

Election Observer Panel Plan

Updated September 2020

I. County and System Information

1. Name of County: Santa Cruz
2. Name of Contact: Gail L. Pellerin, County Clerk
3. Contact's Phone: 831-454-2419
4. Vendor and Voting Systems Used by County: Dominion Democracy Suite 5.10 ImageCast Central and ICX Tablet
5. Date: September 10, 2020

II. Purpose

The purpose of an Election Observer Panel is to:

1. Provide the public with the opportunity to observe and make suggestions on ways to improve our election process.
2. Help ensure the integrity of the election process.
3. Remove some of the mystery associated with the election process to build voter confidence and encourage more people to take part.
4. In Santa Cruz County, an Election Observer Panel is invited to observe all critical procedures of the election process, including Logic and Accuracy testing of the voting system, vote-by-mail ballot processing, election officer trainings, Election Day activities, Election Night ballot counting, and canvass procedures.

III. Invite

Between E-60 and E-30, prepare e-mail invitations to the following:

- County Grand Jury
- Political Party County Central Committee members
- Representatives from jurisdictions on the ballot
- League of Women Voters
- Media
- Representatives of contests on the ballot
- Advocacy groups

Other groups and individuals expressing an interest in observing Election Day activities may also be included in the observer panel.

IV. Duties, General Rules of Conduct

Overview

Election observers may wish to view election processes and procedures at various locations:

- Santa Cruz County Clerk/Elections, 701 Ocean Street, Room 310, in Santa Cruz.
- Santa Cruz County Clerk/Elections Operations Center, 2809 Mission Street, in Santa Cruz.
- Watsonville City Community Room when they are conducting early voting at 275 Main Street, 4th Floor, in Watsonville.
- Our office and the Watsonville City Clerk's Office will open as voting locations beginning October 5. We will be open regular business hours until the weekend before the election.
- There will be 18 locations open Saturday October 31 to Tuesday, November 3, and one additional location open Monday, November 2 and Tuesday, November 3. Due to the fires in Santa Cruz County, some of these sites may have to be relocated due to fire damage or being used for a shelter or other emergency purpose. Check www.votescount.us for the latest information.

Each location will be open for voting on the following dates and times:

Saturday, October 31, 2020, 9am to 5pm

Sunday, November 1, 2020, 9am to 5pm

Monday, November 2, 2020, 8am to 5pm

Tuesday, November 3, 2020, 7am to 8pm

- Aptos - Temple Beth El, 3055 Porter Gulch Rd.
- Boulder Creek - Boulder Creek Recreation Hall, 13333 Middleton Rd.
- Capitola - New Brighton Middle School, 250 Washburn Ave.
- Felton - San Lorenzo Valley High School, 7105 Highway 9
- Santa Cruz - Santa Cruz County Clerk/Elections, 701 Ocean St., Room 310
- Santa Cruz - Simpkins Swim Center, 979 17th Ave.
- Santa Cruz - Bonny Doon Elementary School, 1492 Pine Flat Rd.
- Santa Cruz - Kaiser Permanente Arena, 140 Front St.
- Santa Cruz - Masonic Center, 828 N. Branciforte Ave.
- Santa Cruz - Natural Bridges School, 255 Swift St.
- Scotts Valley - Scotts Valley Community Center, 360 Kings Village Rd.
- Scotts Valley - SV High School, 555 Glenwood Dr.
- Soquel - Soquel High School, 401 Soquel San Jose Rd.
- Watsonville - Watsonville City Community Room, 250 Main St., 6th Floor
- Watsonville - Pajaro Valley Community Trust, 85 Nielson St.
- Watsonville - La Selva Beach Clubhouse, 314 Estrella Ave.
- Watsonville - Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, 2601 East Lake Ave.
- Watsonville - Calabasas Elementary School, 202 Calabasas Rd.
- Santa Cruz - UCSC, Merrill Cultural Center, open ONLY Monday, November 2, 2020, 8am to 5pm and Tuesday, November 3, 2020, 7am to 8pm

VoteMobile – stay tuned!

The Santa Cruz County Elections office is also getting a VoteMobile that can travel anywhere in the county to conduct pop-up voting and ballot return. Locations, dates and times will be posted on the Elections Department's website at www.votescount.us by October 12.

Check-in Procedures

At Operations Center, County Elections Office or Watsonville City:

- All observers must sign in upon arrival.
- An Election Observer Badge will be issued and must always be worn.
- When leaving premises, observers must sign out and return the badge to the front counter.
- All observers must maintain a professional manner while observing the election processes.
- All observers must adhere to public health guidelines of wearing a mask, maintaining physical distancing, covering coughs and sneezes, frequent hand washing and disinfecting surfaces after use.
- Observers may not wear any item that contains any messages about what is on the ballot or political slogans.

At voting locations:

- If your group would like to observe activities at a voting location, please provide the names of the individuals to the County Clerk by Wednesday, October 28. Letters of introduction will be prepared for the observers to use when visiting voting locations.
- Upon arrival, please present the Election Officer with the letter of introduction and explain your plans for observing.
- All observers must maintain a professional manner while observing the election processes.
- All observers must adhere to public health guidelines of wearing a mask, maintaining physical distancing, covering coughs and sneezes, frequent hand washing and disinfecting surfaces after use.
- Observers may not wear any item that contains any messages about what is on the ballot or political slogans.

If necessary, observers who fail to comply with the rules/procedures contained in these guidelines may be asked to leave and/or a local law enforcement agency may be called for assistance.

Interfering with Election Officers holding an election or with voters lawfully exercising their rights of voting at an election, is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for 16 months and up to 3 years (California Elections Code §18502).

Election Officers will cooperate with any reasonable request from observers.

General rules for observers

Observers may:

1. Observe the proceedings at all locations, including the opening and closing procedures at the voting locations or drop boxes.
2. Obtain information from a secured FTP site managed by the Santa Cruz County Elections Department showing who has voted. An application to view voter data must be on file before you can get access to these files.
3. Make notes and watch all election procedures.
4. View all election-related activities at all locations.
5. View all election night ballot check-in and counting procedures.
6. View the canvass of the vote activities following the election.
7. View vote-by-mail, same day voter registration, and provisional ballot processing during the canvass.
8. Ask questions of staff, poll workers, or voters at all locations as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of the election procedures.
9. Ask questions of supervisors at the central counting site as they do not interfere with the conduct of the election procedures.

Observers may not:

1. Interfere, in the judgment of the elections official, with the conduct of the election.
2. Physically handle any voting materials or equipment.
3. Sit at the official worktables or view confidential voter information on any work terminal.
4. Communicate with voters (within 100 feet of a central voting location) regarding the casting of a vote or speak to a voter regarding his or her qualifications to vote.
5. Wear candidate badges, discuss candidates or issues, or bring any campaign material into the voting location, and/or within 100 feet of the entrance to the voting location
6. Wear the uniform of a peace officer, a private guard or security personnel.
7. Use cellular telephones, pagers or two-way radios inside the voting location, and/or within 100 feet of the entrance to the voting location.
8. Use the telephones or computers.
9. Use the area between the official worktable and voting booths as an observation point/post.
10. Touch election personnel.
11. Eat or drink at any location.
12. Assist in operations at any location.
13. Photograph, videotape, or otherwise record a voter entering or exiting a voting location with intent of dissuading them from voting.
14. All photography or videotaping must be approved by the site supervisor.

General rules for observing at the Operations Center

Observers may observe the proceedings at the Operations Center, including:

1. Logic and Accuracy Testing of ICX tablets.
2. Sealing, storage and security of voting units.
3. Asset tracking of equipment.
4. Ballot quality control, testing, and security.
5. Chain of custody records for equipment and ballots.
6. Preparation of supplies for delivery to the voting locations.

Observers may not:

1. Interfere in any way with the preparation of the election.
2. Use the Operations Center telephone, except in cases of an emergency.
3. Wear candidate badges, discuss candidates or issues, or bring any campaign material into the warehouse.
4. Sit at any designated official worktable or handle any of the official voting equipment, supplies, or ballots.
5. Enter the caged area without staff with a green badge escorting you.
6. Walk around the Operations Center without an escort who is wearing a green, blue or yellow badge.
7. Use cellular telephones, pagers or two-way radios inside the elections Operations Center.
8. Photograph, videotape, or otherwise record activities occurring at the Operations Center without approval of the site supervisor.

General rules for observing canvass procedures

1. No observer shall interfere with the orderly processing of vote-by-mail ballot return envelopes or processing and counting of vote-by-mail ballots, including touching or handling of the ballots or envelopes. (Elections Code §15104e)
2. Observers will be permitted access to a designated observation area, sufficiently close to enable them to observe and challenge whether individuals handling vote-by-mail ballots are following established procedures. (Elections Code §15104d)
3. If the challenge process unduly impedes or interferes with the verification process, challenges shall be discontinued.
4. Radios, cameras and tape recorders are not allowed. Pagers and cellular phones must be set to vibrate or off mode while observing the canvass. You may use one of the telephones in the front office should you need to make a call.
5. The individual's function is to observe that procedures are followed. Observers cannot assist in operations, touch or handle any ballots or other election-related materials.
6. All questions concerning a procedure should be directed to the site supervisor and not directly to employees.
7. The number of observers may be limited so as not to interfere with the process and to ensure physical distancing of 6 feet or more. Observers should avoid physical contact with employees.
8. Observers are to hold discussions and conversations outside the designated canvass work areas.

9. Observers will be allowed into the canvass work areas only when employees are performing canvass operations.
10. Operations will continue as scheduled whether or not an observer is present.

Ballot challenges

1. Any member of the county grand jury, and at least one member each of the political party Central Committees or County Councils who have a candidate on the ballot, and any other interested organizations, shall be permitted to observe and challenge the manner in which the vote-by-mail ballots are handled, from the processing of vote-by-mail ballot return envelopes through the counting and disposition of the ballots. (Elections Code §15104b)
2. Observers may not challenge signatures on vote-by-mail ballot return envelopes. Only the elections official shall perform signature comparison, in accordance with Division 3 of the California Elections Code.
3. Observers may challenge whether the individuals handling vote-by-mail ballots are following established procedures. Please see established procedures for processing vote-by-mail ballots provided by the Santa Cruz County Clerk/Elections Department.

V. Mechanism for Feedback

Observers are provided a form for providing feedback concerning the ballot tabulation process and any other aspects of the administration of the election. However, observers may also provide verbal feedback to the County Clerk Gail L. Pellerin or Assistant County Clerk Tricia Webber. Written feedback does not have to be on the provided form.