer- or application-specific modification.

Common Data Format

Standard and practice of storing and creating data in a common, described format that can be read by other systems.

Common Industry Format (CIF)

Refers to the format described in ANSI/INCITS 354-2001 "Common Industry Format (CIF) for Usability Test Reports."

Component

Element within a larger system; a component can be hardware or software. For hardware, it is a physical part of a subsystem that can be used to compose larger systems (e.g., circuit boards, internal modems, processors, computer memory). For software, it is a module of executable code that performs a well-defined function and interacts with other components.

Computer Judge

Vote center election worker who checks the voter's ID and signature, and processes the voter in the electronic poll book.

Conditional Voter Registration

Some states use this term to define the action of an individual registering and casting a provisional ballot after the statutory deadline, but whose eligibility or registration status could not be confirmed when they present themselves to vote.

Conduct an Election

The act of managing, running, and overseeing an election.

Configuration Management

Discipline applying technical and administrative direction and surveillance to identify and document functional and physical characteristics of a configuration item, control changes to these characteristics, record and report change processing and implementation status, and verify compliance with specified requirements.

Configuration Management Plan

Document detailing the process for identifying, controlling and managing various released items (such as code, hardware and documentation).

Configuration Status Accounting

An element of configuration management, consisting of the recording and reporting of information needed to manage a configuration effectively. This includes a listing of the approved configuration identification, the status of proposed changes to the configuration, and the implementation status of approved changes.

Confirmation Mailing

A notice mailed to a voter to confirm changes made to their information on a voter list. The notice may request that the voter take an action to confirm that the information contained in the notice is accurate.

Confirmation Notice

A notice mailed to a voter to confirm changes made to their information on a voter list. The notice may request that the voter take an action to confirm that the information contained in the notice is accurate.

Conformance

Fulfilling specified requirements by a product, process, or service.

Conformance Testing

Process of testing an implementation against the requirements specified in one or more standards. The outcomes of a conformance test are generally a pass or fail result, possibly including reports of problems encountered during the execution. Also known as certification testing.

Congressional District

The area within the boundaries of a state which a member of the U.S. House of Representatives is elected.

Congressional Election

An election when voters participate to election their U.S. House of Representative.

Connect the Arrow

On certain ballots, voters are instructed to draw a single line to connect the head and tail of the arrow that points to the choice to vote for a candidate or measure, instead of filling in a bubble or marking an X.

Consolidated Election

An election where more than one jurisdiction is holding an election on the same day, and participating jurisdictions take an official action to combine elections on the same ballot.

Consolidated Precinct

Two or more precincts treated as a single precinct for a specific election.

Consolidated Primaries

An election where more than one jurisdiction is holding an election on the same day, one of which is a scheduled primary election, and participating jurisdictions take an official action to combine elections on the same ballot.

Constituent

A person who is represented politically by a designated government official or officeholder, especially when the official is one that the person represented has the opportunity to participate in selecting through voting.

Constitution

The basic principles and laws of a nation, state, or social group that determine the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people in it.

Contest

(1) A single decision or set of associated decisions being put before the voters (for example, the option of candidates to fill a particular public office or the approval or disapproval of a constitutional amendment). This term encompasses other terms such as “race,” “question,” and “issue” that are sometimes used to refer to specific kinds of contests. (2) A legal challenge of an election outcome.

Contested Races

An election contest with more candidates than there are vacancies for that election.

Continue Voting

Terminology used in some electronic voting systems or ballot marking devices to indicate that the voter either has more selections or has not cast their ballot.

Contribution

Anything of value given, loaned or advanced to influence a political vote for or against candidates or ballot questions.

Contribution Limit

The maximum amount that an individual or organization may give, loan or advance to influence a political vote for or against candidates or ballot questions.

Contributions and Expenses Reports

Reports that detail political contributions and expenses required to be filed by a governing authority.

Contributions and Spending Limits

The regulations that govern the maximum amount that a candidate or committee can spend to influence a political vote and that an individual or organization may give, loan or advance to influence a political vote for or against candidates or ballot questions.

Controls

A device, procedure, or subsystem, which when properly designed and implemented, ensures correctness of operation in a system. Common controls include completeness of processing checks, authentication of users, and accuracy in processing. Controls can be preventative (prevent anomalies from occurring) or paired, detective and corrective controls.

Corrective Action

Action taken to eliminate the causes of an existing deficiency or other undesirable situation in order to prevent recurrence.

Council District

The area within the boundaries of a state which a member of a City or Town Council is elected.

Count

Process of totaling votes.

Counted Ballot

Ballot that has been processed and whose votes are included in the candidates and measures vote totals.

County

A political and administrative division of a state, providing certain local government services.

County Auditor

A county official, in some states, who is responsible for election administration for a county.

County Board of Election

A group of individuals charged with control of elections and voting procedures for a county.

County Board of Supervisors

The governing body of a county in many U.S. states, especially in the West, consisting of members elected by the voters.

County Clerk

A county official who is responsible for election administration for a county.

County Commission

The governing body of a county in many U.S. states, especially in the Midwest and the East, consisting of members elected by the voters.

County Election Commission

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities and charged with control of elections and voting procedure.

County Election Officer

An official who is responsible for election administration for a county.

County Election Precinct

Election administrative division corresponding to a geographic area that is the basis for determining which contests the voters legally residing in that area are eligible to vote on.

County Elections Officials

Officials who are responsible for election administration for a county.

County Measure

A law, issue, or question that appears on a ballot for voters of a county to decide on.

County Recorder

A county official, in some states, who is responsible for election administration for a county.

County of Residence

The county in a state or territory in which, at the time a person or receives services, the person is living and has established an ongoing presence for a permanent or indefinite period of time.

County Special District

A political subdivision of a county established to provide a single public service (such as water supply or sanitation) within a specific geographic area.

Competency Order

An order issued by a court determining whether a person has the mentally capacity to vote.

Critical Infrastructure

The physical and cyber systems and assets that are so vital to the United States that their incapacity or destruction would have a debilitating impact on our physical or economic security or public health or safety.

Cross-Filing

Endorsement of a single candidate or slate of candidates by more than one political party. The candidate or slate appears on the ballot representing each endorsing political party. Also referred to as cross-party endorsement.

Cross-party endorsement

Endorsement of a single candidate or slate of candidates by more than one political party. The candidate or slate appears on the ballot representing each endorsing political party.

Crossover Voting

The act of a voter participating in a partisan primary election of a party that they are not officially registered or affiliated with.

Cryptographic Key

Value used to control cryptographic operations, such as decryption, encryption, signature generation or signature verification.

Cryptography

Discipline that embodies the principles, means, and methods for the transformation of data in order to hide their semantic content, prevent their unauthorized use, prevent their undetected modification and establish their authenticity.

Cumulative Voting

A vote variation used in a multiple seat contest where a voter is permitted to distribute a specified number of votes to one or more contest options. Two major variations are used in US elections, one of which may result in fractional votes.

Curbside Voting

When a voter cannot enter a polling place, in some jurisdictions election officers are authorized to assist a voter with voting and casting a ballot outside of the polling place.

Cure

The process of fixing an error or providing information to an elections office when your ballot has originally been rejected for counting.

Cured Ballot

A ballot that was originally rejected for an error or because it was missing required information but was ultimately counted because the voter corrected the error or supplied the required information.

Cure Period

The time period authorized by law or regulations that a voter has to provide required information to allow a ballot to be counted that was originally rejected. This process is often authorized when signatures on ballot envelopes do not compare to signatures on voter registration cards, or if a voter forgets to sign their ballot envelope.

Current Resident Address

The address where you are current living.

Custodian

Person with the responsibility for protecting information assets.

Cybersecurity

Measures taken to protect computer systems and data from attack and unauthorized access or use.

D

Damaged Ballot

A ballot that has been torn, bent, or otherwise mutilated or rendered unreadable such that it cannot be processed by the ballot tabulating equipment designed for use with the ballot.

Data Accuracy

(1) Data accuracy is defined in terms of ballot position error rate. This rate applies to the voting functions and supporting equipment that capture, record, store, consolidate and report the specific selections, and absence of selections, made by the voter for each ballot position. (2) The system's ability to process voting data absent internal errors generated by the system. It is distinguished from data integrity, which encompasses errors introduced by an outside source.

Data Integrity

Invulnerability of the system to accidental intervention or deliberate, fraudulent manipulation that would result in errors in the processing of data. It is distinguished from data accuracy which encompasses internal, system-generated errors.

Data Security

The practice of protecting digital information from unauthorized access, corruption, or theft throughout its entire lifecycle.

Deadline for Voting

The latest time and date that a citizen can vote.

Deaf

Hearing loss so severe that there is very little or no functional hearing.

Decertification

Revocation of national or state certification of voting system hardware and software.

Declaration of Assistance to Vote

A form completed by a disabled voter to either request or deny assistance during the voting process.

Declaration of Candidacy

The act of completing the required paperwork to become a candidate for public office.

Declaration of Intent

The act of completing the required paperwork to declare a person's intent to become a candidate for public office.

Declaration of Intent to Solicit and Receive Contributions

A document filed with a governing authority to declare a person's intent to raise and spend political contributions.

Declaration of Write-in Candidate

A document filed with a governing authority to declare a person's intent to seek election to an office where their name will not be pre-printed on a ballot but need a voter to write in the candidate's name on a blank space for that contest.

Decryption

Process of changing encrypted text into plain text.

Defective Ballot

A ballot that has been torn, defaced, or marked in a way that it cannot be tabulated by a scanner.

Defense-In-Depth

Multiple levels of logical and physical security measures that deny a single point of security failure in a system. Also called the "Castle" approach.

Delegate

An authorized person sent to represent others, in particular an elective representative.

Democracy

A government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.

Deputy

A person who is empowered or authorized to act on behalf of a person in authority. Election officials can administer an oath to citizens to carry out official election duties as their deputies in some States.

Designation

A description, name, or formal title. In some jurisdictions, a candidate may submit a descriptive designation to be printed under their name on the ballot.

Device

Functional unit that performs its assigned tasks as an integrated whole.

Digital Certificate

A technology by which systems and their users can employ the security applications of Public Key Infrastructure (PKI). PKI is a set of roles, policies, and procedures needed to create, manage, distribute, use, store, and revoke digital certificates and manage public-key encryption.

Digital Signature

An asymmetric key operation where the private key is used to digitally sign an electronic document and the public key is used to verify the signature. Digital signatures provide data authentication and integrity protection.

Digitize

To convert analog data to digital format for storage and use on a computer. The digital form of the character "A" is the byte: 01000001 (ASCII value 65). Any data stored in a computer must be digitized.

Direct Democracy

A form of democracy in which citizens decide on policy initiatives directly, such as when voters decide on initiative, propositions, and referendums.

Direct Primary

A primary election in which members of a party nominate its candidates by direct vote.

Direct Recording Electronic (DRE)

A vote capture device that allows electronic presentation of a ballot, electronic selection of valid contest options, and electronic storage of contest selections as individuals vote. It also provides a summary of these contest selections.

Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) Voting System

An electronic voting system that utilizes electronic components for the functions of ballot presentation, vote capture, vote recording, and tabulation which are logically and physically integrated into a single unit. A DRE produces a tabulation of the voting data stored in a removable memory component and in printed hardcopy.

Directly Verifiable

Voting system feature that allows the voter to verify at least one representation of their ballot with their own senses, not using any software or hardware intermediary. Examples include a Marksense paper ballot and a DRE with a voter verifiable paper record feature.

Directory

A file storage architecture in which individual files are stored in separate, hierarchical directories. The directory is the map to where the file is stored. Most systems will store files in a default directory unless otherwise specified.

Disability

With respect to an individual: (1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; (2) a record of such an impairment; (3) being regarded as having such an impairment (definition from the Americans with Disabilities Act).

Disabled

An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Disabled Voters

Voters that may require assistance during the election process to interact with systems not designed using universal design.

Discrimination

Unequal treatment.

Disenfranchise

To deprive someone of the right to vote.

Displaced Voters

Voters who have had to leave their homes, typically because of a natural disaster.

Disqualification

The action of disqualifying a candidate or voter from participating in an electoral process.

Disqualify

Pronounce someone ineligible for an office or unable to participate in an electoral process.

Disqualifying

An action or offense that makes a candidate or voter unable to participate in an electoral process.

Distribution of Contributions

The detailed expenses of political candidate or campaign.

District

A political subdivision established within a specific geographic area.

District Lines

The lines that divide Districts from one another.

District Number

The number assigned to a political district.

District Office

An office of the federal or state government that is not voted on statewide.

Double Voting

When a voter votes more than one ballot.

Download

An act or instance of transferring something (such as data or files) from a usually large computer to the memory of another device (such as a smaller computer) to transfer (data, files, etc.) from one location (such as a large computer or the cloud) to another (such as a smaller computer, smartphone, or storage device).

Dox

Publishing damaging or defamatory information about an individual or organization on the Internet.

Drop Box

A locked container, either indoor or outdoor, where voters can return a mailed ballot for collection directly by an election official.

Duplicate Ballot

A ballot substituted for a damaged or partially invalid ballot. Duplicate ballots are usually remade by a regulated process where the votes from the damaged or partially invalid ballot are duplicated onto another ballot that can be tabulated by a scanner.

Duplicate Records

Identical rows of information or documents.

Duplicate Registrations

An application to register to vote from a person already registered to vote at the same address, under the same name and personal information.

Duty Station

An assigned work location.

Dynamic Password

A password that changes at a defined interval or event.

Dynamic Voting System Software

Software that changes over time once it is installed on the voting equipment.

E

E-pollbook

Device that partially automates the process of checking in voters, assigning them the correct ballot style, and marking voters who have been issued a ballot. May be used in place of a traditional paper poll book. E-pollbooks can stand alone at the precinct with a separate copy of the registration list or can be networked into a central voter registration system where they can check and update voter records in real time.

Early Voting

Voting before election day where the voter completes the ballot in person at an elections office or other designated polling site prior to election day. Early voting can also include voting with a mailed or absentee ballot prior to election day.

Early Voting Ballot Board

A group of individuals, authorized by local authorities, who are charged with participating in or observing elections and voting procedures prior to election day.

Early Voting Clerk

An official responsible for overseeing early voting.

Elect

The act of choosing a person to hold public office through a public election.

Elected

Candidates who received the highest or requisite number of votes in an election for public office.

Elected Office

An office that is filled primarily or exclusively via election.

Elected Officials

Individuals who have been elected to hold public office or candidates appointed in lieu of being elected to a public office.

Elected to Fill Unexpired Term

Elected positions have set terms of usually two, four, or six years. If there is a vacancy in the middle of a term, a candidate will be elected and only hold office until the end of the original term. For example, if an elected official retired one year into a four-year term, the next candidate would be elected to fill the remaining three years.

Election

A formal process of selecting a person for public office or of accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting.

Election Administration Process

The act of managing, running, and overseeing an election.

Election Assessment

An evaluation and analysis of any election or voting process.

Election Assistance Commission

Election Assistance Commission was created by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to assist the states regarding HAVA compliance and to distribute HAVA funds to the states. The EAC is also charged with creating voting system guidelines and operating the federal government's first voting system certification program. The EAC is also responsible for maintaining the National Voter Registration form, conducting research, and administering a national clearinghouse on elections that includes shared practices, information for voters, and other resources to improve elections.

Election Authority

The official responsible for overseeing elections in a jurisdiction.

Election Ballot

The official presentation of all of the contests to be decided in a particular election. Either in paper or electronic format, the mechanism for voters to show their voter preferences.

Election Board

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities, and charged with control of elections and voting procedure.

Election Calendar

The official list of key dates and voting deadlines for an election.

Election Campaign

A series of democratic activities to influence a political vote for or against candidates or ballot questions.

Election Certification

The act of confirming the final official results of a jurisdiction's election. This event occurs after results from valid ballots are tallied from all sources (election day, absentee voting, early voting, provisional ballots, etc.) and results are validated and approved by those legally responsible.

Election Clerk

Any person who is involved with administering or conducting an election, including government personnel and temporary election workers. This may include any county clerk and recorder, election judge, member of a canvassing board, central election official, election day worker, member of a board of county commissioners, member or secretary of a board of directors authorized to conduct public elections, representative of a governing body, or other person engaged in the performance of election duties as required by the election code.

Election Code

The official laws that govern the electoral process.

Election Commission

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities, and charged with overseeing elections and voting procedure.

Election Contest

A single decision or set of associated decisions being put before the voters (for example, the option of candidates to fill a particular public office or the approval or disapproval of a constitutional amendment). This term encompasses other terms such as “race,” “question,” and “issue” that are sometimes used to refer to specific kinds of contests. A single ballot may contain one or more contests.

Election Contribution

Anything of value given, loaned, or advanced to influence a political vote for or against candidates or ballot questions.

Election Databases

Data file or set of files that contain geographic information about political subdivisions and boundaries, all contests and questions to be included in an election, and the candidates for each contest.

Election Day

The last day on which voters may cast a ballot. Absentee ballots and early voting ballots may be cast in advance of Election Day.

Election Definition

Definition of the contests and questions that will appear on the ballot for a specific election.

Election District

Contiguous geographic area represented by a public official who is elected by voters residing within the district boundaries. The district may cover an entire state or political subdivision, may be a portion of the state or political subdivision, or may include portions of more than one political subdivision.

Election Division

The department of government charged with administering elections.

Election Equipment

All of the necessary items to conduct elections and voting. This can include technology such as electronic poll books, voting machines, and other non-technical equipment including voting booths and voting signs.

Election Fraud

The misrepresentation or alteration of the true results of an election.

Election Inspector

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Election Integrity

An election that is professional, impartial, and transparent in its preparation and administration throughout the electoral cycle.

Election Judge

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Election Jurisdiction

A geographical area to which a practical authority has been granted to administer elections for political or administrative offices. Areas of jurisdiction apply to local, state, and federal levels. States, counties, cities, towns, and townships are all examples of jurisdictions.

Election Kit

A set of items that election officials need to assist voters at a voting location.

Election Law

The official laws that govern the electoral process.

Election Management System

Set of processing functions and databases within a voting system that defines, develops and maintains election databases, performs election definitions and setup functions, format ballots, count votes, consolidates and report results, and maintains audit trails.

Election Materials

Items needed to assist voters and conduct an election.

Election Night Tabulation

The act of tabulating votes on the night of the election, after the polls have been closed for voting.

Election Officer

An official responsible for administering an election or an election process.

Election Officials

The people associated with administering and conducting elections, including government personnel and poll workers.

Election Order

A legal term used when an authorized government authority proclaims that an election will take place at a particular time.

Election Precinct

Election administration division corresponding to a contiguous geographic area that is the basis for determining which contests and issues the voters legally residing in that area are eligible to vote on.

Election Precinct Officer

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Election Programming

Process by which election officials or their designees use voting system software to logically define the ballot for a specific election.

Election Registrar

An official who is responsible for election administration.

Election Results

Tallies of votes cast in an election after the polls have been closed for voting.

Election Returns

Tallies of votes cast in an election after the polls have been closed for voting.

Election Seals

A security mechanism using strategically placed serialized or tamperproof evident materials that alert officials if a device used in the elections process has potentially been altered or accessed without authorization.

Election Supervisor

An official responsible for administering an election or an election process.

Election System

A technology-based system that is used to collect, process, and store data related to elections and election administration. In addition to voter registration systems and public election websites, election systems include voting systems, vote tabulation systems, electronic poll books, election results reporting systems, and auditing devices. Can also be used to refer to the entire array of procedures, people, resources, equipment and locations associated with conducting elections.

Electioneer

The activity of trying to persuade people to vote for or against a particular candidate, measure or political party.

Elections Administrator

An official who is responsible for election administration.

Elective Office

An office that is filled primarily or exclusively via election.

Elector

(1) A person qualified to vote in an election. (2) A person appointed by a state in the U.S. to vote for president and vice president in the electoral college.

Elector Candidates

A candidate to be appointed by a state in the U.S. to vote for president and vice president in the electoral college.

Electoral Board

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities, and charged with control of elections and voting procedure.

Electoral College

A body of people representing the states of the U.S., who formally cast votes for the election of the president and vice president.

Electoral Cycle

The time period from the first official act in an election to the last official act. The electoral cycle is divided in three main periods: the pre-electoral period, the electoral period, and the post-electoral period.

Electoral Votes

Votes cast by members of the electoral college.

Electorate

All the people in a political jurisdiction who are entitled to vote in an election.

Electronic Ballot Delivery

The delivery of ballot and voter information packets electronically. The MOVE Act requires each state to provide for the electronic delivery (via fax, email, or an Internet supported application) of ballots and related information from the local election office to the registered Uniformed and Overseas Civilian voters. Some jurisdictions allow voters with a disability, voters who have been displaced or other circumstances where a voter who resides in the election jurisdiction to also receive a ballot electronically.

Electronic Ballot Return

The return of a voted ballot or voter information packet using electronic means. This can be by fax, email, or through the use of an Internet supported application. Sometimes referred to as "Internet Voting."

Electronic Cast Vote Record

Permanent record of all votes produced by a single voter in electronic form.

Electronic Poll Book

Device that partially automates the process of checking in voters, assigning them the correct ballot style, and marking voters who have been issued a ballot. May be used in place of a traditional paper poll book. E-poll books can be stand alone at the precinct with a separate copy of the registration list or can be networked into a central voter registration system where they can check and update voter records in real time.

Electronic Record

Information recorded by a computer that is produced or received in the initiation, conduct, or completion of an agency or individual activity. Examples of electronic records include: e-mail messages, word-processed documents, electronic spreadsheets, digital images, and databases.

Electronic Reporting And Tracking System (ERTS)

An ERT system is used to electronically create stationary source sampling test plans and reports. The ERT calculates the test results from data imported or hand-entered and includes supporting documentation to create a complete electronic report for submittal to the regulatory agency.

Electronic Storage

Any storage of electronic user data on a computer, computer network, or computer system regardless of whether the data is subject to recall, further manipulation, deletion, or transmission. Electronic storage includes any storage or electronic communication by an electronic communication service or a remote computing service.

Electronic Voter Interface

Subsystem within a voting system which communicates ballot information to a voter in video, audio, or other alternative format which allows the voter to select candidates and issues by means of vocalization or physical actions.

Electronic Voting

Voting that uses electronic means to either aid or facilitate casting and counting votes.

Electronic Voting Accessibility

Electronic voting system with accessible features, including touchscreen and audio, that gives voters with disabilities the ability to cast a secret ballot without assistance.

Electronic Voting Machine

Any system that utilizes an electronic component. Term is generally used to refer to DREs.

Electronic Voting System

An electronic voting system is one or more integrated devices that utilize an electronic component for one or more of the following functions: ballot presentation, vote capture, vote recording, and tabulation. A DRE is a functionally and physically integrated electronic voting system which provides all four functions electronically in a single device. An optical scan (also known as Marksense) system where the voter marks a paper ballot with a marking instrument and then deposits the ballot in a tabulation device is partially electronic in that the paper ballot provides the presentation, vote capture and vote recording functions. An optical scan system employing a ballot marking device adds a second electronic component for ballot presentation and vote capture functions.

Electronically Tabulated Totals

Election results tabulated on an electronic device.

Eligibility for Office

All of the legal requirements to hold a public office.

Eligible Candidates

Candidates who have completed all of the things necessary and meet all of the legal requirements to participate in an election process.

Eligible Citizens

The universe of all voters who, if they cast a ballot, would have the legal right to have eligible contests on that ballot tabulated. This would include those who do not appear in the list of eligible voters because they live in a same-day registration or no registration state and did not or could not register ahead of time.

Eligible to Vote

A person who meets the requirements set forth in a political subdivision for being able to vote.

Eligible Voters

The universe of all voters who, if they cast a ballot, would have the legal right to have eligible contests on that ballot tabulated. This would include those who do not appear in the list of eligible voters because they live in a same-day registration or no registration state and did not or could not register ahead of time.

Emergency Ballot

A ballot issued to a voter under special circumstances, such as being out of state during an election or being displaced because of a natural disaster.

Enclose

To put something inside of something else, such as enclosing an absentee ballot in a secrecy sleeve.

Encryption

Process of obscuring information by changing plain text into ciphertext for the purpose of security or privacy.

Endorsement

An act of giving one's public approval or support to someone or something, such as a candidate for public office or a ballot measure question.

Error Correcting Code

Coding system that allows data being read or transmitted to be checked for errors and, when detected, corrects those errors.

Error Rate

Ratio of the number of errors that occur to the volume of data processed.

Error Rate Standards

The maximum allowable number of errors that can occur to the volume of data processed, as established by an official authority.

Exhausted Ballot

Refers to processing a ranked choice voting contest on a cast ballot, when that ballot becomes inactive and cannot be advanced in the tabulation for a contest because there are no further valid rankings on the ballot for continuing contest options.

Exit Poll

A poll taken of a small percentage of voters as they leave the polls, used to forecast the outcome of an election or determine the reasons for voting decisions.

Expected Mark

Mark that falls wholly or partially inside a contest option target area.

Expense Report

Report that details political expenses required to be filed by a governing authority.

Extended Hours

When a person of authority extends by formal action the required number of hours that voters are able to vote, usually in response to a situation that delayed or restricted voting.

Extensible Markup Language

A text-based language used to organize and present information on the World Wide Web (XML).

Extension

Such as "extension of period" or "extension of polling hours."

Extraneous Mark

A mark on a paper ballot that appears to be unrelated to the act of indicating a voter's selection. Examples include: a mark made unintentionally by a voter that is obviously not related to making a selection; a hesitation mark, a dot within or outside of the contest option position made by resting a pen or pencil on the ballot; written notes or identifying information not related to indication of the voter's selection; or printing defects.

F

Fail-Safe Ballot

A ballot cast by a voter who was not on the list of eligible voters, whose information was incomplete or not accurate, or who had already received a ballot in the mail and was allowed to vote. Fail-safe ballots are usually kept separate from the other ballots until an election official can determine if the voter is eligible to vote. These ballots are sometimes called provisional ballots.

Fail-Safe Voter

A voter who was not on the list of eligible voters, whose information was incomplete or not accurate, or who had already received a ballot in the mail but was allowed to vote. Fail-safe ballots are usually kept separate from the other ballots until an election official can determine if the voter is eligible to vote. These ballots are sometimes called provisional ballots.

Fault

Flaw in design or implementation that may result in the qualities or behavior of the voting system deviating from the qualities or behavior that are anticipated, including those specified in the VVSG or in manufacturer-provided documentation.

Fault-tolerant

A system that continues to operate after the failure of a computer or network component.

Federal Election

Any primary, general, runoff, or special election in which a candidate for Federal office (President, Senator, or Representative) appears on the ballot.

Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA)

Strict limits on the amount of money a particular corporation, union, or private individual could give to a candidate in a federal election. It also required candidates and political action committees (PACs) to disclose their receipts and identify their contributors. A 1974 amendment specified additional contribution limits and imposed spending limits for candidates in primary and general elections; however, the Supreme Court struck down the latter provision as unconstitutional in *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1 (1976). The 1974 amendment also set up the Federal Election Commission and established public funding of presidential elections. Two additional amendments (1976, 1979) were aimed at regulating PACs and boosting the level of party participation.

Federal Election Commission (FEC)

Independent agency responsible for administering and enforcing laws that cover federal election campaigns. The FEC oversees the public financing of presidential elections, ensures public disclosure of campaign finance activities, monitors campaign contributions and expenditures, regulates the campaign activities of political action committees (PACs), and investigates reports of violations. It is composed of six commissioners appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Federal Election Inspector

A U.S. federal inspector general (IG) is the head of an independent, non-partisan organization established within each executive branch agency assigned to audit the agency's operation in order to discover and investigate cases of misconduct, waste, fraud, and other abuse of government procedures occurring within the agency.

Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS)

Standards for federal computer systems developed by NIST. These standards are developed when there are no existing industry standards to address federal requirements for system interoperability, portability of data and software, and computer security.

Federal Observer

The Voting Rights Act permits federal observers to monitor procedures in polling places and at sites where ballots are counted in eligible political subdivisions.

Federal Office

United States President, member of the U.S. Senate, or member of the House of Representatives.

Federal Postcard Application (FPCA)

Among the challenges military and overseas voters face are the wide variability in rules and procedures governing registration and voting across states. The FPCA serves as a uniform registration and ballot request application accepted in all U.S. states and territories.

Federal Service Voters

Active-duty military and family members and individuals, who vote while living abroad.

Federal Services Ballot

Ballot of active-duty military and family members and individuals, who vote while living abroad.

Federal Voting Assistance

Assistance available from the Federal Voting Assistance Program to voters serving in the military and overseas civilians.

Federal Voting Assistance Officers

Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) work to ensure that military and overseas voters understand their voting rights, how to register to vote absentee, and have access to accurate nonpartisan voting information and assistance. VAOs may be members of the Uniformed Services, civilians, or members of overseas U.S. citizen organizations.

Federal Voting Assistance Program

Voter assistance and education program to ensure that members of the U. S. armed forces, their eligible family members, and U.S. citizens overseas are aware of their right to vote and have the tools to do so.

Federal Voting Rights Act

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark piece of federal legislation in the United States that prohibits racial discrimination in voting.

Federal Voting Systems Standards (FVSS)

The Federal minimum standards that each voting system used in an election for Federal office must meet.

Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

A blank ballot provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program by which military and overseas voters can vote by writing in their choices and returning the ballot to their elections office.

Federally Recognized Tribes

Indigenous tribal entities that are recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to that designation, and are eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Furthermore, federally recognized tribes are recognized as possessing certain inherent rights of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty) and are entitled to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protections because of their special relationship with the United States.

Felony Disenfranchisement

A crime regarded as more serious than a misdemeanor and usually punishable by loss of voting rights for a period of time.

File for Office

The act of completing the required paperwork to declare a person's intent to become a candidate for public office.

Filing Deadline

The last day to file election or voting documents for a specific election and process. Examples include paperwork to circulate a petition, to file paperwork to become a candidate, or to file campaign financial disclosures.

Filing Electronically

The process of submitting election paperwork via the internet.

Filing Fees

The amount of money due when filing election paperwork, such as when filing to become a candidate for public office.

Filing Petitions

Formally submitting a petition to the governing authority.

Fill in The Oval

On certain ballots, voters are instructed to fill in an oval to vote for a candidate or measure, instead of marking an X or connecting an arrow.

Finalize Your Vote

The final action a voter takes in selecting contest options and irrevocably confirming their intent to vote as selected.

Financial Disclosure Reports

Reports that detail information about the source, type, amount, or value of the incomes of public officials and candidates for public office, required to be filed by a governing authority.

Firmware

Computer programming stored in programmable read-only memory thus becoming a permanent part of the computing device. It is created and tested like software.

First-Time Federal Voter

A voter who registers to vote or votes for the first time in a federal election. Pursuant to the Help America Vote Act, these voters must provide identification before they can vote.

First-Time Registrant

The first time that a citizen registers to vote.

First-Time Voter

The first time that a citizen votes.

Fiscal Statement

A report that details political contributions and expenses required to be filed by a governing authority.

Fixed Resident

When a person lawfully and habitually uses a living quarters a majority of the week, it is considered a fixed residence for voting purposes, and the voter is referred to as a fixed resident.

For Election Day Use Only

An election procedure that can only be used on the day of an election.

Forms of Identification

Means of proving a person's identity, especially in the form of official papers. Common examples include Driver's Licenses, Passports and other Government issued documents.

Fraud

The misrepresentation or alteration of the true results of an election.

Fraud Hotline

A direct phone line set up to report voting issues.

Fraudulently Registering to Vote

A form of voter fraud in which someone registers to vote or registers someone else to vote using fictional information, or when they are ineligible to register to vote.

Free from Coercion Or Intimidation

The right to cast a ballot without threat of violence, manipulation, harassment, or fear.

Functional Configuration Audit (FCA)

Exhaustive verification of every system function and combination of functions cited in the vendor's documentation. The FCA verifies the accuracy and completeness of the system's voter manual, operations procedures, maintenance procedures, and diagnostic testing procedures.

Functional Test

Test performed to verify or validate the accomplishment of a function or a series of functions.

Fundraising

To seek financial support for a political candidate, campaign, or organization for the purpose of influencing an electoral outcome.

G

Grounds for Recall

The reasons that citizens would begin the process to remove an elected official from office.

Group Affidavit

A written statement confirmed by oath or affirmation by a group of individuals.

Gubernatorial

Relating to a state governor or the office of state governor.

Gubernatorial Election

Election where the office of the state governor is also on the ballot. Typically includes the other statewide office contests and is held in a year other than when the Presidential contest is on the ballot.

Gubernatorial General Election

Election in which all eligible voters, regardless of party affiliation, are able to vote for candidates to fill public office and/or vote on ballot measures, and the office of the state governor is also on the ballot.

Gubernatorial Primary Election

Election held to determine which candidate will represent a political party for a given office in the general election and the office of the state governor is also on the ballot. Some states have an open primary, while others have a closed or modified-closed primary. Sometimes elections for nonpartisan offices and ballot issues are consolidated with primary elections.

H

Hand Count

Counting ballot sheets and/or selections on ballot sheets by human examination.

Hand-marked Paper Ballot

Paper ballot marked by a voter using a writing utensil. The paper ballot is the independent voter verifiable record.

Hanging Chads

Chad refers to fragments sometimes created when holes are made in a paper, card or similar synthetic materials, such as punched cards. A "hanging chad" is a chad that is incompletely removed.

Hard Money

Political contributions made directly to a specific candidate.

Hard of Hearing

Refers to a hearing loss where there may be enough residual hearing that an auditory device may aid.

Hardware

The physical, tangible, mechanical, or electromechanical components of a system.

Hash

Algorithm that maps a bit string of arbitrary length to a fixed-length bit string.

Hash Function

A function that maps a bit string of arbitrary length to a fixed-length bit string. Approved hash functions satisfy the following properties: 1. (one-way) It is computationally infeasible to find any input that maps to any pre-specified output, and 2. (collision-resistant) It is computationally infeasible to find any two distinct inputs that map to the same output.

Hearing

An opportunity to state one's case through a formal administrative process.

Hearing Officer

An individual who is authorized to apply a legal process, conduct hearings, resolve administrative disputes, facilitate negotiations between opposing parties, and issue legal decisions.

Hearing Procedures

The rules and series of actions that govern how hearings are administered.

Help America Vote Act Of 2002 (HAVA)

Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 2002 to make reforms to the nation's voting process. HAVA addresses improvements to voting systems and voter access that were identified following the 2000 election.

Help America Vote College Program

A program authorized under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to encourage student participation as poll workers or assistants, to foster student interest in the elections process, and to encourage state and local governments to use students as poll workers.

High School District

A geographical unit for the local administration of secondary schools. It is a special-purpose government entity with elected board members.

Hold an Election

The term used when a government authority administers an election.

Hold Elections

The term used when government authorities administer elections.

Hold Hearings

To indicate that an agency is organizing a process for an individual or organization to state one's case, resolve administrative disputes, facilitate negotiations between opposing parties, and issue legal decisions.

Hold Office

A term used to describe an individual who has been sworn into public office and is currently serving in the position.

Home Rule

The right of the people cities, village, townships or other local districts to set up and change their own governmental structure.

Home Rule Charter

In some states, known as home rule states, the state's constitution grants municipalities and/or counties the ability to pass laws to govern themselves as they see fit (so long as they obey the state and federal constitutions). The Charter is the written document that defines the laws and regulations of that body.

Home Rule City

A city that has adopted a Charter outlining the form of government and local laws.

House of Representatives

The lower house of the United States Congress, with the Senate being the upper house. Together they compose the national bicameral legislature of the United States. The House's composition is established by Article One of the United States Constitution.

House Seat

One of 435 regions from which voting representatives are elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

**Internal Audit Log**

A human readable record, resident on the voting machine, used to track all activities of that machine. This log records every activity performed on or by the machine indicating the event and when it happened.

Internet Voting

The return of a voted ballot or voter information packet by email or through the use of an Internet supported application.

Interoperability

The extent to which systems from different manufacturers and devices with different system configurations can communicate with each other.

Interpreter

One who translates for people communicating in different languages.

Interruption of The Voting Process

Voting equipment failures, inadequate supplies, disasters, or anything that prevents voting.

Intrusion Detection System (IDS)

A hardware or software application that detects and reports a suspected security breach, policy violation, or other compromise that may adversely affect the network.

Invalidate Your Vote

An error, mistake, or omission that results in your vote not counting towards the final election result.

Irregularities

Something that is not correct or acceptable, such as when the rules, laws, or usual ways of doing things have not been followed.

Issue

To give something to someone in an official manner.

Issue (To Issue A Vote)

When an official authority, election clerk or poll worker gives a voter a ballot to vote.

J

Judge

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process, also known as an Elections Judge.

Judicial Candidate

A candidate for Judicial office.

Judicial District

One of a fixed number of districts into which a state is divided, each district electing Judicial candidates.

Judicial Offices

A public Judicial position, for an officer who administers the law.

Judicial Retention Election

An election where voters are asked whether an incumbent (usually a judge) should remain in office for another term. The office holder, who does not face an opponent, is removed from the position if a percentage of voters indicate that they should not remain in office.

K

Key Management

Activities involving the handling of cryptographic keys and other related security parameters (e.g., passwords) during the entire life cycle of the keys, including their generation, storage, establishment, entry and output, and zeroization.

L

Language Assistance

The Voting Rights Act outlaws literacy- and language-based voting qualifications or prerequisites. Section 203 recognizes widespread voting discrimination against Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic language minority citizens and seeks to eliminate it by requiring the provision of minority language materials and assistance related to the electoral process—oral and/or written—to language minority groups. Other VRA sections, including 4(e) and 208, are also relevant to language access. The most recent reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act in 2006 extended Section 203 through 2032, and determinations were adjusted to occur every 5 years instead of 10.

Language Minority Citizens

The language minority provisions of the Voting Rights Act require that when a covered state or political subdivision provides registration or voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance, or other materials or information relating to the electoral process, including ballots, it shall provide them in the language of the applicable minority group as well as in the English language. Covered language minorities are limited to American Indians, Asian Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Spanish-heritage citizens - the groups that Congress found to have faced barriers in the political process.

Lawful Permanent Resident

Non-citizens who are lawfully authorized to live permanently within the United States.

Legal Holiday

A holiday established by law and is usually a non-working day during the year.

Legislative Initiative Amendment

A ballot measure that proposes to amend a law.

Legislative Ratification

The act or process of formal confirmation of a law.

Lever Voting Machine

Machine that directly records a voter's choices via mechanical lever-actuated controls into a counting mechanism that tallies the votes without using a physical ballot.

Lieutenant Governor

The top election official in the states of Alaska and Utah.

Life Cycle

Systems engineering concept that identifies the phases that a system passes through, from concept to retirement. There are different concerns and activities associated with each phase of the life cycle.

Limited Ballot

A ballot with some, but not all of the contests that other voters are entitled to vote on in an election.

List of Registered Voters

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Local (Local Government)

Governmental jurisdictions below the level of the state including - counties, cities, districts, boroughs, and parishes.

Local Measures

A proposal to enact, amend, or repeal a new law, ordinance, or charter at the local government level that is placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Logic and Accuracy (L&A) Testing

Equipment and system readiness tests whose purpose is to detect malfunctioning devices and improper election-specific setup before the equipment or systems are used in an election. Jurisdictions are required to test the correctness of every ballot style and to determine that every possible valid and invalid voter choice can be captured or handled by the voting system, both technologically and legally. Election officials conduct L&A tests prior to the start of an election as part of the process of setting up the system and the devices for an election according to jurisdiction practices and conforming to any state laws.

Logical Correctness

Condition signifying that, for a given input, a computer program will satisfy the program specification and produce the required output.

Look at Both Side of Your Ballot

Voting instructions reminding voters that election contests can appear on both the front and back of a ballot.

Low/No Dexterity Mode

An interaction mode with accessibility features for voters with no use of one or both hands or have low dexterity.

M

Machine-Readable Mark

Mark in a contest selection position of a paper ballot that meets requirements for detection by a scanner.

Machine-Unreadable Mark

Mark in a contest selection position of a paper ballot that cannot be detected as readable or marginal by a scanner and requires human adjudication.

Magisterial District

One of a fixed number of districts into which a state is divided, each district electing Magisterial candidates.

Magisterial District Judge

A civil officer or lay judge who administers the law, especially one who conducts a court that deals with minor offenses and holds preliminary hearings for more serious ones.

Mail Ballots (Noun)

A ballot cast by a voter other than in-person at a voting location. Mailed ballots are typically mailed to voters but can be issued over the counter from an election's office. Depending on the jurisdiction, mailed ballots can be returned by mail, in a drop box, or in-person. Mailed ballots are synonymous with vote-by-mail and absentee ballots.

Mail Ballots (Verb)

The process of mailing ballots to voters using the U.S. Postal Service.

Mail-In Voter Registration Form

A form used by a voter to request that a ballot be mailed to them.

Mailed Ballot Election

An election that is conducted entirely with the use of mailed ballots and either does not offer in-person voting options or has limited in-person voting options.

Mailed Ballot Precinct

A voting precinct that does not offer in-person voting options.

Mailing Address

The address where a person can receive mail, which may be different than the address where a person lives.

Majority

More than half.

Majority of The Votes

More than half of the votes cast.

Majority of Voters

More than half of the voters.

Majority Party

A political party that receives a minimum percentage of the total vote in a jurisdiction or has sufficient strength to win control of a government or constitute the principal opposition to the winning party.

Majority Voting

A vote variation which requires the winning candidate to receive more than half of the votes cast. If no candidate wins an outright majority, a runoff election may be held between the top two vote-getters.

Make Void

An error, mistake, omission, or intentional act that results in a vote not counting towards the final election result.

Malware

Software or firmware intended to perform an unauthorized process that will have adverse impact on the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of a system. For example, a virus, worm, Trojan horse, or other code-based entity that infects a host. Spyware and some forms of adware are also examples of malware.

Mandate

An official or authoritative command, usually by legislative statute or executive order.

Manual Tabulation of Ballots

Counting ballot sheets and/or selections on ballot sheets by human examination.

Manually-Marked Paper Ballot

Paper ballot marked by a voter using a writing utensil. The paper ballot is the independent voter verifiable record.

Mark

Any symbol made by the signer that represents execution of a document or indicates a voting selection.

Marked Ballot

Ballot that contains voter's selections.

Marking Device

A device that permits contest options to be selected and reviewed on an electronic interface and does not make any other lasting record of the voter's selections.

Marksense

System by which votes are recorded by means of marks made in voting response fields designated on one or both faces of a ballot card or series of cards. Marksense systems may use an optical scanner or similar sensor to read the ballots. Also known as optical scan.

Master Voter Registration List

A list of voters maintained in a single, uniform, official, computerized statewide or local registration database of registered voters.

Measure

A proposal to enact a new law or constitutional amendment that is placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Measure Information

The portion of voting materials that contains information about a new law or constitutional amendment that is placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Measure Register

Record that reflects the total votes cast for and against a specific ballot issue.

Mechanical Lever Voting Machine

Machine that directly records a voter's choices via mechanical lever-actuated controls into a counting mechanism that tallies the votes without using a physical ballot.

Memory Card

An electronic data storage device used for storing digital information, typically using flash memory.

Method of Application

Several methods of application are available to the public so they may register to vote.

Midterm Election

Elections that take place between presidential elections.

Military Voting

A member of the Uniformed Services in active service, including army, navy, air force, marine corps, coast guard, and merchant marine, and their spouses and dependents.

Military Voting Assistance Officer

Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) work to ensure that military and overseas voters understand their voting rights, how to register to vote absentee, and have access to accurate nonpartisan voting information and assistance. VAOs may be members of the Uniformed Services, civilians, or members of overseas U.S. citizen organizations.

Minimum Standards

The lowest level of quality or achievement that is acceptable.

Minimum Voting Age

The age established by law that a person must attain before they become eligible to vote in a public election.

Minor Party

A political party that does not meet the requirements to be recognized as a major party, but otherwise is recognized typically because its candidates have received a certain percentage of the vote or through a petition process.

Mismarked

An error, mistake, omission, or intentional act that results in a voter's intent not counting towards the final election result.

Mixed Ticket

A ballot where voters may select candidates of their choice regardless of party affiliation up to the maximum allowed for each race.

Mock Election

A non-partisan educational event that primarily teaches young people how to vote.

Modified Closed Primary

A primary election that allows state parties to decide whether they permit voters registered without a political party affiliate to [participate in their primary elections.

Modified Open Primary

A primary election that allows state parties to decide whether they permit voters registered without a political party affiliate to [participate in their primary elections.

Monitor and Device Controller

An audio-tactile interface that allows users to make selections.

Motor Voter

This act, commonly known as the “Motor Voter Law,” requires that states offer the opportunity to register to vote at their motor vehicle licensing offices (known as the DMV in many states). The law also requires states to offer voter registration at offices that provide public assistance or state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities, and armed services recruitment offices. NVRA also provides guidelines on registration list maintenance and sets limits on how voters can be removed from the rolls.

Multi-Member District

An electoral district or constituency having two or more representatives in a legislative body rather than one.

Multi-Seat Contest

Contest in which multiple candidates can run, up to a specified number of seats. Voters may vote for no more than the specified number of candidates.

Municipal

Relating to a city, borough, village or town, except in the New England states, New York, and Wisconsin, where the name town signifies a subdivision of the county or state by area.

Municipal Ballot

A ballot for candidates or measures related to a municipal governing body.

Municipal Bond Election

An election where a proposal to allow a municipal government to approve additional spending in which a debt and obligation are repaid with interest appears on the ballot for approval or rejection.

Municipal Elections

A regular election of candidates and measures within a municipal governing body.

Municipal School District

A geographical unit for the local administration of elementary or secondary schools.

Municipal Water District

A geographical unit of local government given the task of supplying water and sewer needs to a community.

Municipality

Relating to a city, borough, village or town, except in the New England states, New York, and Wisconsin, where the name town signifies a subdivision of the county or state by area.

N

National

Belonging to or maintained by the federal government.

National Association Of Secretaries Of State (NASS)

A non-partisan professional organization of public officials composed of the secretaries of state of U.S. states and territories.

National Association Of State Election Directors (NASED)

A non-partisan professional association of state election directors and administrators of U.S. states and territories.

National Certification Test Report

Report of results of independent testing of a voting system by an accredited test lab delivered to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission with a recommendation regarding granting a certification number.

National Certification Testing

Examination and testing of a voting system to determine if the system complies with the performance and other requirements of the national certification standards and with its own specifications.

National Change of Address Program (NCOA)

A secure dataset of approximately 160 million permanent change-of-address (COA) records consisting of the names and addresses of individuals, families, and businesses who have filed a change-of-address with the USPS. Election officials use NCOA to update records in their voter registration databases.

National Convention

A meeting where state and territory parties convene to select a presidential nominee.

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)

Federal organization tasked with assisting in the development of voting system standards. NIST develops and maintains standards for a wide array of technologies. NIST scientists assist the U.S Election Assistance Commission in developing testable standards for voting systems.

National Party Convention

A meeting where state and territory parties convene to select a presidential nominee.

National Presidential Nominating Convention

A meeting where state and territory parties convene every four years in the United States to field nominees in the upcoming U.S. presidential election. This allows the nominees to be decided before the National Convention opens.

National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP)

The National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program operated by National Institute of Standards And Technology (NIST).

National Voter Registration Act Of 1993 (NVRA)[Also Known As The “Motor Voter Act”]

This act, commonly known as the “Motor Voter Law,” requires that states offer the opportunity to register to vote at their motor vehicle licensing offices (known as the DMV in many states). The law also requires states to offer voter registration at offices that provide public assistance or state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities, and armed services recruitment offices. NVRA also provides guidelines on registration list maintenance and sets limits on how voters can be removed from the rolls.

No Excuse Absentee Voting

A term used when any registered voter can request an absentee ballot, without restrictions.

Nominate

To propose an individual to be considered for public office.

Nominated Officials

Individuals who have been proposed for consideration to appointment to public office or who have received enough votes in a primary election to move onto a general or run-off election. This term can also refer to individuals selected by state and territory parties at a National Party Convention to represent the party as a candidate for U.S. President.

Nominating Petition

A formal written document signed by registered voters to request the names of candidates be placed on election ballots.

Nomination

The process of being proposed for consideration to public office.

Nomination Paper

A formal written document issued by an election office to request the name of a candidate be placed on election ballots.

Nominee

An individual who has been proposed for consideration to public office.

Non-Accepted Ballots

An error, mistake, omission, or intentional act that results in a vote not counting towards the final election result.

Non-Paper Media

Any type of media on which information is stored, but which does not qualify as Paper or Printed Media, such as Micro Media (micro fiche and microfilm) or Computer Hard Drives.

Non-Partisan

Not affiliated with a political party.

Nonpartisan Primary

Primary election held to narrow the field of candidates in non-party-specific contests.

Non-Party-Specific Contest

Contest where eligibility to vote in that contest is independent of political party affiliation.

Noncompliance

Failure or refusal to comply with something (such as a rule or regulation).

Nondiscriminatory

Fair and equitable.

None of The Above

A ballot option in some jurisdictions or organizations, designed to allow the voter to indicate disapproval of all candidates in a voting contest.

Nonpartisan Canvas Board

A group of individuals with either no party affiliation or undisclosed party affiliation, working together following specific rules and procedures, to compile, review, and validate election materials.

Nonpartisan Election

Election held with candidates in non-party-specific contests.

Nonpartisan Office

Elected office for which candidates run without political party affiliation.

Nonpartisan Office Declaration of Candidacy

The act of completing the required paperwork to become a candidate for nonpartisan public office.

Nonvolatile Memory

Memory in which information can be stored indefinitely with no power applied. ROMs and PROMs are examples of nonvolatile memory.

Not Contested

When not more individuals file to become candidates than there are open seats up for election.

Notarized Statement

A document that has been certified by a notary public, who is an official who verifies the identities of everybody signing the document and certifies the document with a stamp.

Notice

The announcement of an organization's intention, action or reminder.

Notice of Clarification

Document providing further guidance and explanation on the requirements and procedures of the Election Assistance Commission's (EAC) Voting System Certification or Voting System Testing Lab (VSTL) programs. NOCs may be issued in response to a clarification request from a Voting System Test Lab or an EAC registered manufacturer. EAC may also issue Notice of Clarifications when it determines general clarifications are necessary.

Notice of Disposition

The final settlement of a matter, and with reference to decisions announced from an agency.

Notice of Election

The legal term used when an authorized government authority provides public notice that an election will take place at a particular time and under particular rules and statutes.

Notice to Voters

Official communication from an elections office about an election, voter registration, or election process.

Notices of Noncompliance

Official communication from an agency that a statute and rule has been violated.

O

Oath

A solemn attestation of the truth of what one says or that one sincerely intends to do what one says.

Oath of Office

An oath or affirmation a person takes to make a public commitment to the duties, responsibilities and obligations associated with holding public office.

Observational Test

Operational test conducted on voting devices during an election by real voters to establish confidence that the voter verifiable paper record is produced correctly when assistive technology is used. Devices subjected to observational testing are used for normal collection of votes; the votes collected are included in the election tally.

Observers

Individuals that monitor the opening and closing of voting locations, voting, the counting and tabulation of results, or any other part an election.

Office

Any federal, state, county, town, parish, borough, municipal, school, district or other government position.

Office Holder

A term used to describe an individual who has been sworn into public office and is currently serving in the position.

Office of The Registrar Of Voters

An official responsible for administering an election or an election process.

Officer

A term used to describe an individual who has been sworn into public office and is currently serving in the position.

Official

(1) Of or relating to an office, position, or trust (2) Holding an office : having authority

Official Ballot

The official presentation of all of the contests to be decided in a particular election. Either in paper or electronic format, the mechanism for voters to show their voter preferences.

Official Ballot Card

An official card or a number of cards upon which are printed, or identified by reference to the ballot, the names of candidates for nomination or election to one or more offices or the ballot titles of one or more measures.

Official Ballot Card Secrecy Sleeve

A paper, envelope, or folder that encloses a ballot to maintain the secrecy of how a voter marked their ballot.

Official Envelope

The official inner, outer, and secrecy envelopes used to transport or enclose ballots.

Official Party Affiliation List

A list of the individuals that have registered with a party affiliation on an electoral roll, as a prerequisite for being entitled or permitted to vote.

Official Roster of Voters

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Official Sample Ballot

An example ballot provided to voters with information specific to the voter. Sample Ballot booklets often provide additional election information such as the voter's polling place and hours, information about candidates, questions, and instructions for voting.

Online Registration

Online voter registration follows essentially the same process as a traditional paper-based process, by which new voters fill out a paper form that is submitted to election officials, but instead of filling out a paper application, the voter fills out a form via an Internet site, and that paperless form is submitted electronically to election officials. In most states the application is reviewed electronically. If the request is confirmed to be valid, the new registration is added to the state's voter registration list.

Open Primary

Primary election in which any voters can participate, regardless of their political affiliation. Some states require voters to publicly declare their choice of party ballot at the polling place, after which the poll worker provides or activates the appropriate ballot. Other states allow the voters to make their choice of party ballot within the privacy of the voting booth.

Open Records

Documents or pieces of information that are not considered confidential and generally pertain to the conduct of government.

Open Source

Computer software with its source code (human readable code) made available with a license in which the copyright holder provides the rights to study, change, and distribute the software to anyone and for any purpose. Open source software may be developed in a collaborative public manner. Voting and election systems that contain open source software have had that software reviewed by multiple professional and amateur programmers. Open source systems are usually not free and are typically licensed like other software. Systems can be fully open source or may have only a portion of their software open source.

Operating System

A collection of programs that controls the hardware of a computer system and provides utilities and services to application software that is installed on the device. Operating systems use complex release version numbers to indicate which version is installed and require frequent patches or updates to maintain security and functionality. Managing the software revisions in an election office requires careful coordination of updates to the operating system as well as to the application software.

Operation Manual

The documentation by which an organization provides guidance for members and employees to perform their functions correctly and reasonably efficiently. It documents the approved standard procedures for performing operations safely to produce goods and provide services.

Operational Environment

All software, hardware (including facilities, furnishings and fixtures), materials, documentation, and the interface used by the election personnel, maintenance operator, poll worker, and voter, required for voting equipment operations.

Opponent

Other candidates for offices up for elections who belong to a different party or who have different aims or policies.

Oppose

Disapproving of or disagreeing with.

Optical Scan

A voting system that can scan paper ballots and tally votes. Most older optical scan systems use Infrared (IR) scanning technology and ballots with timing marks to accurately scan the ballot. Newer (digital) optical scan systems can also capture images of ballots as they are tabulated.

Optical Scan Ballots

A card or a number of cards upon which are printed, or identified by reference to the ballot, the names of candidates for nomination or election to one or more offices or the ballot titles of one or more measures, that can be tabulated on an optical scanner.

Optical Scan System

System by which votes are recorded by means of marks made in voting targets designated on one or both sides of a ballot card or series of cards. An optical scan system reads and tabulates ballots, usually paper ballots, by scanning the ballot and interpreting the contents.

Order

An authoritative command, direction, or instruction.

Order on The Ballot

The order in which contests and candidates appear on a ballot.

Ordinance

A piece of legislation enacted by a local authority.

Original Petition

A master document with information about measures, initiatives, referendums, or candidates used to gather signatures from registered voters.

Out-Of-State

To be outside the physical boundaries of a particular state.

Outer Envelope

An official envelope used to transport absentee and mailed ballots and protects voter privacy.

Overseas Ballot

A ballot cast by a member of a uniformed service in active service overseas, or by a civilian living overseas.

Overseas Citizen

A citizen of the United States who is living or located in another country outside of the United States.

Overseas Military Voter

A member of a uniformed service in active service, including army, navy, air force, marine corps, coast guard, and merchant marine, and their spouses and dependents. Members of the uniformed services while in the active service who are permanent residents of the state and are temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia; members of the Merchant Marine of the United States who are permanent residents of the state and are temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia; and/or other citizens of the United States who are permanent residents of the state and are temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia - who are qualified and registered to vote as provided by law.

Overseas Voter

A U.S. citizen who is living outside of the United States and is eligible to vote in their last place of residence in the United States.

Overvote

When the number of selections made by a voter in a contest is more than the maximum number allowed.

Overvoting

Voting for more than the maximum number of selections allowed in a contest.

P

Paper Ballot

A piece of paper, paper roll or multiple card stock, on which all voter selections are either hand marked or printed, depending on the particular voting system.

Paper Printout

A piece of paper on which information from a computer, scanner or similar device has been printed.

Paper Record

Paper cast vote record that can be directly verified by a voter.

Paper Ballot Sheet

A single piece of paper that forms part of a paper ballot. Paper ballots may contain multiple sheets.

Paper Trail

A series of documents providing written evidence of a sequence of events or the activities of a person or organization.

Paper-Based Voting System

Voting system that records votes, counts votes, and tabulates the vote count, using one or more ballot cards or paper ballots.

Parallel Monitoring

Testing a number of randomly selected voting stations under conditions that simulate actual Election Day usage as closely as possible, except that the actual ballots seen by 'test voters' and the voting behavior of the 'test voters' are known to the testers and can be compared to the results that these voting stations tabulate and report.

Parish

A small administrative district corresponding to a county in other states, such as in the State of Louisiana.

Partisan

A committed member of a political party who strongly supports their party's policies.

Partisan Election

An election in which candidates run for offices as representatives of a political party, often in which their party affiliation is printed on the ballot.

Partisan Office

An elected office for which candidates run as representatives of a political party.

Partisan Office Declaration of Candidacy

The act of completing the required paperwork to become a partisan candidate for public office.

Partisan Primary

Election in which political parties choose their nominees for a general or run-off election.

Party

An organization that coordinates candidates to compete in a country's elections. It is common for the members of a political party to have similar ideas about politics, and parties may promote specific ideological or policy goals.

Party Affiliation

Refers to a candidate or elected official's relationship to a particular party, not necessarily to a particular set of philosophical beliefs. In terms of voting, this usually refers to voters registering with a recognized political party.

Party Candidate

A candidate who is running as representatives of a political party for an elected office.

Party Convention

A meeting where states and territory parties convene to select a presidential nominee.

Party Designation

The political party printed with the name of a candidate on a ballot or election materials.

Party Enrollment

The act of registering to vote and selecting a political party affiliation. Note, some states refer to registering with a party preference, and not formal enrollment or affiliation.

Party Label

The political party printed with the name of a candidate on a ballot or election materials.

Party Preference

The act of registering to vote and selecting a political party preference. Note, some states refer to registering with a party as party enrollment or affiliation.

Pattern Voting

Selecting contest options across multiple contests in a predetermined pattern intending to signal one's identity to someone else. The possibility of pattern voting can be an issue for publishing Cast Vote Records (CVR) because it may compromise voter privacy if there are enough selections in each published CVR to make it likely a selection pattern might be unique.

Penetration Testing

An evaluation method that enables researchers to search for vulnerabilities in a system. Election systems, such as the Voter Registration system, are periodically submitted to Penetration Tests to determine their vulnerabilities to cyber-attacks. Also called Pen Testing.

People's Veto Referenda

A proposal to repeal a law authorizing what was previously enacted by a governing body, and that is placed on the ballot by a citizen petition.

Permanent Absentee Application

An application to automatically receive an absentee ballot in the mail for all future elections.

Permanent Absentee Voter

A voter who has applied to use an absentee ballot to vote for all elections and has met the qualifications to be a permanent absentee voter in their jurisdiction.

Permanent Absentee Voter Status

A term used by election officials when a voter has applied for and is eligible to use an absentee ballot for all elections.

Permanent Advance Voter

Synonymous with permanent absentee voter.

Personal Assistive Device

A device that is carried or worn by an individual with some physical impairment whose primary purpose is to help compensate for that impairment.

Persons with Disabilities

The disability community is rapidly evolving to using identity-first language in place of person-first language. This is because it views disability as being a core component of identity, much like race and gender. Some members of the community, such as people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, prefer person-first language. In this column, the terms are used interchangeably.

Petition

A document with information about measures, initiatives, referendums, or candidates used to gather signatures from registered voters.

Petition Drive

An organized effort to collect sufficient valid signatures to support an initiative, candidate, measure, or referendum.

Petition Fund

The act of raising and spending funds for purposes related to a petition.

Petition Signature Gathering

The act of attempting to gather signatures from voters for initiatives, referendums, or candidates.

Petition Verification

Term used when elections officials examine submitted petitions and determine whether they are in proper form, if the signatures of voters are valid, and if the requisite number of valid signatures have been filed to accomplish its purpose.

Physical Configuration Audit (PCA)

Inspection by an accredited test laboratory that compares the voting system components submitted for certification testing to the vendor's technical documentation and confirms that the documentation submitted meets the national certification requirements. Includes witnessing of the build of the executable system to ensure that the certified release is built from the tested components.

PII

Information that permits the identity of an individual to be derived and any information about an individual maintained by an agency, including: information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as name, social security number, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, or biometric records; any other information that can be linked to an individual, such as medical, educational, financial, and employment information.

Platform

The declared policy of a political party, candidate or group.

Plebiscite

A proposal to repeal a law that was previously enacted by a governing body, and that is placed on the ballot by a citizen petition.

Plurality

The number of votes cast for a candidate who receives more than any other but does not receive an absolute majority (more than 50%).

Pointer

Provide an alternative method of using equipment for people with limited hand use, for activities including turning pages, drawing, as a keyboard aid or a pencil holder.

Pointing to The Candidate or Question on the Ballot

On certain ballots, voters are instructed to draw a single line to connect the head and tail of the arrow that points to the choice to vote for a candidate or measure, instead of filling in a bubble or marking an X.

Political

(1) relating to the government or the public affairs of a country. (2) Relating to the ideas or strategies of a particular party or group in politics.

Political Action Committee (PAC)

From FEC's glossary: Popular term for a political committee that is neither a party committee nor an authorized committee of a candidate. PACs directly or indirectly established, administered or financially supported by a corporation or labor organization are called separate segregated funds (SSFs). PACs without such a corporate or labor sponsor are called nonconnected PACs.

Political Appointee

Any employee who is appointed by the President, the Vice President, or agency head.

Political Caucus

A meeting at which local members of a political party register their preference among candidates running for office or select delegates to attend a convention.

Political Disclaimer

The required information that must accompany any political advertisement that is paid for by a candidate, committee, or individual that is published, displayed, or circulated for the purposes of influencing an election.

Political Organizations

Any organization that involves itself in the political process, including political parties, non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups, and special interest groups.

Political Party

An organization that coordinates candidates to compete in a country's elections. It is common for the members of a political party to have similar ideas about politics, and parties may promote specific ideological or policy goals.

Political Party Affiliation

Refers to a candidate or elected official's relationship to a particular party, not necessarily to a particular set of philosophical beliefs. In terms of voting, this usually refers to voters registering with an authorized political party.

Political Party Statements of Purpose

The declared policy of a political party or group.

Political Subdivision

Any unit of government, such as counties and cities, school districts, and water and conservation districts having authority to hold elections for public offices or on ballot issues.

Politician

A person who is professionally involved in politics, especially as a holder of or a candidate for an elected office.

Poll

(1) To check the status of or record the opinion of a voter. (2) The process of voting in an election.

Poll Book

An official register of electors entitled to vote at an election, used to verify and check in voters prior to issuing them a ballot.

Poll Book Station

A site used to check in, process, or tabulate ballots from multiple precincts as a central location.

Poll Hours

The opening and closing times for voting at polling locations.

Poll List

An official register of electors entitled to vote at an election, used to verify and check in voters prior to issuing them a ballot.

Poll Officer

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Poll Watcher

Individuals that monitor the opening and closing of voting locations and the voting process.

Poll Worker

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Polling Location

Physical address of a polling place.

Polling Place

Facility to which voters are assigned to cast in-person ballots.

Polling Place Assignment

The location of the facility where a voter will be on the official list of voters authorized to cast a ballot. Polling places are based on a voter's residential address and the site may change from one election to the next.

Polling Place Officer

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Popular Vote

The vote for a candidate or issue made by the qualified voters, as opposed to a vote made by elected representatives.

Portable Document Format (PDF)

A standard and commonly used file format, used for creating, sharing, and reading documents, forms, and reports. PDF files can only be opened and read by a reader, such as Adobe Acrobat.

Position

(1) The proper, appropriate, or usual place; such as the location a contest or candidate will appear on a ballot. (2) An opinion or what a person thinks about a political candidate, issue or policy.

Post-Election

Relating to or occurring in the time following an election.

Post-Election Procedures

Laws, policies, and administrative procedures that are conducted after an election, often related to the canvassing, auditing, and certifying of election results.

Post-Election Tabulation Audit

A post-election audit that involves hand-counting a sample of votes on paper records, then comparing those counts to the corresponding vote totals originally reported as a check on the accuracy of election results, and to detect discrepancies using accurate hand-counts of the paper records as the benchmark.

Postage

The fee to use a postal service.

Postage Paid

A form of indication on an envelope that the costs for sending were paid in another way than using stamps or a franking machine. The indication is usually placed in the upper right corner of the front side of an envelope, where otherwise stamps would have been stuck.

Postage Stamp

A small piece of paper issued by a post office, postal administration, or other authorized vendors to customers who pay postage, who then affix the stamp to the face or address-side of any item of mail—an envelope or other postal cover—that they wish to send.

Postal Registration

A mail service offered by postal services in many countries, which allows the sender proof of mailing via a mailing receipt and, upon request, electronic verification that an article was delivered or that a delivery attempt was made.

Postmark

A postal marking made on an envelope, parcel, postcard or the like, indicating the place, date, and time that the item was delivered into the care of a postal service, or sometimes indicating where and when received or in transit.

Pre-Clearance

Under the Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, specified changes in voting procedures in certain states or political divisions cannot take effect in a state or political subdivision until the change is approved by a specified federal authority. The process that certain states or political divisions must follow to make specified changes in voting procedures Under the Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Pre-Election Procedures

Laws, policies, and administrative procedures that are conducted prior an election, often related to candidacy filings, ballot preparation, logic and accuracy testing of voting machines, poll worker training and all of the other activities required to prepare for voting in an election.

Precandidacy

The time period that a person, otherwise qualified to be a candidate for any public office or position to be determined by public election, prepares to be a candidate and may receive contributions or make expenditures, or both personally or by another individual.

Precinct

Election administration division corresponding to a contiguous geographic area that is the basis for determining which contests and issues the voters legally residing in that area are eligible to vote on.

Precinct Board

A group of individuals working together, following specific rules and procedures, responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Precinct Board Member

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Precinct Captain

A party leader who organizes political activities in a specific geographic area.

Precinct Count

Counting of ballots in the same precinct in which those ballots have been cast.

Precinct Count Optical Scan System (PCO)

System by which votes are recorded in a voting location by means of marks made in voting targets designated on one or both sides of a ballot card or series of cards. An optical scan system reads and tabulates ballots, usually paper ballots, by scanning the ballot and interpreting the contents.

Precinct Count Voting System

A voting system that tabulates ballots at the polling place. These systems typically tabulate ballots as they are cast and print the results after the closing of the polls. With an Optical Scan System, after ballots are marked either by hand or with a ballot marking device, they are tabulated when a ballot is placed into the scanner. For direct-recording electronic voting machines (DREs), and for some paper-based systems, these systems provide electronic storage of the vote count and results are later uploaded to a central voting system.

Precinct Official

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process.

Precinct Register

An official register of electors entitled to vote at an election, used to verify and check in voters prior to issuing them a ballot.

Precinct Split

A subdivision of a precinct which arises when a precinct is split by two or more election districts that may require different ballot styles.

Precinct Technician

The official responsible for the proper and orderly voting of the technology used at a polling location.

Precinct Voting

Voting before or on Election Day where the voter completes the ballot in person at a designated polling site that is overseen by election officials or poll workers.

Precision

(1) Extent to which a given set of measurements of the same sample agree with their mean. Thus, precision is commonly taken to be the standard deviation estimated from sets of duplicate measurements made under conditions of repeatability, that is, independent test results obtained with the same method on identical test material, in the same laboratory or test facility, by the same operator using the same equipment within short intervals of time. (2) Degree of refinement in measurement or specification, especially as represented by the number of digits given.

Presentable Ballot Style

Ballot style that includes all presentational details required to generate a ballot. This may include language, ordering of contests and candidates, and structural content such as headers.

Presidential Candidate

A candidate who is seeking nomination or election to the office of U.S. President and who either has met the legal requirements to have their name printed on the ballot or is eligible to have their name written in on the ballot and counted as the voter's choice for the contest.

Presidential Delegates

Individuals who represent their state at national party conventions for the purpose of nominating a candidate for U.S. President. The candidate who receives a majority of the party's delegates wins the nomination.

Presidential Elector

A member of the electoral college, who is authorized to cast a ballot for U.S. President on behalf of the voters of their state or the District of Columbia.

Presidential Primary Election

Primary election in which voters choose the delegates to the presidential nominating conventions allotted to their states by the national party committees.

Prevailing Party

Successful or winning individual or organization.

Primary

Election held to determine which candidate will represent a political party for a given office in the general election. Some states have an open primary, while others have a closed or modified-closed primary. Sometimes elections for nonpartisan offices and ballot issues are consolidated with primary elections.

Primary Calendar

The official list of key dates and voting deadlines for a primary election.

Primary Election

Election held to determine which candidate will represent a political party for a given office in the general election. Some states have an open primary, while others have a closed or modified closed, primary. Sometimes elections for nonpartisan offices and ballot issues are held during primary elections.

Primary Presidential Delegation Nomination

Primary election in which voters choose the delegates to the presidential nominating conventions allotted to their states by the national party committees.

Primary Results

Tallies of votes cast in a primary election after the polls have been closed for voting.

Prior Registration

When a voter updates their registration in the same or a different jurisdiction, their previous voter registration on the official voter rolls is known as their Prior Registration.

Prior To An Election

Relating to or occurring in the time before the first official act related to an election.

Prior To Election Day

Relating to or occurring in the time before the day of an election.

Privacy

The ability to prevent others from determining how an individual voted.

Private Key

The secret part of an asymmetric key pair that is typically used to digitally sign or decrypt data.

Process the Application

The act of verifying eligibility, adding information to a database, and creating a new or updated voter record upon the receipt of elections application, such as a voter registration card or absentee ballot request.

Product Standard

Standard that specifies requirements to be fulfilled by a product or a group of products, to establish its fitness for a purpose.

Programmed Device

Electronic device that includes software. Most electronic voting devices include application logic (software) and are, therefore, programmed devices.

Proof of Residence

A document confirming where a voter lives.

Proponent

Someone who proposes something, or at least supports it by speaking and writing in favor of it.

Proportional Representation

An electoral system in which parties gain seats in proportion to the number of votes cast for them.

Proportional Voting

A vote variation used in multi-seat contests where the votes allowed in the contest are distributed to the selected candidates proportionally depending on the number of selections. This may result in candidates receiving fractional votes.

Proposition

A proposal to enact a new law or constitutional amendment that is placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Protest Petitions

A petition or process to challenge or to raise objections against the conclusions of an administrative action.

Provisional Ballot

A ballot cast by a voter who was not on the list of eligible voters, whose information was incomplete or not accurate, or who had already received a ballot in the mail and was allowed to vote. Fail-safe ballots are usually kept separate from the other ballots until an election official can determine if the voter is eligible to vote. These ballots are sometimes called fail-safe ballots.

Provisional Ballot Envelope

An official envelope used to enclose a ballot that was cast provisionally to separate the ballot from other cast ballots until the voters eligibility can be determined.

Provisional Vote

A ballot cast by a voter who was not on the list of eligible voters, whose information was incomplete or not accurate, or who had already received a ballot in the mail and was allowed to vote. Provisional ballots are usually kept separate from the other ballots until an election official can determine if the voter is eligible to vote. These ballots are sometimes called fail-safe votes.

Provisional Voting

The act of casting a ballot by a voter who was not on the list of eligible voters, whose information was incomplete or not accurate, or who had already received a ballot in the mail and was allowed to vote. Provisional ballots are usually kept separate from the other ballots until an election official can determine if the voter is eligible to vote. These ballots are sometimes called fail-safe votes.

Provisional Voter Instructions

An outline of the rules and procedures for voting provisionally, published by the official authority who is responsible for administering an election.

Proxy Absentee Ballot

A form of voting whereby a member of a decision-making body may delegate his or her voting power to a representative, to enable a vote in absence.

Public Jurisdiction

The authority of a sovereign power to govern or legislate.

Public Key

Public part of an asymmetric key pair that is typically used to verify digital signatures or encrypt data.

Public Measure

A proposal to enact a new law or constitutional amendment that is placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Public Network Direct-Recording Electronic (DRE) Voting System

A DRE that transmits vote counts to a central location over a public telecommunication network.

Public Notice

A notice issued by a government agency or legislative body to make the public aware of the various government activities, hearings, public bids or other actions.

Public Office

Any federal, state, county, municipal, town, parish, borough or other district office or government position.

Public Officer

A term used to describe an individual who occupies any federal, state, county, municipal, town, parish, borough, or other district office or government position.

Public Records Request

A formal request made by a member of the public for documents or pieces of information that are not considered confidential and generally pertain to the conduct of government.

Punch Card Ballot

A ballot card that contains voting position targets that a marking device must pierce to form a hole in order to record a voter's choice for a candidate or measure.

Punch Card Voting System

A voting system where voters punch holes in a ballot card with a ballot marking device to mark their selections. After voting, the voter may place the ballot in a ballot box, or the ballot may be fed into a computer vote tabulating device at the precinct.

Punching Device

A ballot marking device used by voters to punch holes in a ballot card to mark their selections.

Punching Tool

A ballot marking device used by voters to punch holes in a ballot card to mark their selections.

Purge

Terminology sometimes used to describe a process that states and counties use to maintain and update voter rolls and data by canceling registrations for voters who are no longer eligible.

Q

QR Code

A machine-readable code consisting of an array of black and white squares, typically used for storing URLs or other information for reading by the camera on a smartphone typically used for storing vote information on ballots that are printed from ballot marking devices to be read and tabulated by a ballot scanner.

Qualification

A requirement, such as being a registered voter, that is necessary in order for a voter, candidate, or election process to be acceptable for a specific purpose.

Qualification Number

A number issued by NASED (National Association of State Election Directors) to a system that has been tested by an accredited independent testing authority for compliance with the voting system standards. Issuance of a qualification number indicates that the system conforms to the national standards.

Qualification Test Report

Report of results of independent testing of a voting system by an independent testing authority documenting the specific system configuration tested, the scope of tests conducted and when testing was completed.

Qualification Testing

Examination and testing of a voting system by a NASED-accredited independent testing authority to determine if the system conforms to the performance and other requirements of the national certification standards and the vendor's own specifications.

Qualification to Register

The conditions necessary in order for an individual to register to vote, such as being a citizen of the United States and over 18 years of age.

Qualification to Vote

The conditions necessary in order for a voter to cast a ballot, such as registering to vote by a certain deadline.

Qualified

Officially recognized as having met the requirements; certified.

Qualified Candidate

Any person who files all of the required forms to become a candidate with the proper election authority before the appropriate deadline. The candidate's name will be printed on ballot.

Qualified Elector

An individual who has registered on an electoral roll with the proper election authority and is entitled to vote.

Qualified Voter

An individual who has registered on an electoral roll with the proper election authority and is entitled to vote.

Qualified Voting Systems

Voting Systems that have met the standards to be certified for use in a jurisdiction.

Qualified Write-in Candidate

Any person seeking election, but whose name will not be printed on the ballot. For these votes to be tallied and certified, the candidate must file forms with the election official during the qualifying period. A space will be provided on the ballot for voters to write in the candidate's name. The candidate must educate voters to write in the candidate's name in the space provided.

Qualify

The process of meeting all of the requirements to be officially recognized as certified.

Qualifying Period

The official time period for individuals to file all of the required forms with the proper election authority to be eligible to be a candidate for public office or to have a ballot measure printed on the ballot for voters to vote on in a public election.

Question Petitions

A formal written request signed by voters, to propose to create, amend, or repeal a state law or constitutional provision.

Questions on The Ballot

Proposals to enact new laws or constitutional amendments that are placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

R

Random Audit

A public process of manually tallying a percentage of votes, selected at random by the elections official, and typically involves a defined minimum number of precincts or races. This procedure is conducted to verify the accuracy of an automated count.

Ranked Choice Voting

A vote variation which allows each voter to rank contest options in order of the voter's preference, in which votes are counted in rounds using a series of runoff tabulations to defeat contest options with the fewest votes, which elects a winner with a majority of final round votes in a single winner contest and provides proportional representation in multi-winner contests.

Ranked Order Voting

A vote variation which allows each voter to rank contest options in order of the voter's preference, in which votes are counted in rounds using a series of runoff tabulations to defeat contest options with the fewest votes, which elects a winner with a majority of final round votes in a single winner contest and provides proportional representation in multi-winner contests.

Ransomware

Malware that holds the victim's device (computer, phone, etc.) and data for ransom (a sum of money or other payment), by means of encrypting the files on the device or preventing access to the device.

Re-Elect

To elect for another term to the same public office.

Read Ballot

Cast ballot that has been successfully accepted and initially processed.

Reappointment

To appoint for another term to the same public office.

Reapportion

To assign or distribute seats differently in a legislative body based on changes in population.

Reapportionment

The process by which seats in a legislative body are distributed among administrative divisions based on changes in population.

Recall

Process that allows voters to remove elected representatives from office prior to the expiration of their terms of office.

Recall Election

An election in which the question of whether to remove an elected official from office before their term is completed appears on the ballot for approval or rejection.

Recall Grounds

Refers to the reasons that citizens would begin the process to remove an elected official from office in a political recall.

Recall Issue with Options

Process that allows voters to remove elected representatives from office prior to the expiration of their terms of office. The recall may involve not only the question of whether a particular officer should be removed, but also the question of naming a successor in the event that there is an affirmative vote for the recall.

Recall of Public Officer

Process that allows voters to remove elected representatives from office prior to the expiration of their terms of office.

Recall Petition

The procedure by which citizens can gather signatures from voters, using an official form, to propose a recall election directly to a governing body.

Recall Process

Process that allows voters to remove elected representatives from office prior to the expiration of their terms of office.

Recall Statement

The general statement included on a petition, when attempting to gather signatures from voters for a recall election, which describes the reason for seeking a recall election.

Recall Vote

Vote cast in a recall election.

Recallable Ballot

Recorded ballot that can be individually retrieved and included or excluded from further processing.

Receiving Boards

A group of individuals appointed, usually by local authorities, and charged with control of an elections procedure, such as receiving voted ballots, voting material or voting equipment from poll workers after the polls have been closed.

Recertification

Re-examination, and possibly retesting of a voting system that was modified subsequent to receiving national and/or state certification. The object of this is to determine if the system as modified still conforms to the requirements.

Reconcile

An accounting or auditing process that compares two sets of records to check that figures are consistent, accurate, and complete.

Record (noun)

Preserved evidence of activities performed or results achieved (for example, forms, reports, test results).

Record (verb)

To document an action or create a record.

Recorded Ballot

A ballot for which there is an associated cast vote record.

Recount

An additional count of the votes cast in an election, typically required due to state law, a candidate request, or a court order, that is used to determine the accuracy of the reported results of an election. This process may be conducted using ballot tabulation equipment or by-hand depending on local laws and procedures.

Redistrict

The process by which seats in a legislative body are distributed among administrative divisions based on changes in population.

Referenda

The plural of Referendum, which is a process whereby a state law or constitutional amendment may be referred to the voters before it goes into effect.

Referendum

Process whereby a state law or constitutional amendment may be referred to the voters before it goes into effect.

Referendum Petitions

A formal written request signed by voters, to refer a state law or constitutional amendment to the voters before it goes into effect.

Referendum Question

Proposals to enact new laws or constitutional amendments that are placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Referendum Vote

Vote cast in a referendum election.

Register

To complete a form with information to be added to an electoral roll for the jurisdiction where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Register by Mail

To complete a form with information to be added to an electoral roll, sent through the mail, to the jurisdiction where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Register to Vote

To complete a form with information to be added to an electoral roll for the jurisdiction where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Registered

A voter who is listed on an electoral roll for the jurisdiction where a voter resides.

Registered Voter

A voter who is listed on an electoral roll for the jurisdiction where a voter resides.

Registrar

An official who is responsible for election administration.

Registrar of Records

An official who is responsible for election administration.

Registrar of Voters

An official who is responsible for election administration.

Registration

A term used by election officials when referring to a voter's record.

Registration Affidavit

An official sworn statement of information used to register to vote by voters. This is sometimes referred to as a Voter Registration Card.

Registration Application

An official sworn statement of information used to register to vote by voters. This is sometimes referred to as a Voter Registration Card.

Registration Book

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Registration by Mail Form

A form voters use to supply information to be added to an electoral roll, sent through the mail, to the jurisdiction where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Registration Card

An official sworn statement of information used to register to vote by voters.

Registration Certificate

An official document providing proof of registration.

Registration Certificate Number

The serial number associated with a voter's registration on an electoral roll.

Registration Database

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Registration Deadline

The last day to complete the documents to become a registered voter to participate in a specific election or election process.

Registration Form

An official sworn statement of information used to register to vote by voters. This is sometimes referred to as a Voter Registration Card.

Registration Official

An official who is responsible for election administration.

Registration Status

A term used by election officials to describe whether a voter's record shows that the voter is eligible to vote. Status terms include: Active, Inactive, Canceled, and others.

Registration-By-Mail

To complete a form with information to be added to an electoral roll, sent through the mail, to the jurisdiction where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Rejected Ballot

A ballot which has been cast but cannot be counted due to a defect or ineligibility of the voter.

Removal (Of A Candidate)

When a candidate has withdrawn, been disqualified, or passed away, or when there is a formal process to remove a candidate from a ballot or from public office.

Repeal

The removal or reversal of a law.

Report of Election Results

A report of the tallies of votes cast in an election after the polls have been closed for voting.

Represent

An arrangement whereby one is enabled to speak and act with authority on the behalf of another.

Representation System

A type of democracy founded on the principle of elected persons representing a group of people, as opposed to direct democracy. Representative democracy places power in the hands of representatives who are elected by the people.

Representative (noun)

(1) A person who has been chosen to speak or vote for somebody else or on behalf of a group. (2) A member of the House of Representatives, the lower house of Congress.

Representative (Adj.)

Typical of a particular group of people.

Representative Districts

Administrative area in which voters are entitled to vote in contests that are specific to that area.

Reproducibility

Ability to obtain the same test results by using the same test method on identical test items in different testing laboratories with different operators using different equipment.

Requirement

Provision that conveys criteria to be fulfilled.

Requirements for Elected Offices

All of the legal requirements to hold an elected office.

Reregister

To complete a form to update your information on an electoral roll for the jurisdiction where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Residence for Voting

The place in which a voter's habitation is fixed, wherein the person has the intention of remaining, and to which, whenever they are absent, the person has the intention of returning. Persons experiencing homelessness can register and vote, as long as they can describe the physical location where they sleep at night. At a given time, a person may have only one voting residence.

Residency Requirement

The rules that govern if an individual is entitled to become a candidate or vote, based on where they live, and how long they have lived there.

Residual Vote

Vote that could not be allocated to a specific contest option due to an undervote or overvote.

Resilience

The ability to recover gracefully from error conditions and unexpected circumstances. For example, manually marked paper preserves evidence of exceptions that can advise both adjudication and audit to achieve better interpretation of original voter intent.

Resolution

A statement of policy by the governing body or an order by the governing body that a specific action be taken.

Restoration of Voting Rights

The process of restoring voting rights to people who lost their voting rights under felony disenfranchisement or for any other reason that might have disqualified them from voting.

Results

Tallies of votes cast in an election after the polls have been closed for voting.

Retention Vote

A periodic process whereby voters are asked whether an incumbent (usually a judge) should remain in office for another term. The office holder, who does not face an opponent, is removed from the position if a percentage of voters indicate that they should not remain in office.

Retractable Ballot

Recorded ballot that can be individually retrieved and included or excluded from further processing.

Return Envelope

An official envelope used to transport absentee and mailed ballots and protects voter privacy.

Returns

Tallies of votes cast in an election after the polls have been closed for voting.

Reverse Side

The front or back of a flat object which has two sides, such as a ballot card.

Right to Vote

A set of legal and constitutional protections designed to ensure the opportunity to vote in free and fair elections.

Rights Restoration

The process of restoring voting rights to people who lost their voting rights under felony disenfranchisement or for any other reason that might have disqualified them from voting.

Risk Assessment

The process of identifying the risks to system security and determining the probability of occurrence, the resulting impact, and safeguards that would mitigate this impact.

Risk-Limiting Tabulation Audit

Post-election tabulation audit procedure for checking a sample of ballots (or voter verifiable records) that provides a pre-specified statistical chance of correcting the reported outcome of an election if the reported outcome is wrong (that is, if a full hand-count would reveal an outcome different from the reported outcome).

Roster

An official register of electors entitled to vote at an election, used to verify and check in voters prior to issuing them a ballot.

Run-Off

Election to select a winner following a primary or a general election in which no candidate in the contest received the required minimum percentage of the votes cast. The two candidates receiving the most votes for the contest in question proceed to the run-off election.

Run-Off Election

Election to select a winner following a primary or a general election in which no candidate in the contest received the required minimum percentage of the votes cast. The two candidates receiving the most votes for the contest in question proceed to the run-off election.

Run-Off Primary

The election to select a winner in a primary, in which if no candidate in the contest received the required minimum percentage of the votes cast the two candidates receiving the most votes for the contest in question proceed to the run-off election.

Run-Off Results

Tallies of votes cast in a run-off election after the polls have been closed for voting.

Running for Office

Person contending in a contest for office. A candidate may be explicitly presented as one of the choices on the ballot or may be a write-in candidate.

Running Mate

A person running together with another person on two closely associated political offices in an election. For example, President and Vice President, and (in some states) Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

Rural Route

A mail delivery route in a rural area where mail is typically delivered to a box number for destinations without street addresses, as opposed to a P.O. Box.

S

Sample Ballot

An example ballot provided to voters with information specific to the voter.

Sample Ballot Pamphlet

Sample Ballot Pamphlets often provides additional election information such as the voter's polling place and hours, information about candidates, questions, and instructions for voting, in addition to an example ballot specific to the voter.

Sample Official Ballot

An official example ballot provided to voters with information specific to the voter.

Satellite Location

An office that is physically separate from the main election office and may provide limited services. Voters can typically register to vote or receive an absentee ballot from these offices. Satellite offices are also known as branch offices.

Satellite Voting Stations

Temporary site set up by an elections office for the purposes of voting.

Scan-Line

A horizontal line traced across a cathode-ray tube by an electron beam to form part of an image. Typically, this issue is caused by wet ink or some other substance transferred from a piece of paper as it goes through the scanner. The ink or other substance gets on the glass as the paper moves through, and blocks the light of the scanner in that area for future copies.

Scanner

A device that scans documents, images, printed text, handwriting, or an object and converts them into digital data. A Ballot scanner is a device used to read the voter selection data from a paper ballot or ballot card.

Scanning

The practice of using scanners to convert paper documents into digital images. This is done when capturing images of paper voter registration cards, and other election correspondence and when tabulating ballots.

Scheduled Elections

Existing law that requires any federal, state, county, municipal, district, or other district election to be held on certain dates, usually on a reoccurring basis.

School District

A geographical unit for the local administration of elementary or secondary schools.

Score Voting

A single-winner voting system where voters rate candidates on a scale. The candidate with the highest rating wins.

Seal

A security mechanism using strategically placed serialized or tamper-evident materials that alert officials if a device used in the elections process has potentially been altered or accessed without authorization.

Sealed Container

A container used to hold or transport election materials, such as ballots, where strategically placed serialized or tamperproof evident seals have been used to alert officials if it has been altered or accessed without authorization.

Seat

An elected office position that a single officeholder may occupy for a term of office.

Second-Chance Voting

Feature of a voter-facing scanner that reviews the ballot for possible marking mistakes, informs the voter, and presents an opportunity to cast as-is or return the ballot.

Secrecy Cover

A paper, envelope, or folder that encloses a ballot to maintain the secrecy of how a voter marked their ballot.

Secrecy Envelope

An envelope that encloses a ballot to maintain the secrecy of how a voter marked their ballot.

Secrecy of The Ballot

A set of rules and procedures to establish the fundamental right of voters in the United States to cast a secret ballot. These procedures ensure that no ballot can be associated with a voter, thereby allowing voters to mark their ballots freely and without fear of repercussion or reprisal.

Secrecy Sleeve

A paper, envelope, or folder that encloses a ballot to maintain the secrecy of how a voter marked their ballot.

Secret Ballot

A set of rules and procedures to establish the fundamental right of voters in the United States to cast a secret ballot. These procedures ensure that no ballot can be associated with a voter, thereby allowing voters to mark their ballots freely and without fear of repercussion or reprisal.

Secret Ballot Envelope

An envelope that encloses a ballot to maintain the secrecy of how a voter marked their ballot.

Secretary of State

A state-level officer who is responsible for various departments and functions. Secretaries of State are often, but not always, the Chief Election Official in their state.

Secure Receptacle

An object used to store and safeguard election material.

Security Analysis

An inquiry into the potential existence of security flaws in a voting system. Includes an analysis of the system's software, firmware, and hardware, as well as the procedures associated with system development, deployment, operation and management.

Security Controls

Management, operational, and technical controls (i.e., safeguards or countermeasures) prescribed for an information system to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the system and its information.

Semi-Static Voting System Software

Software that may change in response to the voting equipment on which it is installed or to election-specific programming.

Senate

A deliberative assembly, often the upper house or chamber of a bicameral legislature.

Senate District

One of a fixed number of districts into which a state is divided, each district electing one member to the higher house of the state legislature.

Serial Number

A number showing the position of an item in a series, such as a unique voter registration card number or on a manufactured article for the purposes of identification.

Sign-In Book

An official register of electors entitled to vote at an election, used to verify and check in voters prior to issuing them a ballot.

Signature

A person's name written in a distinctive way as a form of identification in authorizing. This can also be made by a mark.

Signature Roster

An official register of electors entitled to vote at an election, used to verify and check in voters prior to issuing them a ballot.

Simple Majority

A majority in which the highest number of votes cast for any one candidate, issue, or item exceeds the second-highest number, but less than 50%.

Single-Member District

An electoral district or constituency having a single representative in a legislative body rather than two or more.

Sip and Puff

An interface that allows voters to use their mouth on a straw to send inputs to an election voting machine.

Slate

A group of candidates that run in multi-seat or multi-position elections on a common platform. The common platform may be because the candidates are all members of a political party, have the same or similar policies, or some other reason.

Slate Mailer

A mass mailing that supports or opposes multiple candidates or ballot measures.

Software

The collection of programs that control the computer and perform a specific collection of tasks. Software has version numbers and is licensed (not sold) to the end user. Software can be altered to change the functionality of the computer.

Software Independence

Quality of a voting system or voting device where a previously undetected change or fault in software cannot cause an undetectable change or error in election outcome.

Software Patches

Corrections to existing programs, designed to be integrated into the programs without major release changes. Also called fixes or bug fixes.

Source Code

Human readable computer instructions that when compiled or interpreted, become an application. Source code can be written by humans or by computers.

Spear Phishing

A targeted attack by hackers, via bogus emails, that attempts to get the victim to provide login information or personal information to the hackers. Spear Phishing attempts may appear to originate from legitimate known sources, such as organizational IT or known vendors.

Special District

Public agencies created to provide one or more specific services to a community, such as water service, sewer service, parks, fire protection, and others.

Special Election

Primary, general, municipal, proposition, run-off, or recall election that is not held on a date and time regularly scheduled through statute. A special election may be combined with a scheduled election.

Special Interest Group

A group of people who have particular requests and who try to influence political decisions involving them.

Split Precinct

A precinct that contains an election district subdivision, e.g., parts of the precinct are in different political jurisdiction such as a water district or school board district, requiring an additional ballot configuration.

Split Ticket

The act of selecting candidates from different parties for different contests. In states with Straight Ticket Voting, this action overrides the straight ticket vote, and allows voters to select the candidates of their choice. For non-partisan races and proposals, the voter must make selections in these races separately. (Note: Split Ticket Voting is often not allowed during primary elections in some jurisdictions.)

Spoil

To mark or otherwise alter a ballot so it indicates in a human-readable manner that the ballot is not to be cast.

Spoiled Ballot

A ballot which has been mistakenly marked or altered by a voter. A spoiled ballot is not cast, and the voter may request a new ballot to mark correctly.

Spoiled Ballot Affidavit

A written statement confirmed by oath or affirmation, that a voter made a mistake on a ballot and is requesting a new one.

Standards Board

HAVA designates a 110-member Standards Board to assist the EAC in carrying out its mandates under the law. The board consists of 55 state election officials selected by their respective chief state election official, and 55 local election officials selected through a process supervised by the chief state election official.

State

A territory with its own government and borders within a larger country. There are 50 states in the United States of America.

State Assembly

The name given to various legislatures, especially lower houses or full legislatures in states.

State Central Committee

The organization of the central or executive committees of the political parties in several states.

State Certification

State examination and possibly testing of a voting system to determine its compliance with state requirements for voting systems.

State Election Commission

A group of individuals appointed and charged to oversee elections and voting procedure in a state.

State Election Fund

The special revenue account created in a State Treasury, where expenditures from the account are used for the administration of elections.

State Elections

Elections for members to State offices, including Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Controller, Treasurer, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and State Legislative Offices, among others.

State Measures

Proposals to enact new laws or constitutional amendments that are placed on the ballot for approval or rejection by voters.

Statement of Contest

The court filings and general requirements to contest the results of an election.

Statewide

Extending throughout a particular U.S. state.

Statewide Election Results

Tallies of votes cast in an election, that have been compiled from voting jurisdiction throughout a state, after the polls have been closed for voting.

Statewide Office

Any government position in a State. State elected offices, include Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Controller, Treasurer, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Statewide Uniform Registry Of Electors (SURE)

A platform that supports the functions of election systems, including voter registration, voter list maintenance, precinct data, and the production of poll books.

Static Voting System Software

Software that does not change based on the election being conducted or the voting equipment upon which it is installed, e.g., executable code.

Statute

A written law passed by a legislative body of a city, county, state, country, or other political body.

Statutory Initiative Petitions

A citizen-initiated ballot measure that amends statute.

Statutory Provisions

Provisions that expand on the subject matter of the statute, or law, to provide more information about who the law applies to, when it applies, and what the penalties are for violating it.

Statutory Violations

To break the rules of or act against a law.

Straight Party Ballot

A ballot with all candidates from a single political party.

Straight Party Override

Explicit voter selection that overrides or supplements the vote selections made by a straight party voting option. Straight party overrides may be subject to state election rules for how they work or whether they are allowed.

Straight Party Voting

Mechanism that allows voters to cast a single vote to select all candidates on the ballot from a single political party.

Straight Ticket

The action of voting in one oval or box next to a party name at the top of the ballot to cast a vote for every candidate of that political party. No vote will be cast in individual races in which the selected party does not have a candidate. If the voter wishes to vote in any non-partisan races and proposals, the voter must make selections in these races separately.

Straight Vote

When a voter selects every candidate of a single political party on a ballot.

Straw Ballot

An ad hoc or unofficial vote. It is used to show the popular opinion on a certain matter.

Straw Poll

An ad hoc or unofficial vote. It is used to show the popular opinion on a certain matter.

Stray Mark

A mark made by a voter outside of the area of the ballot adjacent to each candidate or measure or that area of the ballot specifically designated to record the voter's choice for that contest.

Street Segment Data

The portion of a street between two consecutive cross streets that can be assigned to a precinct.

Strike Out

To draw a line through or attempt to remove a mark on a document or ballot, with the purpose of erasing it.

Stylus

Adaptive device that allows individuals to access screens, boards, and other devices.

Substitute Candidate

A different candidate for vice president from the one whose name appears on the party's certification or nominating petition at any time before seventy-five days before the general election, by certifying the change to the secretary of state.

Successor

Someone that follows and takes the office or position that was held by another.

Suffrage

The right to vote in political elections.

Supervisor of Elections

An official who is responsible for election administration.

Supplemental Ballot Pamphlet

Official information about your ballot issued from an elections office, after an initial ballot pamphlet has been mailed.

Supplemental Petition

Additional petition sections, after a master document has been issued with information about measures, initiatives, referendums, or candidates used to gather signatures from registered voters.

Supplemental Roster

Additional pages added to an official register of electors entitled to vote at an election, used to verify and check in voters prior to issuing them a ballot.

Support Software

Software that aids in the development, maintenance, or use of other software, for example, compilers, loaders, and other utilities.

Suspend Voting Rights

Deprive someone of the right to vote.

Suspended Status

A term used by election officials when a voter's record shows that the voter is ineligible to vote.

Swear

A solemn attestation of the truth of what one says or that one sincerely intends to do what one says.

Swing Voter

A person who is not a firm supporter of any political party, and whose vote in an election is difficult to predict.

Switch

Switches connects computers into networks. A switch acts as a controller. Routers connect and manage traffic between different networks.

Sworn

Having taken a solemn attestation of the truth of what one says or that one sincerely intends to do what one says.

Sworn and Subscribed To

Having taken a solemn attestation of the truth of what one says or that one sincerely intends to do what one says and signing documentation to provide evidence of the fact.

Symmetric Cryptography

Encryption system that uses the same key for encryption and decryption. This key must be kept secret.

Symmetric (Secret) Encryption Algorithm

Encryption algorithms using the same secret key for encryption and decryption.

System

A collection of unified components that convert inputs to outputs. Systems consist of integrated subsystems. Systems are typically complex and highly interconnected. Information systems consist of hardware, software, data, people, and procedures.

System Audit

A systematic and independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with the planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable to achieve objectives. Also defines as a systematic, independent, and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which audit criteria are fulfilled.

Systematic List Maintenance Program

Terminology used to describe a process that states and counties use to maintain and update voter rolls, on a periodic basis and by canceling registrations for voters who are no longer eligible.

System Extent

Administrative unit that is the entire scope within which the voting system is used (for example, a county). The system extent corresponds to the top-level reporting context for which the system generates reports.

T

T-Coil

Inductive coil used in some hearing aids to allow reception of an audio band magnetic field signal, instead of an acoustic signal. The magnetic or inductive mode of reception is commonly used in conjunction with telephones, auditorium loop systems and other systems that provide the required magnetic field output.

Tabletop Exercise

A discussion-based drill where qualified personnel discuss scenarios and responses in order to validate plans and procedures. Also called Incident Response Planning or TTX.

Tabulate

Process of totaling votes.

Tabulating Equipment

The hardware, software, or supplies used to count votes.

Tabulating Equipment Memory Card

An electronic data storage device used for storing digital vote totaling information, typically using flash memory.

Tabulation

Process of totaling votes.

Tabulation Audit

A post-election audit that involves hand-counting a sample of votes on paper records, then comparing those counts to the corresponding vote totals originally reported as a check on the accuracy of election results, and to detect discrepancies using accurate hand-counts of the paper records as the benchmark.

Tabulation Report

A report containing the counts associated with ballots tabulated for a given election district.

Tabulator

The person or device that counts votes.

Tactile Controls

Controls that are discernable or perceptible by touch using hands, feet, or other parts of the body. (Does not include touch screens.) Dual switches are a form of tactile controls that can be used by voters with minimal use of their hands.

Tally

Process of totaling votes.

Tally Sheet

The paper form or electronic record used to collect data in the process of counting votes.

Tape

Report run from a vote tabulation device to show the total number of votes cast per candidate or issue.

Technical Data Package

Vendor documentation relating to the voting system required to be submitted with the system as a precondition of certification testing.

Telecommunications

Transmission, between or among points specified by the user, of information of the user's choosing, without change in the form or content of the information as sent and received.

Term Limits

A legal restriction that limits the total number of terms an officeholder may serve in a particular elected office.

Term of Office

The period of time for which a person is elected or appointed to hold a public office. Terms of elected office are usually 2, 4 or 6 years.

Test

Procedure used to determine one or more characteristics of a given product, process, or service according to a specified procedure for conformity assessment. A test may be an operational test or a non-operating test (for example, an inspection).

Test Campaign

Sum of the work by a voting system test lab on a single product or system from contract through test plan, conduct of testing for each requirement (including hardware, software, and systems), reporting, archiving, and responding to issues afterwards.

Test Deck

A set of marked ballots with a predetermined outcome. Used for logic and accuracy testing of a voting system.

Test Method

Specified technical procedure for performing a test, procedures by which tests are derived, or a combination of these.

Test Plan

Document created prior to testing that outlines the scope and nature of testing, items to be tested, test approach, resources needed to perform testing, test tasks, risks, and schedule.

Test Suite

Implementation of a set of operational tests for a particular object (such as a specific voting system) or class of objects (such as all voting systems that can interpret the language in which the test data are expressed).

Testing Laboratories

The process of performing any tests or procedures that are conducted in a controlled environment where the appropriate equipment, supplies, and certified expertise are available. Laboratory testing can be simply referred to as a laboratory test or lab test.

Testing Standard

Standard that is concerned with test methods, sometimes supplemented with other provisions related to testing, such as sampling, use of statistical methods or sequence of tests.

Third Party

A person or group besides the two primarily involved in a situation.

Third Party Auditor

A certified or otherwise credentialed individual or group, other than an election official, who is tasked with reviewing election materials.

Third Party Candidate

A candidate seeking nomination for office, with a political party affiliation other than the two majority political parties (Republican and Democratic).

Third Party Logic

Software, firmware, or hardwired logic that is neither application logic nor COTS. This includes, for example, general-purpose software developed by a third party that is either customized (for example, ported to a new platform, as is Windows Embedded Compact), not widely used, or source-code generated by a COTS package.

Third Party Notification

A notification from a person or group besides the two primarily involved in a transaction. An example is a change of address notification from the US Postal Service forwarded to an elections office.

Ticket

Another name for a ballot.

Tie Vote

An equal number of votes for more than one candidate or issue of the same contest.

Time Limit

An amount of time in which something must be done or completed.

Time of Recall

The legal time period for the process by which citizens can remove elected officials from office before their term is completed.

Time Off for Voting

Almost every state prohibits employers from disciplining or firing an employee who takes time off work to vote. Some state laws require employers to give their employees a specific amount of time off to cast their ballots. In some states, this time off must be paid; in others, it may be unpaid.

Touch Screen

A display device which allows the user to interact with a computer by touching areas on the screen.

Touchscreen Voting

Voting using a machine that utilizes a computer screen to display the ballot and allows the voter to indicate his or her selections by touching designated locations on the screen.

Touchscreen Voting Machine

A voting machine that utilizes a computer screen to display the ballot and allows the voter to indicate his or her selections by touching designated locations on the screen.

Touchscreen Voting System

A voting system that utilizes machines with a computer screen to display the ballot and allows the voter to indicate his or her selections by touching designated locations on the screen.

Town

A civil and political subdivision of a state, which varies in size and significance according to location but is ordinarily a division of a county. A town may or may not have a local government.

Town Clerk

A town official who is responsible for election administration for a town.

Town Council

The governing body of a town in many U.S. states, consisting of members elected by the voters.

Township

A widely used unit of local government in the United States, subordinate to a county, with some form of local government for which it generally conducts elections.

Township Clerk

A township official who is responsible for election administration for a township.

Translate

Express the sense of (words or text) in another language.

Translation

The process of translating words or text from one language into another.

Translator

A person or program that translates from one language into another.

Transmitted Electronically

A communication sent or received through technological apparatuses, including computer terminals or other equipment or mechanisms linked by telephone or microwave relays, or any similar apparatus having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless, optical electromagnetic, or similar capabilities.

Tribal Lands

The land within the jurisdiction of a federally recognized Indian tribes for which the United States government has a trust responsibility to a Native American tribe or a member of a Native American tribe. This includes reservations, pueblo land grants, tribal trust lands, and individual trust allotments.

Trusted Build

A witnessed software build where source code is converted into machine readable binary instructions (executable code) in a manner providing security measures which help ensure that the executable code is a verifiable and faithful representation of the source code.

Turnout

The number of people attending or taking part in an event, especially the number of people voting in an election. This number is typically reported as a percentage of the total number of voters in an election divided by the total number of registered voters in a given precinct or jurisdiction.

U

U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC)

Election Assistance Commission was created by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to assist the states regarding HAVA compliance and to distribute HAVA funds to the states. The EAC is also charged with creating voting system guidelines and operating the federal government's first voting system certification program. The EAC is also responsible for maintaining the National Voter Registration form, conducting research, and administering a national clearinghouse on elections that includes shared practices, information for voters, and other resources to improve elections.

Unauthorized Use

Use of technology or data for unapproved or illegal activities.

Unconstitutional

Not in accordance with a political constitution, especially the U.S. Constitution, or with procedural rules.

Under Oath

Having sworn to tell the truth.

Undervote

Occurs when the number of choices selected by a voter in a contest is less than the maximum number allowed for that contest or when no selection is made for a single choice contest.

Undervoting

The act of a voter selecting less than the maximum number allowed for a voting contest or when no selection is made for a single choice contest.

Unenrolled

An individual who is not affiliated with a political party.

Unenrolled Candidate

A candidate for public office who is not affiliated with a political party.

Unexpired Term

The number of calendar days left between a vacancy of a public office and the date that the term is regularly scheduled to end. Unexpired terms may be filled through an appointment or special election.

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)

UOCAVA citizens are U.S. citizens who are active members of the Uniformed Services, the Merchant Marine, and the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, their eligible family members, and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States. This Act provides the legal basis for these citizens' absentee voting requirements for federal offices.

Uniformed Services Voter

U.S. citizens who are active members of the Uniformed Services, the Merchant Marine, and the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, their eligible family members.

Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS)

A battery powered back-up system that quickly switches to battery power when electrical current to the computer system is disrupted (surge, sags, and failures).

United States Citizen

An individual with a legal status that provides them with certain rights within the United States. Citizenship may be derived from place of birth, paternal citizenship, or naturalization.

Unmarked Ballot

An issued ballot without any selections made.

Unregistered

Not having entered one's name on an official voting list.

Upload

Transfer data from a smaller computer or device to a larger computer.

Usability

Effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction with which a specified set of users can achieve a specified set of tasks in a particular environment. Usability in the context of voting refers to voters being able to cast valid votes as they intended quickly, without errors, and with confidence that their ballot choices were recorded correctly. It also refers to the usability of the setup and operation in the polling place of voting equipment.

Usability Testing

Encompasses a range of methods that examine how users in the target audience actually interact with a system, in contrast to analytic techniques such as usability inspection.

V

Vacancy

When a public office becomes vacant before the end of a term. This can be due to death, resignation, moving out of the jurisdiction when residency is required, removal from office, among other reasons.

Valid

Legally binding due to having been executed in compliance with the law.

Valid Identification (ID)

A means of proving a person's identity, according to the laws of the jurisdiction. Common forms of Identification are Driver's Licenses and Passports.

Valid Registered Voter

A voter whose record is current with the appropriate election authority and is eligible to vote.

Valid Vote

Vote from a ballot or ballot image that is legally acceptable according to state law.

Validation

Process of evaluating a system or component during or at the end of the development process to determine whether it satisfies specified requirements.

Verification

Process of evaluating a system or component to determine whether the products of a given development phase satisfy the conditions (such as specifications) imposed at the start of the phase.

Verify Status

In some states, a flag within a voter's record stating that the voter needs to confirm a certain piece of data in their record, such as an address or date of birth, before they can be issued a ballot.

Verify Your Voter Registration

Confirm that all of your voter registration information is accurate and up to date so that you are able to vote in the next election.

Video Ballot

Electronic voter interface which presents ballot information and voting instructions as video images.

Violate

Fail to comply with a rule or statute.

Violation

Action of failing to comply with a rule or statute.

Virus

A malicious computer program that may replicate itself on a computer network, insert or attach copies of itself into computer programs, and cause harm to computers or systems by corrupting, stealing, or modifying data or access.

Visual Format

A display format in which contest options and other information are displayed on screen or paper for perception using sight.

Visually Impaired

Any kind of vision loss.

Visually Inspected

A common method of quality control, data acquisition, and data analysis by looking over a piece of equipment, or a ballot envelope, using the naked eye to look for flaws.

Void Ballot

A ballot that has been issued but cannot be cast by a voter. This could be because a ballot was lost in the mail, spoiled, or the voter is no longer eligible to vote using that ballot, among other reasons.

Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG)

A set of specifications and requirements against which voting systems can be tested to determine if the systems meet required standards. Under HAVA, the EAC is responsible for developing, maintaining, and approving these standards. Some factors examined under these tests include basic functionality, accessibility, and security capabilities.

Vote

A valid mark on an official ballot indicating the voter's preference for a particular candidate or ballot question.

Vote A Provisional Ballot

The act of casting a ballot by a voter who was not on the list of eligible voters, whose information was incomplete or not accurate, or who had already received a ballot in the mail and was allowed to vote. Provisional ballots are usually kept separate from the other ballots until an election official can determine if the voter is eligible to vote. These ballots are sometimes called fail-safe votes.

Vote Absentee in Person

Voting before election day where the voter completes an absentee ballot in person at an elections office or other designated polling site prior to election day.

Vote Against

To cast a ballot in opposition to a political candidate or proposition.

Vote by Emergency Paper Ballot

Method of casting a ballot using a paper ballot, when the primary voting system or ballot marking device is not available or not functional.

Vote by Mail

Method of casting ballots by which eligible voters are mailed ballots and information packets by the local jurisdiction. Voters can return their marked ballots by mail, to a voting location, or in drop boxes, depending on the jurisdiction.

Vote by Mail Ballot

A ballot cast by a voter other than in-person at a voting location. Vote by mail ballots are typically mailed to voters but can be issued over the counter from an election's office. Depending on the jurisdiction, vote by mail ballots can be returned by mail, in a drop box, or in-person.

Vote by Mail Ballot Application

A document used by a voter to request a ballot be mailed to the voter.

Vote Capture Device

An electronic voting device that is used directly by a voter to make selections on a ballot.

Vote Center

A vote center is one of multiple voting locations in an election jurisdiction where voters may choose to vote at any of the locations offered (i.e. they are not assigned to one location). Vote centers are typically opened for multiple days and offer a variety of election services.

Vote Counting System

The total combination of mechanical, electromechanical, or electronic equipment (including the software, firmware, and documentation required to program, control, and support the equipment) that is used to count votes; to report or display election results; and to maintain and produce any audit trail information.

Vote For

To cast a ballot in favor of a political candidate or proposition.

Vote for N Of M

A ballot choice in which voters are allowed to vote for a specified number (“N”) of candidates in a multi-seat (“M”) contest.

Vote for No More Than

The maximum number of selections allowed in a contest.

Vote for Up To

The maximum number of selections allowed in a contest.

Vote Illegally

To cast a vote in an election when the individual is not authorized to participate by law.

Vote in Honor of a Veteran Program

A program that provides citizens the opportunity to pay tribute and dedicate their vote to a veteran or active-duty service member.

Vote in Person

Voting before or on Election Day where the voter completes the ballot in person at a designated polling site, elections office, or vote center that is overseen by election officials or poll workers.

Vote Independently

Voters have the right to an accessible voting system must provide the same opportunity for access and participation including independence.

Vote Recorder

A device that permits contest options to be reviewed on an electronic interface, produces a human-readable paper ballot, and does not make any other lasting record of the voter's selections.

Vote Rigging

Illegal interference with the process of an election, either by increasing the vote share of a favored candidate, depressing the vote share of rival candidates, or both.

Vote Tabulating Device

The hardware, software, or supplies used to count votes.

Vote Tabulating Program

The total combination of mechanical, electromechanical, or electronic equipment (including the software, firmware, and documentation required to program, control, and support the equipment) that is used to count votes; to report or display election results; and to maintain and produce any audit trail information.

Vote Tabulation District (VTD)

Counting of ballots in the same District in which those ballots have been cast.

Vote Total

Tallies of votes cast in an election after the polls have been closed for voting.

Vote Variation

Voting style or feature, including but not limited to the following: approval voting, baseline voting, cumulative voting, N-of-M voting, proportional voting, ranked choice voting, score voting, and super majority voting.

Vote Without Assistance

The ability to mark, cast, and verify a ballot privately and independently.

Voted Ballot

Ballot that contains all of a voter's selections and has been cast.

Voter

Person permitted to cast a ballot.

Voter Access Card

Device used with some electronic voting machines programmed for each voter to enable the machine to display the correct ballot style for the voter's precinct.

Voter Aid Card

A card identifying that a voter requires assistance with the voting process, and in some cases the type of assistance required.

Voter Approval

When a question on the ballot has received enough votes to pass.

Voter Assistance Card

A card identifying that a voter requires assistance with the voting process, and in some cases the type of assistance required.

Voter Checklist

A list designed to help voters successfully navigate the elections process, from registering to vote to casting a ballot on Election Day.

Voter Complaint

When a voter files a formal allegation of a violation of voting rights, such as intimidation or refusal to uphold an election law.

Voter Concern Form

A form used to file a complaint or allegation of a violation of voting rights.

Voter-Facing Scanner

System by which votes are recorded in a voting location by means of marks made in voting targets designated on one or both sides of a ballot card or series of cards. An optical scan system reads and tabulates ballots, usually paper ballots, by scanning the ballot and interpreting the contents.

Voter Files

Digital databases of publicly available records of who is registered to vote and who cast ballots in past elections. Voter file records indicate whether or not someone voted in a given election, but does not indicate whom they voted for.

Voter Fraud

Illegal interference with the process of an election, either by increasing the vote share of a favored candidate, depressing the vote share of rival candidates, or both.

Voter Fraud Hotline

Phone number where any individual can report a complaint or allegation of a voting rights violation.

Voter Guide

A guide that provides additional election information such as the voter's polling place and hours, information about candidates, questions, and instructions for voting.

Voter Identification (ID)

A means of proving a person's identity for the purposes of voting, according to the laws of the jurisdiction. Common forms of Identification are Driver's Licenses and Passports.

Voter Information Card

Cards furnished by an elections office to registered voters that contains information regarding a voter's registration record, such as registration number, registration date, name, party affiliation, birth date, residence address, precinct number, polling place address, etc. The elections office may include additional information on the card if they deem it necessary.

Voter Information Guide

A guide that provides additional election information such as the voter's polling place and hours, information about candidates, questions, and instructions for voting.

Voter Information Pamphlet

A guide that provides additional election information such as the voter's polling place and hours, information about candidates, questions, and instructions for voting.

Voter Intent

How the voter attempted to express their vote choices through actions taken to mark, verify, and cast an issued ballot.

Voter Intent Standard

A standard for counting ballots that aims to ensure that ballots are counted in accordance with the goals of the voter, using written rules for both human processes and machine algorithms to ensure that all ballots marked in a similar way are counted in the same way.

Voter Initiative

A means by which voters may propose new laws or amend existing laws by gathering signatures from registered voters to either enact a law or place the issue on the ballot for the public to vote on.

Voter Intimidation

Threat of violence, manipulation, harassment, or fear for the purpose of influencing how a person votes.

Voter List

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Voter Notification Card

Cards furnished by an elections office to registered voters that contains information regarding a voter's registration record, such as registration number, registration date, name, party affiliation, birth date, residence address, precinct number, polling place address, etc. The elections office may include additional information on the card if they deem it necessary.

Voter Qualifications

Everything that is necessary in order for an individual to be able to vote in an election.

Voter Registrar

An official who is responsible for election administration.

Voter Registration

A term used by election officials when referring to a voter's record. Voter Registration also refers to the requirement for citizens to register with a state or local elections office in order to be eligible to receive an official ballot for a given election, and to participate in certain election-related activities (including but not limited to signing petitions, serving as poll workers, and running for office).

Voter Registration Application

An official sworn statement of information used to register to vote by voters. This is sometimes referred to as a Voter Registration Card.

Voter Registration Card

An official sworn statement of information used by individuals to register to vote.

Voter Registration Certificate

An official sworn statement by an elections office to attest that a citizen is a registered voter.

Voter Registration Drive

An effort by a government authority, political party, or other entity to register to vote persons otherwise entitled to vote. Participants in a voter registration drive distribute voter registration forms, provide assistance in completing them, and return the forms to elections offices.

Voter Registration List

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Voter Registration Rolls

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Voter Registration System

A distributed or centralized system that permits the collection, storage, editing, deletion, and reporting of voter records. The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requires each state to have a centralized, statewide voter registration system (VRS). VRS have multiple interfaces and can interact with Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) systems, election officials, voters, and other stakeholders. The VRS may be vendor-provided or “homegrown”. They may be client-server architecture or mainframe based.

Voter Statistics

Data on reported voting and registration activities, including factors such as turnout and age.

Voter Turnout

The number of people voting in an election. This number is typically reported as a percentage of the total number of voters in an election divided by the total number of registered voters in a given precinct or jurisdiction.

Voter's Bill of Rights

A set of legal and constitutional protections designed to ensure the opportunity to vote in free and fair elections.

Voter's Declaration

A written statement confirmed by oath or affirmation, declaring a fact or set of facts.

Voter-Verifiable

A voting system feature that provides the voter an opportunity to verify that his or her ballot selections are being recorded correctly, before the ballot is cast.

Voter-Verifiable Audit Record

Human-readable printed record of all of a voter’s selections presented to the voter to view and check for accuracy.

Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

In DRE systems, a paper document containing evidence of a voter’s contest selections that they can check before officially casting the ballot.

Voter-Verified Paper Record System (VVPRS)

Physical paper records of voter ballots as voters have cast them on a voting system. In the event that an election recount or audit is called for, the VVPRS provides the official record of the ballot.

Voter-Verified Paper Trail (VVPT)

Physical paper records of voter ballots as voters have cast them on an electronic voting system. In the event that an election recount or audit is called for, the VVPT provides a supporting record. The ‘voter-verified’ part of the VVPT refers to the fact that the voter is given the opportunity to verify that the choices indicated on the paper record correspond to the choices that the voter has made in casting the ballot. Thus, the result of an election is an electronic tally of the votes cast and a paper record of the individual votes that have been cast.

Voters with Disabilities

A voter who requires assistance or assistive technology to access processes that are not universally designed.

Votes Cast

The number of ballots received which includes ballots that have not yet been accepted for counting.

Voting Booth

An enclosed area in which a person stands for privacy while casting a ballot.

Voting Device

A device that is part of the voting system.

Voting Equipment

All devices, including the voting machine, used to display the ballot, accept voter selections, record voter selections, and tabulate the votes.

Voting Indicator

The space provided next to the name of each candidate and ballot question choice, to be used for marking a vote.

Voting Instructions

Information provided to a voter that describes the procedures for voting. This information may appear directly on the paper or electronic ballot or may be provided separately.

Voting Lever

The mechanism that directly records a voter's choices via mechanical lever-actuated controls into a counting mechanism that tallies the votes without using a physical ballot.

Voting Location

A physical location where voters may cast their ballots.

Voting Machine

The mechanical, electromechanical, and electric components of a voting system that the voter uses to view the ballot, indicate his/her selections, and verify those selections. In some instances, the voting machine also casts and tabulates the votes.

Voting Official

Term used to designate the group of people associated with elections, including election personnel, poll workers, ballot designers and those responsible for the installation, operation and maintenance of the voting systems.

Voting Position

Specific response field on a ballot where the voter indicates the selection of a candidate or ballot proposition response.

Voting Position Target

A voting position target refers to that area of the ballot adjacent to each candidate or measure, or that area of the ballot specifically designated to record the voter's choice for that contest. The term applies to all types of voting position targets on ballots, regardless of what form they may take, including, but not limited to, rectangle, oval, circle, square, hole punch, cross punch, slotting, and open arrow.

Voting Precinct

Election administration division corresponding to a contiguous geographic area that is the basis for determining which contests and issues the voters legally residing in that area are eligible to vote on.

Voting Process

Entire array of procedures, people, resources, equipment, and locations associated with conducting elections.

Voting Punch

A ballot marking device used by voters to punch holes in a ballot card to mark their selections.

Voting Restrictions

A law or set of laws that make it more difficult for people to vote.

Voting Right

The set of laws that protect a citizens ability to participate in public elections.

Voting Rolls

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides, as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Voting Session

A collection of activities including ballot issuance, voter interaction with the vote-capture device, voting, verification, and casting.

Voting Station

The location within a polling place where voters may record their votes. A voting station includes the area, location, booth, or enclosure where voting takes place as well as the voting machine.

Voting Status

A term used by election officials to describe whether a voter's record shows that the voter is eligible to vote and/or if they have voted.

Voting Stylus

A device used to mark either an analog ballot or direct-recording electronic voting machine.

Voting System

The total combination of mechanical, electromechanical or electronic equipment (including the software, firmware, and documentation required to program, control, and support the equipment) that is used to define ballots; to cast and count votes; to report or display election results; and to maintain and produce any audit trail information; and the practices and associated documentation used to identify system components and versions of such components; to test the system during its development and maintenance; to maintain records of system errors and defects; to determine specific system changes to be made to a system after the initial qualification of the system; and to make available any materials to the voter (such as notices, instructions, forms or paper ballots).

Voting System Certification

The process by which the EAC, through testing and evaluation conducted by an accredited Voting System Test Laboratory, validates that a voting system meets the requirements set forth in existing voting system testing standards (VVSG), and performs according to the Manufacturer's specifications for the system.

Voting System Procedures

The EAC operates a voting system testing and certification program. This program tests and certifies hardware and software and may also decertify those systems. This program accredits test laboratories to perform this testing for the EAC. While states are not required to participate in the program, some have enacted laws or have regulations that require a level of participation.

Voting System Software

All the executable code and associated configuration files needed for the proper operation of the voting system. This includes third party software such as operating systems, drivers, and database management tools.

Voting System Standards (VSS)

Voting systems certified by the EAC are tested to a set of voluntary standards providing requirements that voting systems must meet to receive a Federal certification. These standards are referred to as Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG).

Voting System Test Laboratory (VSTLs)

VSTLs are privately owned testing laboratories that test voting systems (and other election systems) for conformance to the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) or to other requirements, including individual state requirements. VSTLs are periodically reviewed for conformance to National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) administered by the National Institute for Standards and Technology.

Voting System Testing

Examination and testing of a computerized voting system by using test methods to determine if the system complies with the requirements in the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines and with its own specifications.

W

Waive (The Right To)

The legal ability to request an exemption to a rule or regulation.

Waiver

The voluntary relinquishment or surrender of some known right or privilege. Regulatory agencies of state departments or the federal government may issue waivers to exempt companies from certain regulations.

Ward

An administrative division of a city or borough that typically elects and is represented by a councilor or councilors.

Water District

A geographical unit of local government given the task of supplying water and sewer needs to a community.

Wheelchair Accessible

Building features that allow for the free movement of individuals using wheelchairs. Accessible doors should provide at least 32 inches of clear width. Door hardware must not require more than 5 lbs. of force to operate. It must also be operable with one hand and without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist. Thresholds cannot be higher than 1/2 inch at accessible doors, including sliding doors. Doors require a certain amount of clear space around them, in all cases, the maneuvering space should have a level surface, that is, a maximum slope of 1:48.

White Box Testing

Testing based on an analysis of the internal structure of the component or system.

Wi-Fi

A wireless networking technology that uses radio waves to provide wireless high-speed Internet and network connections. Wi-Fi is a trademarked phrase for the IEEE 802.11x standard.

Wide Area Network

A network that connects computers across metropolitan, regional, and national boundaries.

Wireless

Network connectivity using radio waves instead of wire connections. Wireless signals can be intercepted and, if not encrypted, deciphered.

Withdrawal of Candidacy

When a person announces a candidacy or files for an election but later decides, by their own choice, not to appear on the final ballot.

Withdrawal of Nominating Petition

When a person files paperwork to be considered for Nomination to public office, but later decides, by their own choice, to not seek the nomination.

Withdrawn Candidates

Candidates who had announced a candidacy or filed for an election but later decided, by their own choice, not to appear on the final ballot.

Writ of Election

The legal term used when an authorized government authority proclaims that an election will take place at a particular time.

Write-In

A vote for a candidate that was not listed on the ballot. In some jurisdictions, voters may do this by filling in a write-in space provided on a paper ballot, or they may use a keypad, touch screen, or other electronic means to enter the name on an electronic voting device.

Write-In Campaign

Any person seeking election, but whose name will not be printed on the ballot. The candidate must educate voters to write in the candidate's name in the space provided on the ballot.

Write-In Candidate

Any person seeking election, but whose name will not be printed on the ballot. For these votes to be tallied and certified, the candidate must file forms with the election official during the qualifying period. A space will be provided on the ballot for voters to write in the candidate's name. The candidate must educate voters to write in the candidate's name in the space provided.

Write-In Candidate Requirements

Any person seeking election, but whose name will not be printed on the ballot, must still complete and file forms with the election official during a qualifying period, in order for these votes to be tallied and certified.

Write-In Space

A space provided on a ballot for voters to write in candidate's names that are not pre-printed on the ballot.

Write-In Vote

A vote for a candidate that was not listed on the ballot. In some jurisdictions, voters may do this by using a marking device to physically write their choice on the ballot or they may use a keypad, touch screen, or other electronic means to enter the name.

Write-In Voting

To make a selection of an individual not listed on the ballot. In some jurisdictions, voters may do this by using a marking device to physically write their choice on the ballot or they may use a keypad, touch screen, or other electronic means to enter the name.

X

X of Y

Refers to the number of voting precincts that have been tabulated and reported. Example: 8 of 10 voting precincts have been tabulated and reported.

XML Extensible Markup Language

XML is a text-based language used to organize and present information on the World Wide Web.

Y

Yard Sign

A sign advertising a particular vote.

Z

Zero Report

Report produced prior to tabulation to check that there are no stored votes.