

# Accurate and Effective Elections Communications

NCSL's Strong Elections, Strong States: Western Region

May 19<sup>th</sup>, Denver, CO

Tammy Patrick  
CEO-Programs  
National Association of Election Officials (Election Center)

The Basics

Semantics

Experts

Context

Knowing your stuff

Covering your bases

Voter confidence

**Every election has a story to tell.**

- ▶ **Sometimes we don't know what that story is until long after the ballots are counted.**

**Now, more than ever, how we talk about it all matters.**

# Basics

Where are we at / Elections in 2023...

# It's Complicated: Election Basics

**50 States**

**3,140 Counties**

**1,620 NE Townships**

**5,312 Midwest Townships**

**10,072 Election Jurisdictions**



Statistics from Election Data Services

# Election officials have many titles\*

Supervisors

Registrars

Clerks

Assessors

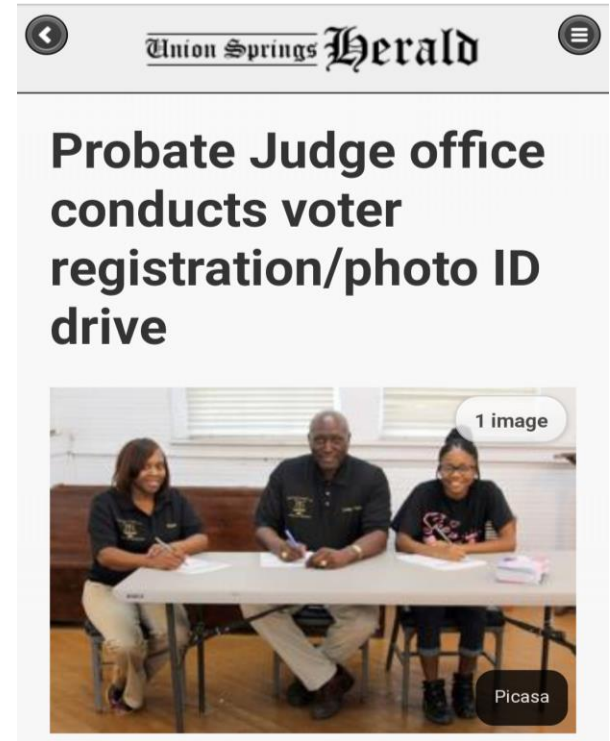
Auditors

Directors

Recorders

Judges

**\*May vary by state**

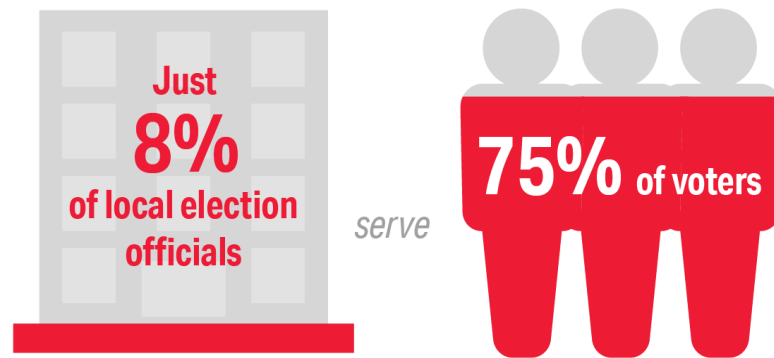


▶ **“One size does not fit all”**

**You are going to hear it, so be prepared...**



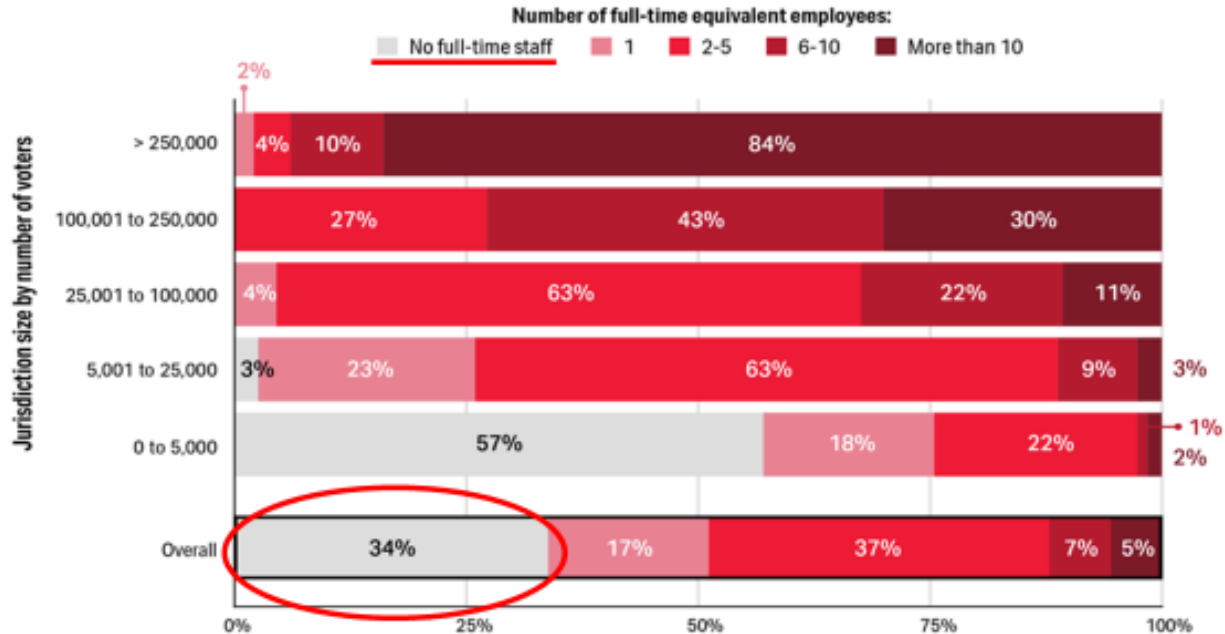
Source: 2022 Democracy Fund/Reed College Survey of Local Election Officials



Source: 2022 Democracy Fund/Reed College Survey of Local Election Officials



## The difference in staffing between small and large jurisdictions is striking



Source: 2020 Democracy Fund/Reed College Survey of Local Election Officials

Avoid generalities. In elections there is *always* an exception. (See what I did there?)

VR: in all but 1 state it is the first step

EDR: 22 states & D.C.

FPCA/FWAB



Even so, some universalities exist.

#1: Voters don't always know how the system works and how to interact successfully with the franchise. (So, don't assume that they know.)



# Semantics

Words to use/Words to avoid

# Universality #2: Election Terminology... Words Matter!



**Dave Nichols**  
@dnichols99



@NPRlistening to your story on election security. Voting SYSTEMS are not voter registration databases. The difference matters.

[#semantics](#)

4:28 AM · 21 Mar 18

Black Box

Conspiracy

Election Integrity

Rigged

Fraud

I've heard that...

Stuffing

## Red Flags & Triggers

Fixing

Vote Flipping

Suppression

Big Lie

Election Deniers

Some people are saying...

# Experts

Who are you listening to / Who are you quoting

# Be the trusted validator, the trusted source

You want to both establish yourself as a trusted source and establish trusted sources and experts for yourself to help inform how you navigate this often-complex topic.

It is complex: but you need to also be personable, not just able to simplify the topic.\*

What is your brand? Does who you quote, re-tweet, seek their counsel reflect your values?



# Experts?

Credentials

Area of expertise *relevancy*

Sources—first-hand or “I saw/read it online”?

Motivations

“Donate Here”

Self-proclaimed (& media too\*) = know who you are talking to



**VoteMarion** ✓  
@VoteMarion



Yesterday, Supervisor Wilcox and fellow Florida Supervisors of Elections met with Secretary Byrd and Legislators at the State Capitol to discuss proposed election legislation. We are committed to ensuring fair, accurate, and secure elections in 2024 and beyond. 🍊



9:30 AM · Mar 30, 2023 · 57 Views

Host your  
elections  
officials!

# Contextualize

Don't jump to conclusions / Why having those relationships matter

In this heightened environment, it is easy to think every issue is a cyber attack.

Consider how issues are framed and what context is left out.

## Hackers? No, human error plagues Arizona primary voting

By ASTRID GALVAN Associated Press Aug 29, 2018 Updated 5 hrs ago



More than 200 polling places were not working Tuesday morning for Arizona's primary election. Officials say a contractor hired

AP NEWS IN SPANISH

Phoenix



**Video shows suitcases filled with ballots pulled AFTER supe...**

267.7K views · Dec 10, 2020

YouTube › Donald J Trump



**Video from GA shows suitcases filled with ballots pulled from u...**

**815.6K views** · Dec 3, 2020

YouTube › Donald J Trump



**Georgia Video sho... filled with ballots...**

1.1K views · Dec 3, 2020

YouTube › We Are 1

See more videos of Georgia Pollworkers Suitcase under table

Fact check: Georgia 'suitcase' video is missing context - USA TODAY

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/...>



This is from the live feed from Maricopa County a few minutes ago. A bunch of bags just randomly arrived at the counting center...



 **Maricopa County Elections Depa...**  @Maricop... · Nov 16, 2022

Today in Tabulation: staff is completing a reconciliation of ballots cast against check ins. It will be on our live stream and political party observers are present. This routine process happens every election to ensure only legal ballots are counted.





Even if you see it with your own eyes, it may not be true...





TrumpsDeplorables

@YourTrumped

Immigration Police arresting people at Voting Booths!

¡Policía de inmigración en las cabinas de votación!

[pic.twitter.com/Fzbz5oAiNM](https://pic.twitter.com/Fzbz5oAiNM)

7:28 PM - Oct 28, 2016



See TrumpsDeplorables's other Tweets

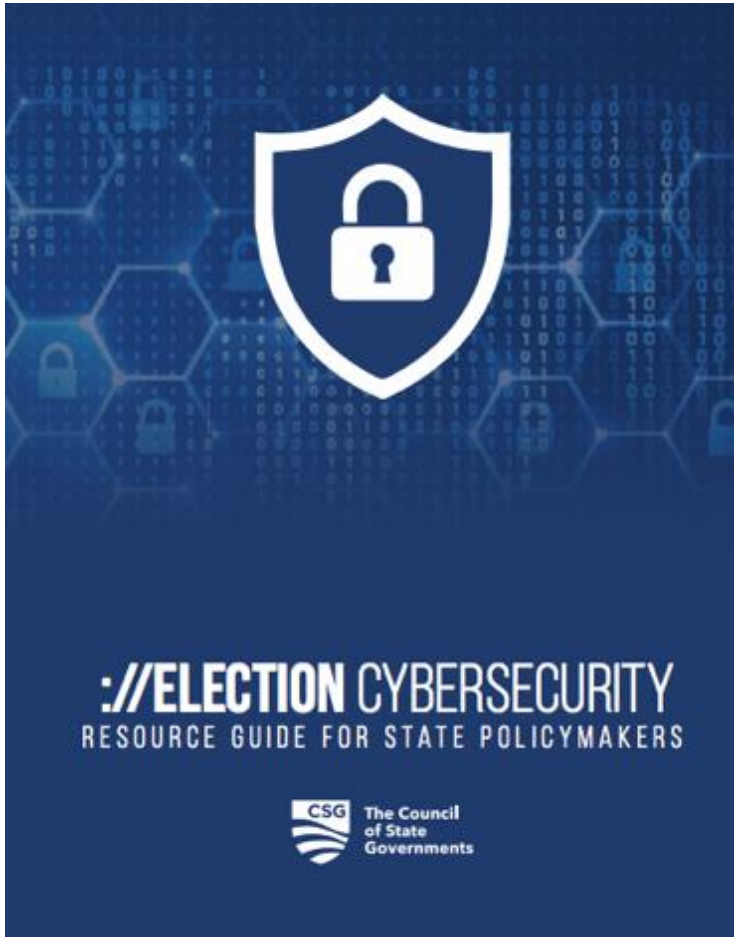


MATT YORK/AP

FILE - In this March 22, 2016 file photo, voters wait in line to cast their ballot in Arizona's presidential primary election in Gilbert, Ariz. New ID requirements. Unfamiliar or distant polling places. Names missing from the voter rolls. Those are just some of the challenges that could disrupt voting across the country through Election Day. While most elections have their share of glitches, experts worry conditions are ripe this year for trouble at the nation's polling places.



The picture is photoshopped from a photograph of a voting line outside of a March Arizona primary voting location - [used widely](#) by several media organizations - and a [Wikipedia Commons](#) picture of an immigration officer making an arrest. The photos are below:



# Alphabet Soup of Security Terms: *Avoid/Explain*

[HTTPS://WWW.CSG.ORG/REPORT\\_INTERACTIVE.PDF](https://www.csg.org/report_interactive.pdf)

# Know your state (really, really, well!)

You've a lot on your plate, have trusted resources

**Know your state:**

**What equipment is used?**

 **What certification/testing requirements do you have for technology?**

**What training is required of election officials & pollworkers? (KS, LA)**

**What do your state experts (election officials) recommend/want/need?**

**How robust is/are your state association(s)?**



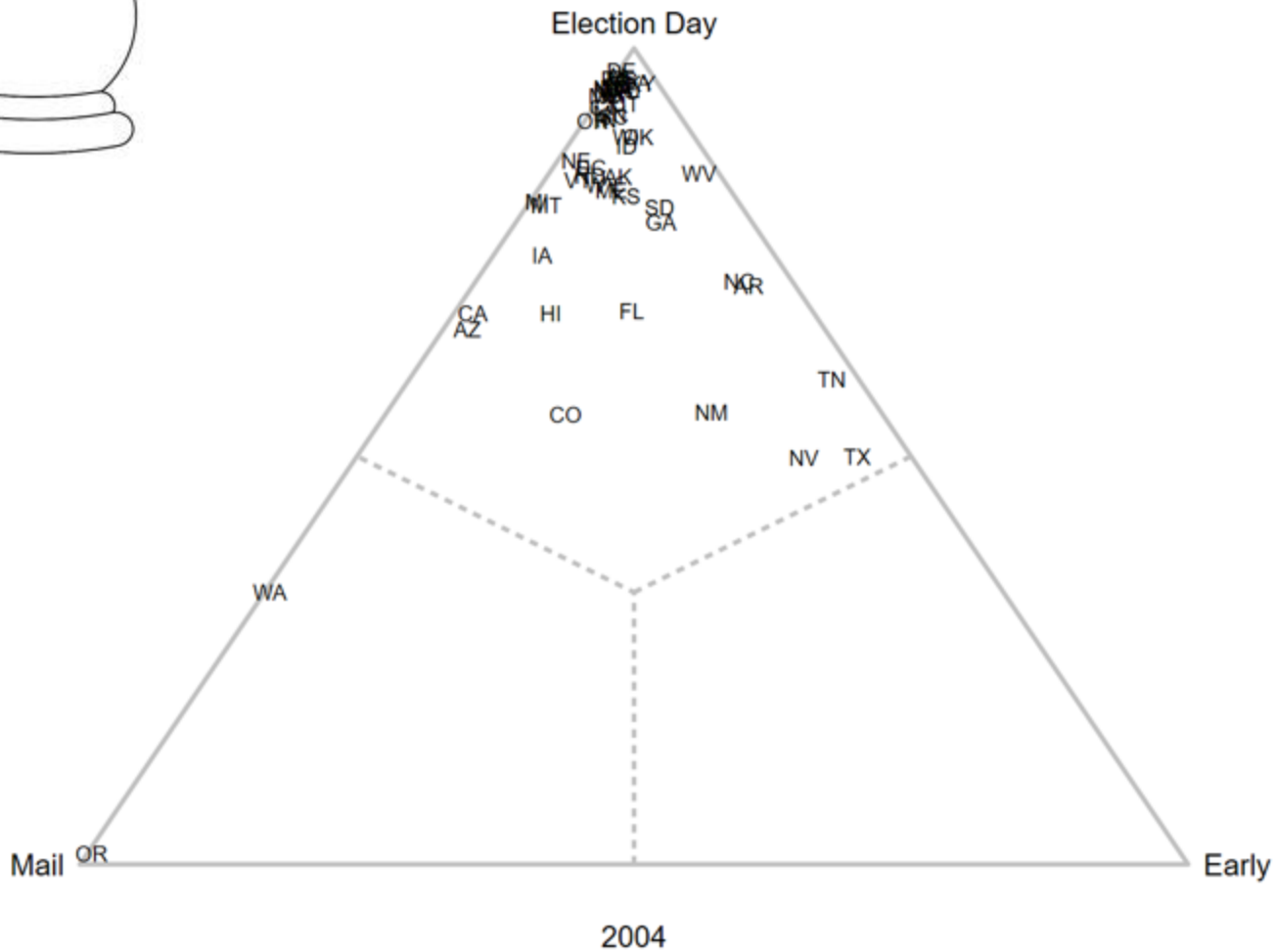
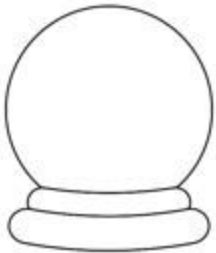
MIT ELECTION DATA  
+ SCIENCE LAB

## Universality #3: Things change!

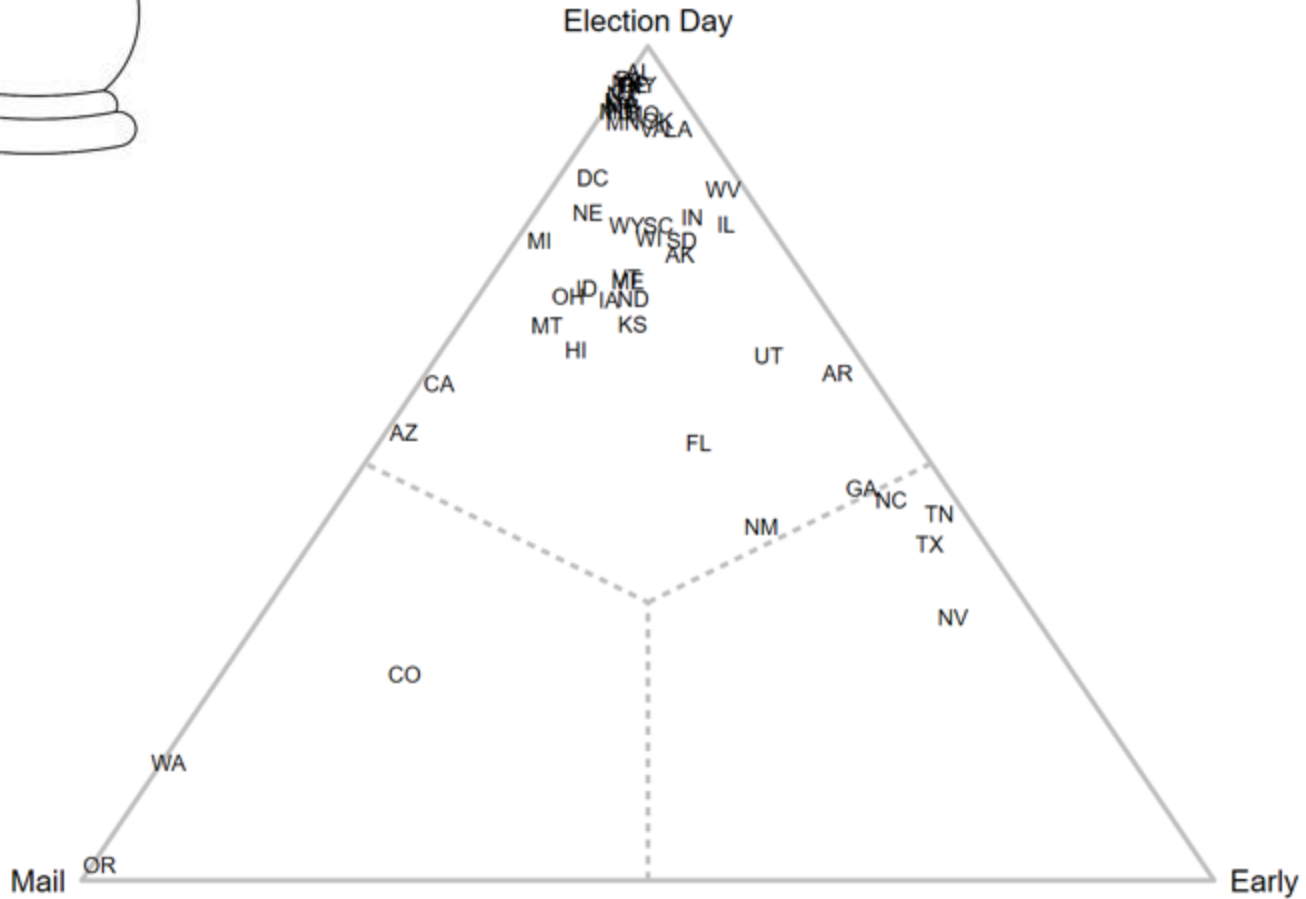
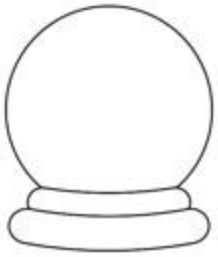
When given options in voting voters move away from Tuesday, Election Day as demonstrated by Charles Stewart, MIT--the “Snow Globe of Elections”.



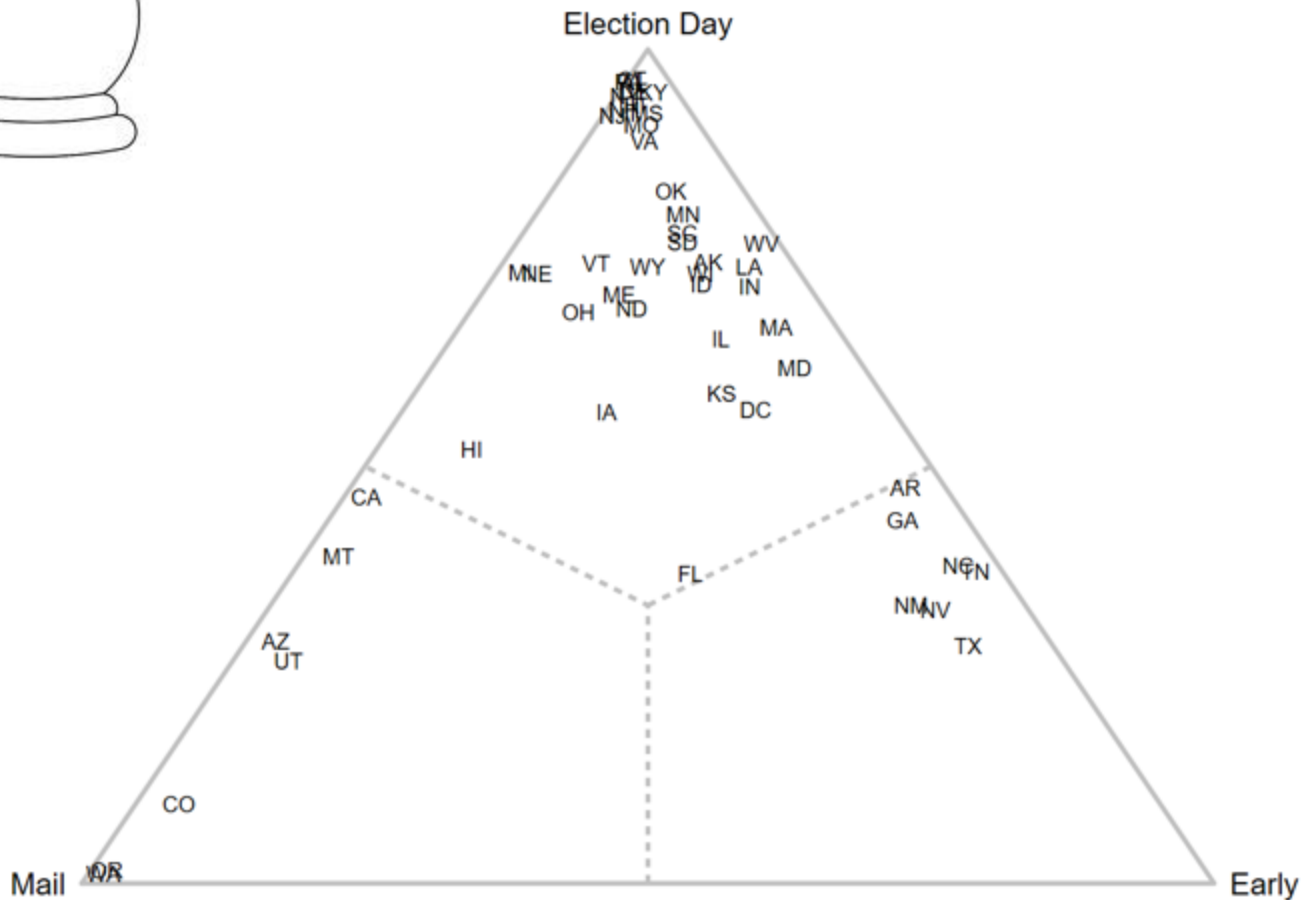
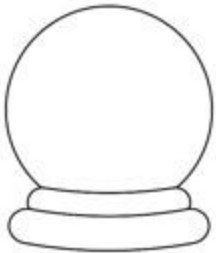


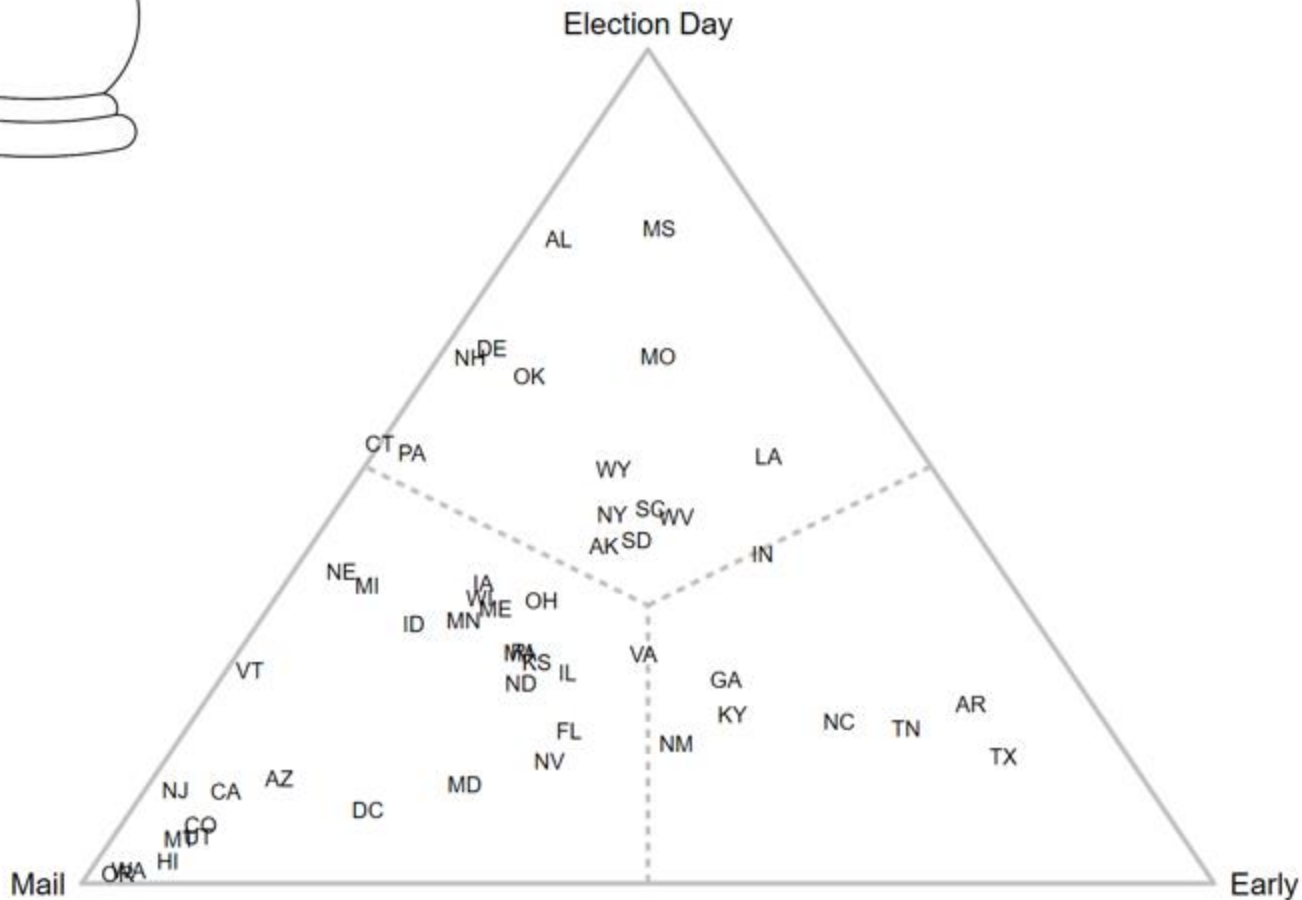
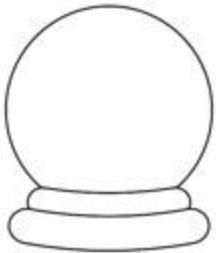




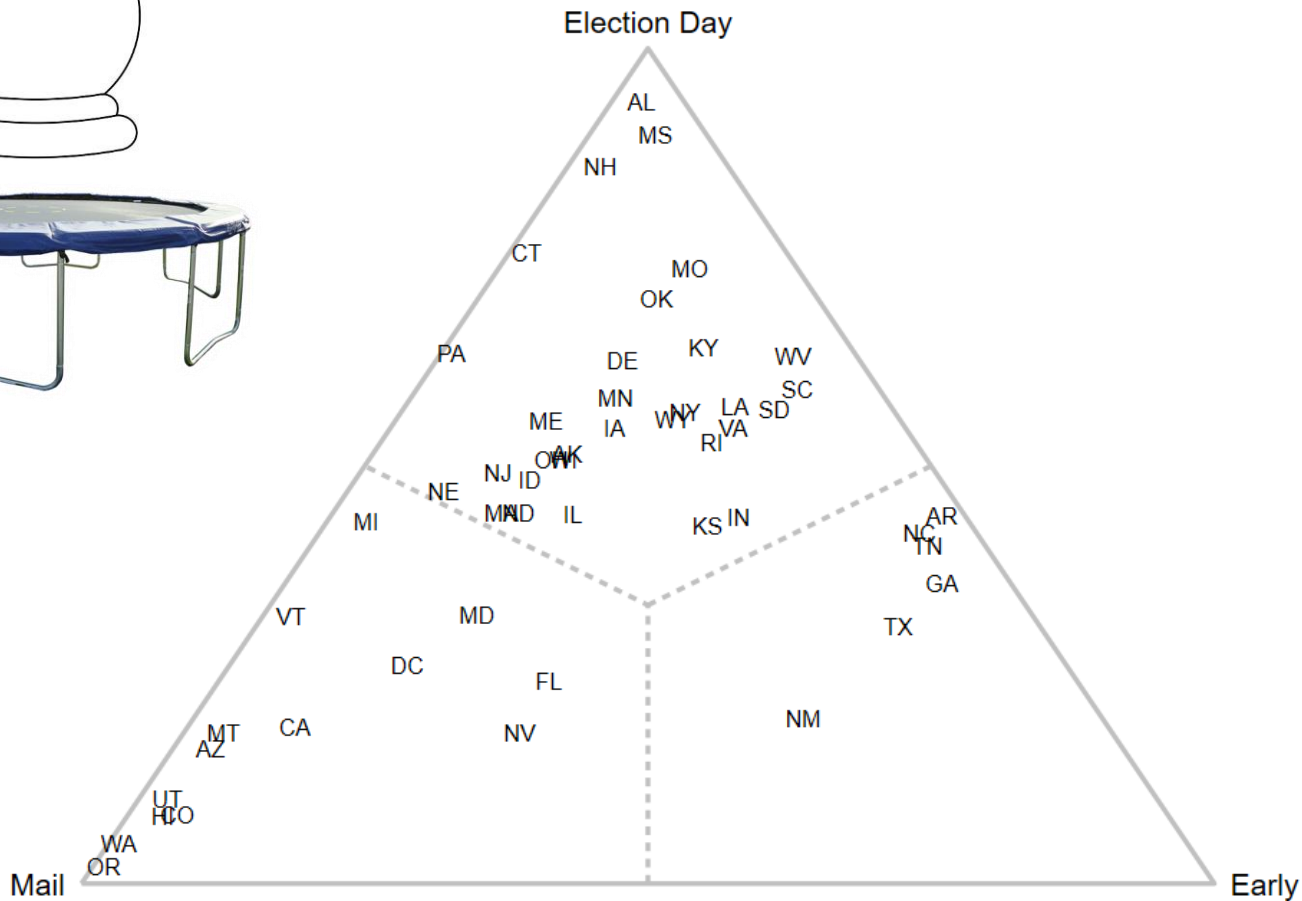




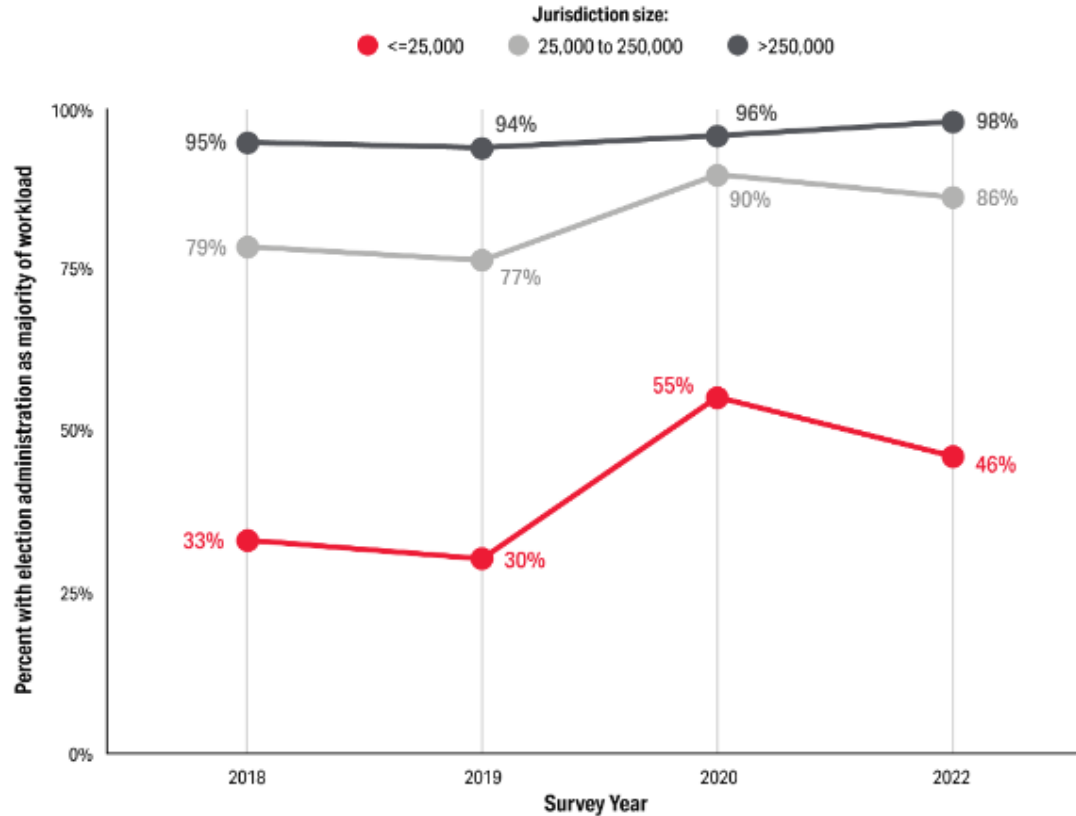




2020



## Small, rural election offices see the greatest jump in workload



Source: 2022 Democracy Fund/Reed College Survey of Local Election Officials

Change can have tangible repercussions that vary depending on jurisdiction size. The tsunami of FOIA requests has hit rural areas the hardest.

## 1 in 4 local election officials experienced abuse, harassment, or threats as part of their work in the last two years



*Source: 2022 Democracy Fund/Reed College Survey of Local Election Officials*

## Experience is exiting the elections field at an alarming rate

**4 in 10**

LEOs eligible for retirement plan to retire within two years



**NEARLY 1 in 5**

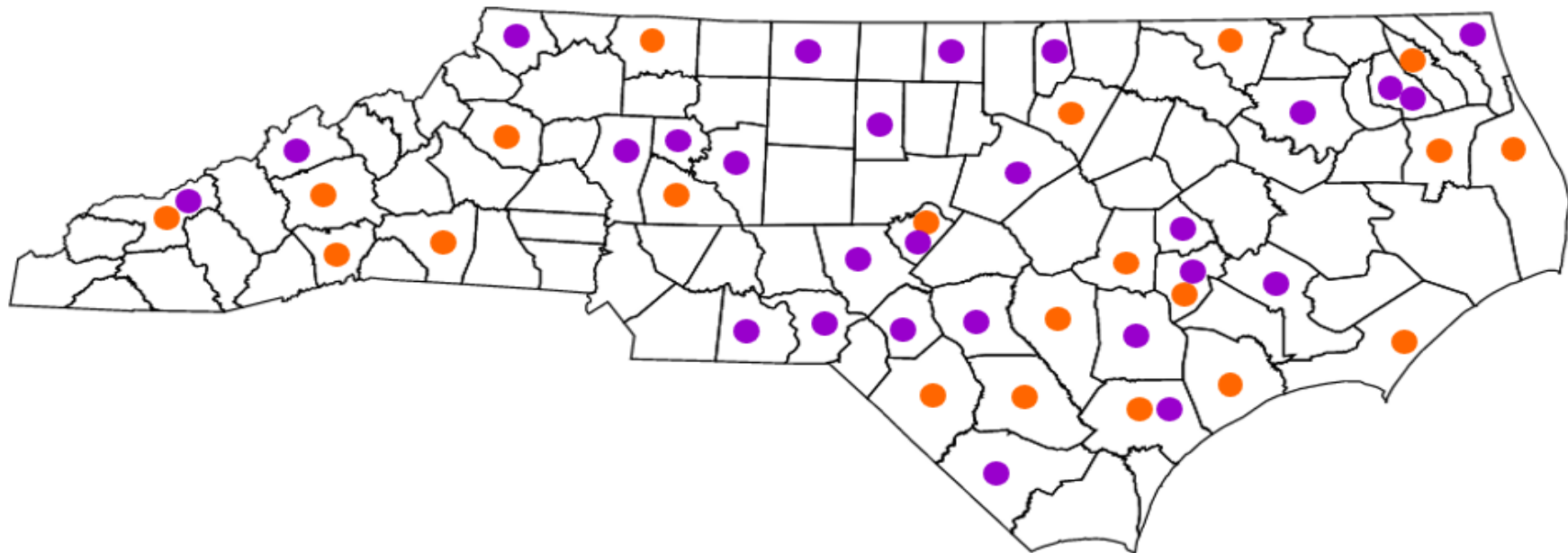
LEOs plan to leave their position before 2024



*Source: 2022 Democracy Fund/Reed College Survey of Local Election Officials*



# Nearly 50% Change in County Elections Directors Since 2019



- Director hired between January 2019 – December 2020
- Director hired between January 2021 – April 6, 2023



**NORTH CAROLINA**  
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

- ▶ Loss of institutional knowledge increases the need for training. It may result in more errors that can be pointed to in order to cast doubt on the election.

# Cover all your bases

Is accurate information reaching all constituencies?



Consider all the parts of your state, different media outlets/platforms, media deserts & the digital divide.

# What increases voter confidence?

Baseline: Facts have to matter.



Personalize the process.  
Election officials are our neighbors, family, friends.  
They shop at your grocery store, sit next to you in  
worship, their kids are on your kid's team.



Clark County Election Department

# VOTING MORE THAN ONCE PROHIBITED

No person who is entitled to vote shall vote or attempt to vote more than once at the same election. Any person who votes or attempts to vote twice at the same election is guilty of a felony.

NRS 293.780

El Departamento de Elecciones del Condado de Clark

# VOTAR MÁS DE UNA VEZ PROHIBIDO

Ninguna persona que sea elegible para votar votará ni intentará votar más de una vez en la misma elección. Cualquier persona que vote o intente votar más de una vez en la misma elección es culpable de un delito.

NRS 293.780



Clark County Election Department

# No LOITERING

Interference of election process strictly prohibited.

NRS 293.700 - 293.840

El Departamento de Elecciones del Condado de Clark

# NO LOITERAR

Interferencia al proceso de votación estrictamente prohibida.

NRS 293.700 - 293.840

Observation:  
What is allowed & where?



Maricopa County Elections Department ✓

@MaricopaVote



Observers from both parties play a critical role in this election. They were present throughout the election, from Vote Centers to tabulation.

It is not enough to just allow for observation, share out the process.

### Political Party Observers

**"Thank you! The whole staff is so great about answering questions. Please tell everyone we notice & we appreciate it!"**


**Observers Present Throughout the Election**

- ✓ Tabulation
- ✓ Signature Verification
- ✓ Vote Centers (Early Voting & Election Day)
- ✓ Ballot Couriers
- ✓ Runbeck on Election Night
- ✓ Ballot Processing

**Ambassador Program**

- ✓ Created to answer observer questions and ensure observers have access to spaces throughout the Elections Department

**ALT** -Republican Observer



3:46 PM · Nov 28, 2022



What are the security safeguards we can talk about, highlight, & share?



Loudoun Elections ✓  
@LoudounVote



The office conducts a process called 'Logic & Accuracy' testing (L&A) before each election. During this process, a bi-partisan team of election officers verifies the programming of each machine and conducts a thorough test to ensure results are calculated correctly.



# Logic & Accuracy Testing



Dean Logan, RR/CC @LACountyRRCC · Jun 2

Today is all about testing and simulation; making sure we are ready for Election Day. #LAVotes – at Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder / County Clerk



# Highlight the bipartisan nature of elections



Maricopa County Elections Depar... @Maricopa... · Dec 13, 2022

Replying to @MaricopaVote

Thank you to the hand count boards appointed by the Maricopa County political party chairs, who worked over three days to complete the hand count audit:

- ✔ Sat: 52 Reps, 35 Dems, 3 Libs
- ✔ Sun: 55 Reps, 27 Dems, 3 Libs
- ✔ Tues: 31 Reps, 25 Dems, 1 Lib



Maricopa County Elections Depar... @Maricopa... · Dec 12, 2022

Political party observers are an integral part of the elections process. In tabulation they also play an active role selecting the batches of ballots that are part of the hand count audit. See these observers in action when we're tabulating here: [bit.ly/MCTECLiveVideo](https://bit.ly/MCTECLiveVideo)





St. Louis County, MO



- Election officials are in new territory—most have been dedicated to transparency of process, now they realize that security of systems may not mean 100% transparency.
- Not all details will be disclosed.





- Documenting and discussing security measures and having robust chain of custody notations is ever increasingly important.
- Public confidence rests on our ability to demonstrate nothing was tampered with.



Maricopa County, AZ

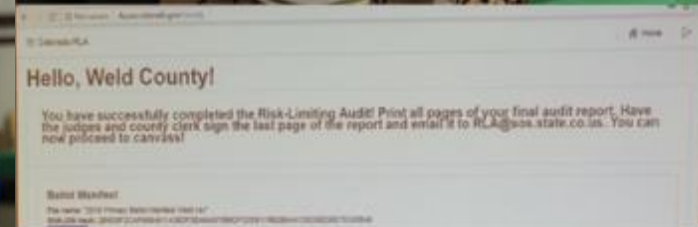
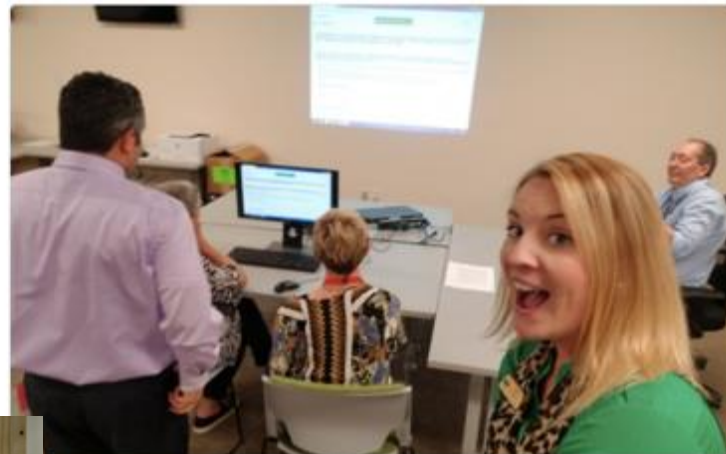


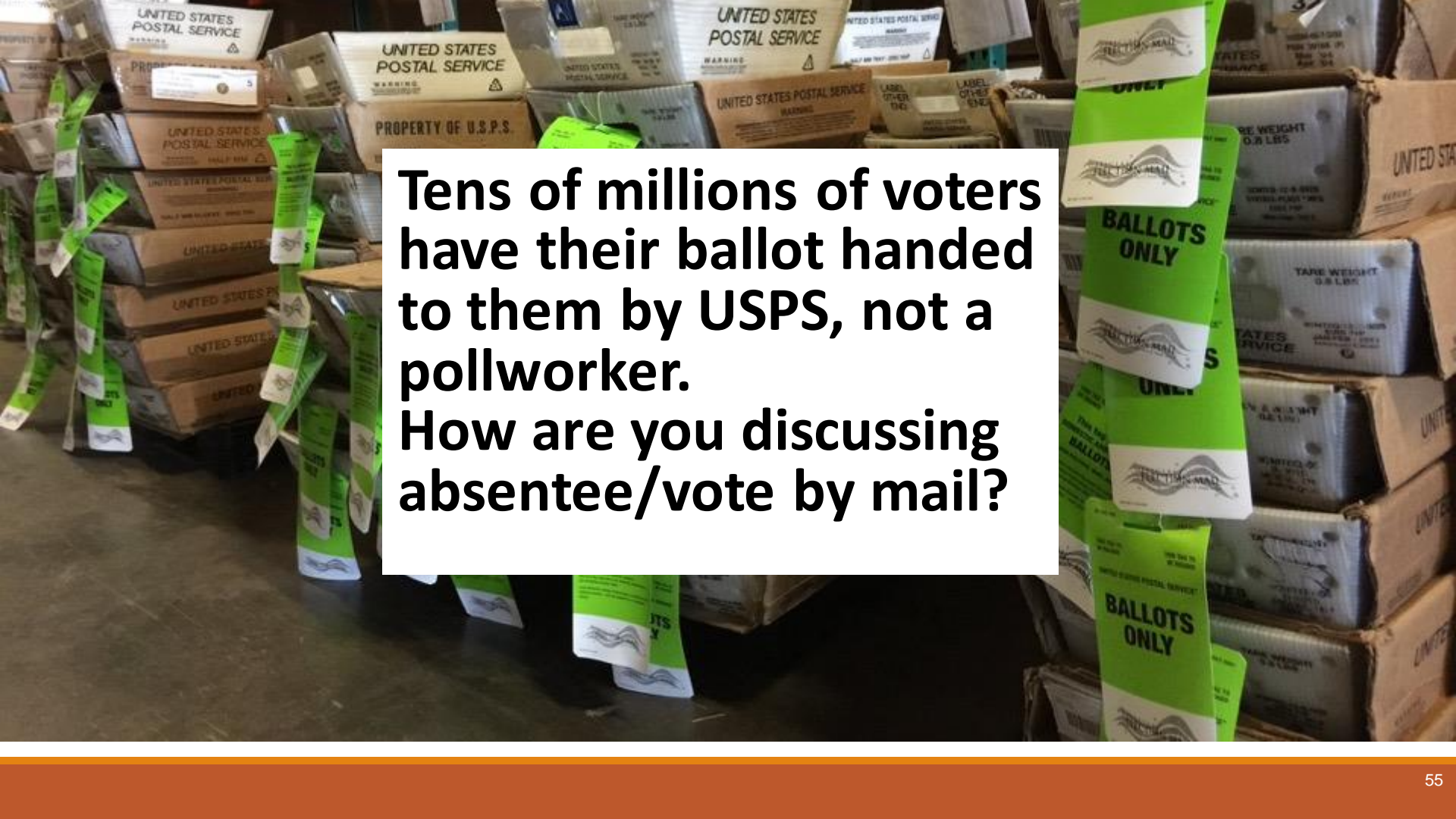


**OC Registrar** @OCRegistrar · Jun 12  
 300,000+ ballots sorted for use in our risk-limiting audit. #VoteOC2018



**Carly Koppes** @KoppesCarly · Jul 7  
 And we PAST!!! CONGRATS TEAM WELD!! #weld #weldvotes #CORLA2018  
 #countoncarly





**Tens of millions of voters  
have their ballot handed  
to them by USPS, not a  
pollworker.  
How are you discussing  
absentee/vote by mail?**

# Projections: 2 Examples

(1 Cause—close margin of victory)



▶ How many of you have a certification of your **OFFICIAL** results on Election Day/Night?

Election Day  
Projection of who  
the eventual  
winners will be  
by the Press:

The importance  
of a wide margin  
of victory

**HIGH TURNOUT** ▶

**WIDE  
MARGINS** ▶





**Elections\*:  
Fast  
Cheap  
Accurate**

**\*pick two.**


↻ You Retweeted



**Sam Mahood** @Sam\_Mahood · 3h



Elections officials take the time to carefully process and count every eligible ballot. Even if it's a "blowout" election. Even if it's a provisional ballot. It is a sad misconception that elections officials just stop "counting" or arbitrarily "throw out" ballots.

**Louie**  @Mantia

What's something that seems obvious within your profession, but the general public seems to misunderstand?

[Show this thread](#)



OC Registrar @OCRegistrar · Jun 24

Prior to certifying any election we meticulously search through every container used in the election multiple times to ensure they are clear of any ballots or election materials. #VoteOC2018



Every eligible vote gets counted.



# Provisionals too!



**MontgomeryMDVotes** · 9h

Doing our part for democracy in the office this Fourth of July. Provisional ballots for the 2018 gubernatorial primary election are ready to begin counting.

#MoCoVotes #mdvotes



**Dean Logan, RR/CC** @LACountyRRCC · Jun 6

Every vote counts. Our office is working hard this morning preparing provisional ballots from #CAPrimary to be sent to our data team for processing. For more info on how provisional ballots work visit [lavote.net/documents/mate...](http://lavote.net/documents/mate...)



Projection of one state's process on another state (where the elections are closer...) should be avoided because the devil is always in the details—When are AB/VBM/UOCAVA & provisionals processed? When do audits occur?



**Frank LaRose**  @FrankLaRose · Nov 12, 2022



Dear Arizona, need some advice on how to run an election the right way?

Your process is obviously not working and it's the dedicated, hardworking local election officials who are stuck picking up the pieces.

Happy to help out...





**Frank LaRose** @FrankLaRose · Nov 19, 2022

With unofficial results finished on election night, now our boards can begin counting provisional ballots and absentees that arrived after Election Day and within the window prescribed by law.

The bipartisan team in Brown County started their final tabulation today!



Brown County, OH has a population of less than 44K. Maricopa County has 2.5M registered voters, 1.56M voted in 2022 Midterm. Their official canvass was done 2 days later, but they also do their hand count audit BEFORE the canvass.



**Maricopa County Elections Depart...** @Maricop... · Nov 21, 2022

Final results have been posted showing 1.56 million voters cast a ballot. This exceeded the historic average of 56.3% going back five decades, just behind the record high turnout in 2018 of 65.5%. Find the totals at [Results.Maricopa.Vote](https://Results.Maricopa.Vote)



0:05 14.9K views

# How Florida counts votes so fast compared to other states

Once considered a laughingstock, Florida has become a model example for holding elections

Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022

AP

U.S. News

World News

Politics

Sports

Entertainment

Business

Technology



Click to copy

“This is absurd. Arizona and Nevada have a lot fewer voters than Florida and yet they take days longer to tally the results,” one tweet said. “Total fraud.”

An Instagram post similarly alleged: “22 million people live in FL. 7 million people live in AZ. In FL we provided same day results. So why can’t a state with less than 1/3 of the population do the same? A.) Cheating B.) Cheating C.) A&B.”

## RELATED TOPICS

Fact-checking

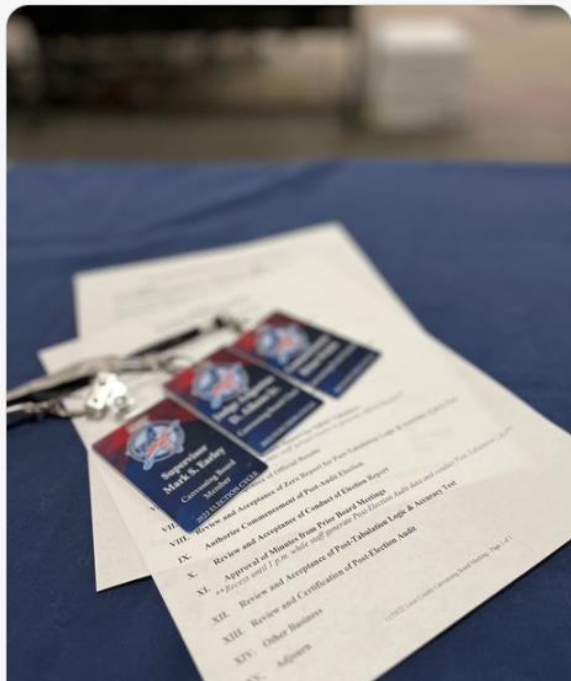
Nov 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022



**LeonVotes** @LeonVotes · Nov 18, 2022

Tomorrow the Canvassing Board will certify & submit the official results for the 2022 General Election. Official results will include final ballots from overseas voters.

After official results are submitted a post-election audit will be conducted, concluding the election!



November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022




**Miami-Dade Elections** @MDCElections · Nov 18, 2022

It's official! The November 8, 2022 General Election results have been certified by the @mdcelections Canvassing Board. #Elections2022 [miamidade.gov/global/news-it...](https://miamidade.gov/global/news-it...)





 **Maricopa County Elections Depa...**  @Maricop... · Nov 28, 2022 ...

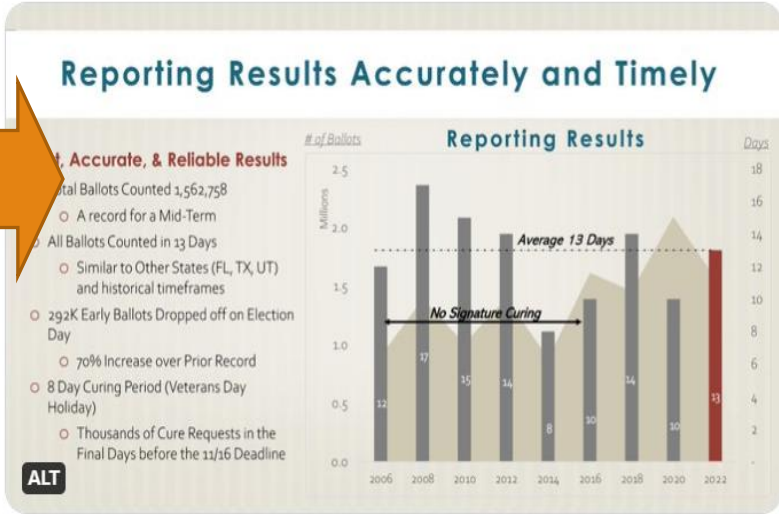
Communicating accurate information to voters is always a priority of ours. We've shared more than 700 social media post, conducted over 600 interviews, and sent a monthly newsletter to 40K subscribers in this election.



Think about how you use photos and data to not only convey the facts but get an emotional response.

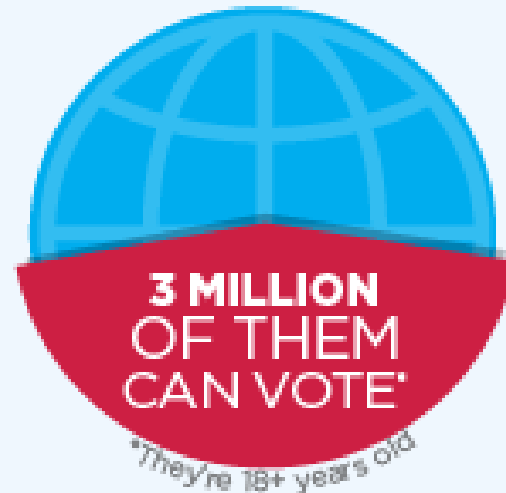
 **Maricopa County Elections Department**  @MaricopaVote ...

While the law gives counties 20 days to complete tabulation, [@maricopacounty](#) finished in 13 days, similar to other states including Florida, Texas and Utah.



3:35 PM · Nov 28, 2022

## OVERSEAS CITIZENS AND VOTING



- Repetitive use of the same graphic—here the daily posting of pre-registered voters turning 18—establishes a “branding” of information



**Craig Latimer** @HillsboroughSOE · 18 Dec 2018

Happy birthday to our pre-registered voters who turn 18 years old this month. Are you ready to vote? If you live in the @CityofTampa be sure to mark your calendars for your very first election: March 5.

#VoteHillsborough



## PENNSYLVANIA VOTERS:



**You may be naked,  
but your ballot  
must not.\***

How to properly complete your  
Pennsylvania Mail-in Ballot



**1** Complete your ballot in blue or black ink.



**2** Insert your completed ballot into the small ballot envelope. If your ballot is not inside the small envelope, it will be considered a "naked ballot" and will **NOT** be counted.  
*(Think of it as underwear for your ballot.)*



**3** Place your sealed ballot envelope into the larger return envelope.  
*(This would be your ballot's pants.)*



**4** Seal the return envelope and sign and date the voter declaration. Your ballot is ready to be mailed.

@joshuphi

*\*Does not apply for in-person voting.*

- Consider the graphics
- Use of humor
- Clear instruction/direction

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