

ELECTION CENTRAL



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Canvassing: Certifying an Election



The Canvass Team reviewing the June Primary.

The most common misconception about elections is that voters believe that the election night results are the official results. In reality, local election officials are given a week to count the ballots. This process is called The Canvass, in which Registrar Keith Balmer calls a “pivotal period” in the electoral process.

At our office after each Election Day, a team of experienced chief election officers examine the results and audit the paperwork from each precinct. On the checklist for the Canvass team is:

- Election Day oath.
- Ballot Officer Report.
- Statement of Results.

TERMINOLOGY YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- **Election Day Oath:** Oath that all election officers have to take on Election Day.
- **Ballot Officer Report:** One election officer in each precinct serves as a Ballot Officer, who maintains a report of how many ballots were used, unused, or reissued on Election Day.
- **Statement of Results:** Record of all the ballots issued in a precincts and voters who were checked in on the pollbooks.



Stacie Harrison (Right) and Debra Williams (Left) working as the Solutions Team to resolve any problem that arises.

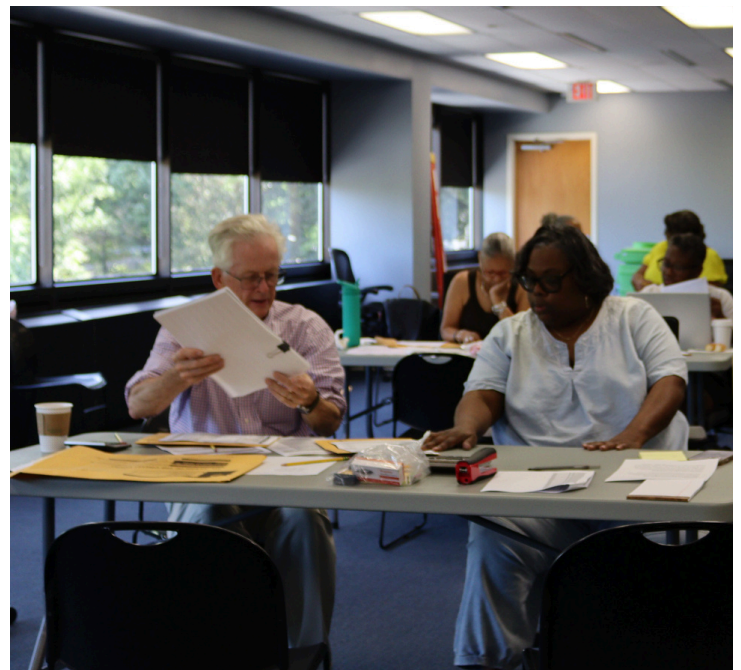
Stacie Harris, who has been a chief election officer for 16 years, said reviewing each precinct's results and paperwork might take up to 30 minutes or longer. The Canvass team needs to review all 72 precincts, which means it may take more than a day to finish the entire process.

The Canvass is especially important in close races that might require a recount. To qualify for a recount, the margin must be 1% or less and the Canvass will determine whether a race needs a recount. This is why results on the TV on Election Day are not the final results because votes are still being counted for the next 7 days, and this includes provisional and absentee ballots that are postmarked by Election Day.

If an error has been found, the chief of that precinct will be called into the office to address the issue. In more serious cases, the issue must be reported to the Electoral Board.

Once Canvassing is complete, the Electoral Board will certify the results of the election. This certification is delivered to the State Board of Election, who then will certify the results for the state

The Canvass process is extremely labor intensive. Earlier this year, Registrar Balmer proposed a bill, House Bill 998, to the General Assembly, requesting 10 days to complete the Canvass, instead of the state mandated 7 days. The purpose of these 3 additional days is to alleviate stress from election officials



who are required to meet legal deadlines, and to ensure the thoroughness of election officials.

The General Assembly passed the legislation in the recent session and was signed in by the Governor.

With an increased number of absentee and provisional ballots since 2020, the additional 3 days will help ensure the accuracy and integrity of the Canvass.

“Together, we can empower Virginia’s electoral system to navigate the complexities of modern elections, ensuring that every vote counts, every voice matters and our democracy endures,” Registrar Balmer said.