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**2024-2025 Riverside County
Civil Grand Jury Report**

**Riverside County Elections:
A Pathway to Greater Voter Confidence**

June 10, 2025

SUMMARY

The 2024-2025 Riverside County Civil Grand Jury (Civil Grand Jury) investigated the actions of Riverside County's Registrar of Voters Department (ROV) before, during, and after the November 5, 2024, General Election in response to public concerns about election integrity. Through interviews with ROV officials, election experts, and community members, as well as visits to ROV facilities, the Civil Grand Jury found the following:

- **Accuracy of Election Results:** A community group could not independently verify ROV's certified November 5, 2024, election results despite ROV's help.
- **Voter Rolls and Maintenance:** The ROV exceeded federal and state voter registration and maintenance laws.
- **Signature Verification:** ROV manually verifies signatures for mail-in ballots.
- **Chain of Custody:** Handwritten documentation is hard to read.
- **Emergency Response:** ROV lacked emergency protocols and evacuation drills for temporary employees.
- **Security Risks:** Cameras did not record ballot processing areas during two bomb threat evacuations.

The Civil Grand Jury's investigation concluded that key actions would enhance confidence in election results. These actions include:

- Conducting a comprehensive performance audit and making necessary adjustments.
- Proactively seeking additional ways to improve the accuracy of voter rolls.
- Automating signature verification.
- Electronically recording chain of custody documents.
- Installing high-definition cameras to live stream and continuously record ballot processing areas.
- Preparing permanent and temporary employees to respond swiftly and safely to emergencies.

BACKGROUND

Concerns surrounding elections have long been a part of American history. Notable presidential elections such as those in 1876, 1888, 1960, 2000, and 2020 were particularly contentious. These elections were marked by various issues, including widespread voter intimidation in 1876, accusations of voter-buying in 1888, allegations of voter fraud in 1960, problems with punch-card ballot processing in 2000, and both voter fraud and disenfranchisement in 2020.¹

Riverside County citizens expressed concerns about the General Election held on November 3, 2020. Consequently, the 2020-2021 Riverside County Civil Grand Jury investigated the procedures followed by the Registrar of Voters Department (ROV) during that election. The

¹ Smithsonian Magazine, "Four Times the Results of a Presidential Election Were Contested," November 4, 2020, by Robert Speel. URL is located at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/rigged-vote-four-us-presidential-elections-contested-results-180961033/> Accessed April 14, 2025.

investigation concluded that the ROV administered the election fairly, impartially, and in compliance with federal and state laws. The procedural objections raised by citizens were related to the implementation of California laws, which the ROV was legally required to follow.²

The 2020-2021 Riverside County Civil Grand Jury report recommended 13 ways for the Registrar of Voters to improve future election processes. These recommendations emphasized (a) improving public outreach, (b) increasing hands-on training for temporary employees, (c) ensuring that election technology functions properly before voting locations open, (d) enhancing the security of drop-off boxes, and (e) fostering better collaboration among county departments before, during, and after elections. By June 2022, the ROV had either implemented or was in the process of implementing all 13 recommendations.³

On December 12, 2023, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors appointed a new Registrar for the Registrar of Voters Department. With the Board's approval, the new Registrar implemented several improvements, including:

- Enhancing the department's internal procedures
- Hiring additional personnel⁴
- Securing a State Homeland Security Program Grant to improve security features at the ROV campus⁵
- Engaging a professional communication firm to bolster voter education and outreach efforts⁶
- Expanding election observation opportunities for the public
- Livestreaming ballot processing areas during ballot processing times

Simultaneously, the Board established an Election Advisory Committee. This committee consists of representatives from both major political parties along with other politically influential organizations. The purpose of the Election Advisory Committee is to provide recommendations to the Board, Executive Office, and to the Registrar on improvements to the electoral process to ensure voter confidence and public trust in how the County conducts elections.⁷

² 2020-2021 Riverside County Civil Grand Jury, "Was the Riverside County November 2020 Consolidated General Election Administered Fairly and Impartially?" Public Release Dated of July 1, 2021. URL is located at https://rivco.org/sites/g/files/aldnop116/files/Past%20Reports%20%26%20Responses/2020-2021/Election_Report.pdf Accessed on April 14, 2025.

³ 2021-2022 Riverside County Civil Grand Jury, "2021-2022 Civil Grand Jury:2022 Continuity Report," Public Release Date June 21, 2022. URL is located https://rivco.org/sites/g/files/aldnop116/files/Past%20Reports%20%26%20Responses/2021-2022/Continuity_Report_2021-2022.pdf Accessed April 14, 2025.

⁴ Riverside County Board of Supervisors, October 31, 2023, Agenda Item 3.3. URL is located at http://riversidecountyca.ig2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=2798. Accessed April 14, 2025.

⁵ Riverside County Board of Supervisors, August 27, 2024, Agenda Item 3.57, Resolution No. 2024-204. URL is located at https://riversidecountyca.ig2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=3027 Accessed April 14, 2025.

⁶ Riverside County Board of Supervisors, December 12, 2023, Agenda Item 3.68. URL is located at https://riversidecountyca.ig2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=2802 Accessed on April 14, 2025.

⁷ Riverside County Board of Supervisors, March 29, 2022, Agenda Item 3.4, pp. 2-3. URL is located at https://riversidecountyca.ig2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=2645 Accessed April 14, 2025.

In response to the ongoing interest of Riverside County citizens in the election processes of the Riverside County's ROV, the 2024-2025 Riverside County Civil Grand Jury investigated the ROV again. This investigation focused on the department's actions before, during, and after the General Election held on November 5, 2024, to determine compliance with relevant laws, policies, and procedures.

METHODOLOGY

The Civil Grand Jury conducted interviews, attended on-line and in-person meetings, reviewed documents, attended public meetings, viewed websites, and communicated with individuals and organizations through e-mails.

Interviews: Nineteen interviews were conducted. Interviewees are classified in the following categories:

- Permanent ROV Election Employees
- Temporary ROV Employees
- Private Citizens
- Riverside County Executive Office Representatives
- Riverside County Council Representatives
- Nationally Recognized Election Expert

Document Reviews: Eighty-one documents were reviewed.

- ROV Chain of Custody Documents
- Board of Supervisors Agenda Items related to ROV
- Internal ROV Documents
- Federal and State Election Laws and other Documents

E-mail Communications

- Riverside County Registrar of Voters
- Private Citizens
- Community Organizations

Visits

- Meetings and Workshops
- Riverside County Executive Office
- Multiple visits to the Registrar of Voters Facilities
- Election Integrity Workshop (August 2024)
- Election Integrity Advisory Committee (September 2024)

Websites

- Registrar of Voters: <https://voteinfo.net/>
- California Secretary of State: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/>
- California Government and Election Codes: <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>
- Help America Vote Act: https://www.eac.gov/about/help_america_vote_act.aspx
- Multiple California Election Codes: <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>

- White House: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>

DISCUSSION

The public has expressed concerns regarding the accuracy of Riverside County's election results. These concerns have been articulated through two legal challenges against the state's election laws and procedures, in which Riverside County's ROV and other California counties were named as defendants. Additionally, a private election oversight committee, composed of Riverside County citizens, has also expressed similar concerns.

The following sections will address the ongoing concerns about elections in Riverside County: (a) accuracy of election results, (b) California's voter rolls, (c) ballot signature verification, (d) chain of custody and (e) the training of permanent and temporary election personnel.

A. Accuracy of Election Results

Litigation Involving Riverside County

The first case, Election Integrity Project California v. Shirley Weber (January 4, 2021), involved an attempt to decertify the November 2020 election results in California due to alleged inconsistencies in election procedures; however, after two and a half years of litigation, a California Appeals Court upheld that the state's election laws and practices did not violate constitutional protections, deeming the allegations insufficient to challenge the election's integrity.⁸

The second case, Advocates for Faith and Freedom v. Weber (October 30, 2024), involved plaintiffs who discovered discrepancies in the California November 2022 election results, with 43,624 more votes recorded in the raw data than reported, prompting them to seek legal action to ensure compliance with election laws ahead of the November 2024 election.⁹

Voting System Certification Prior to the November 5, 2024, Election

The California Elections Code §19202 mandates that no voting system can be purchased or used in a California election without the approval of the Secretary of State.¹⁰ California Elections Codes §§19200-19219 legally defines the parameters of what constitutes a voting system.

⁸ Election Integrity Project CA, Inc. v. Weber, Appeal from the United States District Court for the Central District of California, Opinion by Judge Wardlaw, August 15, 2024.. URL is located at <https://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2024/08/15/23-55726.pdf#:~:text=The%20panel%20rejected%20plaintiffs%E2%80%99%20claim%20that%20California%20laws,the%20minimum%20requirement%20for%20nonarbitrary%20treatment%20of%20voters.-> Accessed May 5, 2025

⁹ Advocates for Faith and Freedom v. Weber, "Verified Petition for Peremptory Writ of Mandate," October 30, 2024. Filed in Superior Court of California, Sacramento URL is located at https://www.eip-ca.com/press_releases/004%202024.10.30%20Writ%20of%20Mandate.pdf Accessed May 5, 2025.

¹⁰ California Secretary of State, Voting Technology, Certification and Approval. URL is located at <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ovsta/certification-and-approval> Accessed April 8, 2025.

A voting system is 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.”¹¹

Civil Grand Jury members observed that the ROV utilized a state-approved voting system and witnessed the procedure for verifying accurate ballot counts before the commencement of ballot counting for the November 5, 2024, General Election.

Local November 5, 2024, Election Results Discrepancies

Riverside County citizens formed a private election oversight committee (community group). For years, they have voiced their concerns about Riverside County elections during Board meetings, directly with ROV personnel, and in other public forums.

Following the November 2024 election, the ROV and the community group held in-person meetings and exchanged emails to discuss local election procedures. One of the key topics addressed was the post-election canvass, which ensures that all valid ballots are accurately counted and included in the certified results. The California Election Code §15302 outlines a series of procedures for election canvassing.¹²

The canvass is a post-election process that aggregates and confirms that all valid ballots cast in the election are accurately counted and included in the final election results.

After the November 5, 2024, election, the community group wanted to compare ROV’s certified election results with results they calculated independently. The community group requested and obtained relevant election information from Riverside County’s ROV.

The ROV calculated its certified results using California Election Code §15302 (a) and (b). Those procedures are as follows:

- a. An inspection of all materials and supplies returned by poll workers.
- b. A reconciliation of the number of signatures on the roster with the number of ballots recorded on the ballot statement.

Table 1 list ROV’s November 5, 2024, General Election final certified results:¹³

¹¹ California Voting System Standards, “Definitions, References, and Types of Voting Systems,” 1.3.2, October 2014. URL is located at <https://admin.cdn.sos.ca.gov/regulations/elections/california-voting-system-standards.pdf> Accessed January 16, 2025.

¹² California Legislative Information, California Government Code §15302, Effective January 1, 2008. URL is located at https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=15302.&lawCode=ELEC Accessed May 5, 2025.

¹³ Riverside County Registrar of Voters, November 5, 2024, Final Certified Results. URL is located at https://www.livevoterturnout.com/ENR/riversidecaenr/5/en/Index_5.html Accessed April 8, 2025.

Table 1
Riverside County’s November 5, 2024, Certified Election Results

Riverside County Voter Turnout	69.90%
Ballots Counted	959,098
Vote by Mail	788,661
Mail Ballots Received at Precincts	11,025
Vote Center - In Person	126,310
Conditional Voter Registration	33,102
Registered Voters	1,372,289

The community group independently calculated the November 5, 2024, results using California Election Code §15302 (c) and (d) and documentation provided by ROV. Those procedures are as follows:

(c) In the event of a discrepancy in the reconciliation required by subdivision (b), the number of ballots received from each polling place shall be reconciled with the number of ballots cast, as indicated on the ballot statement.

(d) A reconciliation of the number of ballots counted, spoiled, canceled, or invalidated due to identifying marks, overvotes, or as otherwise provided by statute, with the number of votes recorded, including vote by mail and provisional ballots, by the vote counting system.

The community group reported a discrepancy of 33,888 ballots when compared to ROV’s figures. The ROV included 33,888 more ballots in its certified election results than the community group could verify.

Following the November 5, 2024, General Election, three races were close enough that recounts were requested. The ROV conducted those recount election races as mandated by California law and the results did not change.¹⁴

Election Audits

The California Elections Code §15360 mandates that election officials conduct a public manual tally of ballots to verify the certified election results. Counties must use at least one of the methods listed below:¹⁵

¹⁴ Interviews with the Registrar of Voters, January 16, 2025.

¹⁵ California Secretary of State, Elections Division, 2024. URL is located at <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/post-election-audits> Accessed January 16, 2025.

- **1% Manual Tally**: Elections officials manually tally all the ballots in 1 percent of the precincts, selected at random by the elections officials. For each race that is not included in the initial group of precincts, the elections officials count one additional precinct to include all races in the manual tally. The 1% Manual Tally is open to the public.
- **Risk-Limiting Audit**: Elections officials manually tally randomly selected ballots, stopping as soon as it is implausible that a full recount would show a different result than the ballots reviewed. Risk Limiting Audits are currently running as part of a pilot program in California

Riverside County's ROV conducted its 1% manual tally on December 2, 2024. The manual tally encompassed 1,610 batches, consisting of 1,596 precincts and 14 vote centers. The ROV's report to the California Secretary of State reported that a total of nine ballots had to be re-adjudicated.¹⁶

Through a series of interviews, the Civil Grand Jury found that the ROV was transparent with the community group, and the community group could not have completed its evaluation of the ballot process without the ROV's assistance. Both sides desired a transparent and accurate ballot counting system. There is evidence that the ROV followed federal and state election laws and no evidence that the ROV is deliberately withholding information.

As demonstrated by lawsuits involving multiple California counties, including Riverside County, there is a persistent need for an independent verification method for Riverside County's certified election results. Simply adhering to California election laws does not eliminate uncertainties in election outcomes.

Accuracy Controversy: Pathway to Resolution

Community members doubt the November 5, 2024, General Election results due to an inability to independently verify them. The ROV followed California election laws, processed ballots, and completed a 1% tally audit showing no errors that could change the outcome.

The election results will remain contested until the ROV provides more detailed data on election preparation and tabulation processes. While the ROV must adhere to federal and state laws and cannot implement public recommendations that contradict these laws, it can contract for a more detailed analysis of election processes following a comprehensive audit focused on its policies and procedures.

Broader Election Audits

Election auditing can encompass a broader scope of work than a 1% manual tally. The U. S. Election Assistance Commission, through the 2002 Help America Vote Act, outlines various

¹⁶ California Secretary of State, County of Riverside, Report of 1% Manual Tally. URL is located at <https://admin.cdn.sos.ca.gov/elections/manual-tally/2024-general/riverside.pdf> Accessed May 29, 2025.

audit practices, including procedural audits, risk-limiting audits, traditional audits, and independent performance audits.¹⁷

- **Procedural audits** look for compliance with pre-determined policies and procedures; include ensuring that forms are signed, vote tabulation equipment is assessed, ballot materials are securely sealed, and the custody of critical election materials is documented.
- **Risk-limiting audits** look at statistical evidence that the machine-tabulated results are consistent with what a full hand count of ballots would reveal.
- **Traditional audits** look at a pre-determined number of ballots, voting precincts, or devices and compare reported results from voting systems to the paper ballot records.
- **Independent internal performance audits** are designed to provide an independent assessment of an entity's operations to determine if specific programs or functions are working as intended to achieve stated goals.

Riverside County contracted with a retired elections official from Orange County to conduct a procedural audit of Riverside County's ROV operations in 2023, followed with an updated review in 2025.

The 2023 procedural audit included 94 recommendations. During a May 5, 2025, interview, the retired elections official indicated that Riverside County's ROV implemented nearly 20% of the 94 recommendations. According to the retired elections official, implementing nearly 20% of the 2023 recommendations within 18 months was a significant achievement, especially considering that the new Registrar had to prepare for and conduct both primary and general elections in 2024.

Performance audits encompass a broader range of election processes including policies, procedures, training, cybersecurity, physical security, and the prevention of unintentional election management errors.^{18 19.20} Orange County's ROV contracted with Caltech to perform an extensive independent audit of its voter registration system.

B. Accuracy of California Voter Rolls

Riverside County residents have also raised concerns about the accuracy of voter rolls. Their concern revolves around the eligibility to vote.

¹⁷ U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Election Audits Across the United States," October 6, 2021. URL is located at https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/bestpractices/Election_Audits_Across_the_United_States.pdf Accessed May 28, 2025.

¹⁸ "International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions," "Performance Audit Standard," p. 8, 2019. URL is located at <https://www.issai.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ISSAI-3000-Performance-Audit-Standard.pdf> Accessed May 28, 2025.

¹⁹ Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Elections Lab, "Election Auditing Best Practices and New Areas for Research," (2024). URL is located at <https://electionlab.mit.edu/sites/default/files/2023-10/election-audits.pdf> Accessed May 28, 2025.

²⁰ U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Best Practices for Election Technology," June 2022 - https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/electionofficials/security/Best_Practices_for_Election_Technology_508.pdf Accessed May 28, 2025.

To register to vote in California, a person must be a United States citizen, a resident of California, 18 years old or older on Election Day, not currently serving a state or federal prison term for the conviction of a felony, and not currently found mentally incompetent to vote by a court.²¹ Non-citizens, including permanent legal residents, cannot vote in federal, state, and most local elections.²²

The Help America Vote ACT requires each state to have a centralized, computerized voter registration list, which “shall serve as the official voter registration list.” (Section 303(a)(1)). In California, it is the California Secretary of State who has the official voter registration list and shares that list with the 58 California counties. Riverside County’s ROV is responsible for maintaining voter rolls as mandated by the federal Help America Vote ACT and California statutes.²³

Local citizen groups have expressed their concerns about the integrity of California’s voter rolls, suggesting that the current system may allow for potential fraud due to insufficient purging of irregular voters, especially when it is easy to register to vote while applying for or renewing a driver license or identification card at the California Department of Motor Vehicles.²⁴

Riverside County’s ROV uses the following government data sources in maintaining voter rolls:²⁵

- USPS National Change of Address information (Daily)
- California DMV Change of Address information (Daily)
- USPS “undeliverable” mail (Daily when ROV mails election materials)
- Mortality report Local and State data (Locally received once a month and State data received quarterly)
- Felony Cancellation Reports from Local and State data (Weekly)
- Conservatorship Cancellation Reports from Local and State data (Local received weekly and state once or twice weekly.)

The ROV made voter roll maintenance a priority before the November 5, 2024, General Election. It exceeded voter roll maintenance legal mandates by collaborating with a Vote By Mail vendor to verify voter information before printing ballots and partnering with a credit reporting company to identify voters who may have moved out of Riverside County.

²¹ California Secretary of State, Elections Division, “Who can vote in California?” (2024). URL is located at <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/> Accessed May 28, 2025.

²² U.S. General Services Administration, “Who can and cannot vote?” (2024). URL is located at <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/frequently-asked-questions> Accessed May 28, 2025.

²³ California Secretary of State, Elections Division, “Chapter 4: Voter Registration Applications and Voter List Maintenance” (2024). URL is located at <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/nvra/laws-standards/nvra-manual/chap-4#fn-3-3> Accessed May 28, 2025.

²⁴ National Voter Registration Act of 1993, 52 U.S.C. § 20504(a). URL is located at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-bill/2/text> Accessed May 28, 2025.

²⁵ County of Riverside, Registrar of Voters, Election Integrity Workshop PowerPoint presentation, slide 8, August 12, 2024.

Accurate voter roll registration procedures and maintenance are important components of the election process. According to an American conservative public policy research organization, there were 68 voting-related criminal convictions in California from 2000 to 2024. Of these, 43 (63%) involved fraudulent registration and ineligible voting.²⁶

The Civil Grand Jury commends the ROV for its proactive actions to rectify inaccuracies in Riverside County's voter rolls. It cannot exceed federal and state election laws associated with maintaining voter rolls, but it can continue to explore ways to eliminate voter rolls errors that are legally allowed.

C. Signature Verification

Ballot signature verification is another area of concern. The process is simple: Does the signature on the Vote by Mail envelope match the signature on the voter registration form? Yes or no? Once a Vote by Mail ballot is received at the ROV ballot processing facility, a digital image of the signature on the sealed envelope is captured. The ROV has digital representations of registered voters' signatures obtained from legally recognized public entities, such as the DMV,²⁷ and archived by the State of California.²⁸ Afterward, the Manual Signature Verification (MSV) process begins.

MSV is where ROV employees manually compare the digital signature on the sealed envelope with digital signatures on file from recognized public entities. Digital signatures appear side-by-side on a computer screen for visual comparison and verification.

Temporary ROV employees are utilized for signature verification, receiving minimal training (approximately four weeks). The number of ballots that can be manually checked for signature verification in an hour depends on several factors:

- **Complexity of the signature:** Some signatures may be more challenging to verify due to their clarity or irregularities.
- **Experience of the worker:** More experienced workers may verify signatures more quickly and accurately.
- **System or process in place:** The presence of guidelines, reference materials, or tools (such as signature databases) can expedite the process.
- **Work environment:** A well-organized workspace with fewer distractions can enhance the efficiency of workers, allowing them to process more ballots per hour.

²⁶ Heritage Foundation, Fraud Map, Explore the Data, California, 2000-2024. (2025). URL is located at <https://electionfraud.heritage.org/search>. Accessed May 28, 2025.

²⁷ California Government Code Section 811.2

²⁸ California Government Code 22001

During the verification process, the signature “shall be liberally construed in favor of the vote by mail voter.” If the officials determine that the signatures do not compare, the identification envelope shall not be opened, and the ballot shall not be counted until it is “cured.”²⁹

Curing is the process of verifying ballots with questionable signatures.

During the 2024 General Election, ROV reported that 7,573 ballots needed to be cured. Unfortunately, there is no information available on how many were successfully cured and counted in the certified election results.

While exact figures for the cost of curing individual ballots are not readily available, the overall expenses associated with mail-in ballot processing, including signature verification and curing, are significant. The comprehensive nature of California's election laws, designed to maximize voter participation and ensure ballot integrity, contributes to these higher costs. Although specific per-ballot curing costs in California are not publicly disclosed, the state's commitment to thorough election processes, including ballot curing, results in substantial overall election expenses.

The ROV does not provide a comprehensive ballot audit trail for all issued, received, returned, and challenged ballots. Outreach to voters with challenged ballot envelopes via letter, calling, or emailing can be automated and tracked.

While overseeing a small number of returned mail ballots is manageable, processing hundreds of thousands of signatures can create a holdup in the ballot counting process. Additionally, human verification can be subjective, influenced by fatigue, bias, or variability in judgment.³⁰ Currently, the Riverside County ROV relies solely on manual signature verification.

Automated Signature Verification

California Election Code §3019 specifies that elections officials “may use signature verification technology.” If signature verification technology determines that the signatures do not compare, then the ballot must proceed through the curing process.

Automated signature verification (ASV) enhances the efficiency and accuracy of signature verification by using technology to compare captured signatures from ballot envelopes with those in voter registration databases, significantly reducing the need for manual signature verification and the costs associated with manual signature verification. Table 2 illustrates the benefits of automated signature verification.

²⁹ California Election Code §§3000 - 3026

³⁰ A Comparative Study among Handwritten Signature Verification Methods Using Machine Learning Techniques by Zainab Hashim, Hanaa M. Ahmed, and Ahmed Hussein Alkhayyat, (2022). URL is located at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1155/2022/8170424> Accessed April 10, 2025.

Table 2
Manual to Automated Signature Verification Comparisons³¹

Criteria	Manual	Automated
Verification Accuracy	Accuracy is dependent on human judgement and diligence.	Offers high accuracy rates due to automated algorithms and pattern recognition.
Efficiency	Time-consuming process, especially for large volumes of documents.	Swift verification process, ideal for handling high document volumes.
Cost	Large intensive process, leading to higher labor costs and potential errors.	Initial investment in technology can lead to long-term cost savings and improved productivity.
Security	Possibilities of manual errors and inconsistencies.	Enhance security measures with encrypted data and audit trails.

Riverside County’s ROV personnel informed the Civil Grand Jury that the ROV is considering implementing an automated signature verification technology and processes.

D. Chain of Custody

The Chain of Custody (CoC) refers to the processes or paper trail that provides evidence of the transfer of materials from one person or place to another. The CoC for ballots, voting equipment, and related data is crucial to ensure the election system remains dependable. Effective CoC documentation and procedures can enhance voter perception that the election results are accurate and include all valid votes cast. Chain-of-custody logs offer a comprehensive record of who accessed ballots, spanning from pre-elections to the retention period, establishing their authenticity through each stage.

Signatures create an auditable record whenever the equipment, supplies, and ballots change hands or location. By signing CoC forms, individuals certify when they receive custody of voting equipment, supplies, and ballots and when these items were delivered to a particular location. Seals and other security measures help ensure the integrity of the election materials. It is standard practice to have at least two signatures on each document to verify that an item has changed hands and that proper election procedures were followed.

A previous Riverside County Civil Grand Jury³² recommended that the ROV electronically track ballots returning from on-site voting centers to ROV’s ballot processing center. The current Civil Grand Jury found evidence that the ROV implemented that CoC recommendation.

³¹ eCopier Solutions, “Manual vs. Automated Document Verification,” February 26, 2025. URL is located at <https://www.ecopiersolutions.com/blog/manual-vs-automated-document-verification> Accessed April 10, 2025.

³² 2020-2021 Riverside County Civil Grand Jury, “Was the Riverside County November 2020 Consolidated General Election Administered Fairly and Impartially?” page 32. Public Release Dated of July 1, 2021. URL is located at

The Certificates of Canvass for the 2024 Primary and General Elections revealed issues with the handwritten ballot count documents from polling centers. The use of carbonless copy paper resulted in many third and fourth copies being difficult to read. Additionally, these documents were filled out by temporary ROV employees who had worked over 12 hours, contributing to their illegibility. Copies of these hard-to-read documents were provided to the community group.

The use of electronic documentation can insure those documents are neat, consistent and can archive documents for auditing purposes.³³ For example, Los Angeles County's Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's Office utilizes a digital chain of custody system.³⁴ This system enables the real-time tracking of key assets such as smart carts, electronic pollbooks, ballot marking devices, routers, and UPS power backups. Automating the chain of custody for election documents enhances security, transparency, and efficiency in the electoral process.

By integrating these technologies and practices, election authorities can automate the chain of custody for election documents, significantly enhancing the security, transparency, and efficiency of the electoral process. This automation ensures that the handling of election documents is more secure, transparent, and efficient.³⁵

E. Training

The ROV employs hundreds of temporary workers to support election processes. Through a series of interviews with both permanent and temporary staff members, the Civil Grand Jury found that temporary employees expressed a need for more training in their assigned areas, more time to ask clarifying questions, and expressed concerns about how the ROV responded to two bomb threats.

While many temporary workers have various opinions about their training sessions, the Civil Grand Jury consistently heard, during interviews, that temporary workers were unaware of what to do when the ROV received two bomb threats at the ballot processing facility. Temporary workers did not know where to safely assemble, no one checked off a list of employees who evacuated the building complex to see who may be missing, and no emergency supplies were

https://rivco.org/sites/g/files/aldnop116/files/Past%20Reports%20%26%20Responses/2020-2021/Election_Report.pdf Accessed on April 14, 2025.

³³ U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Best Practices FAQs," July 20, 2021. URL is located at https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/bestpractices/FAQs_Best_Practices_for_Election_Officials.pdf Accessed March 20, 2025.

³⁴ TD Synnex, Public Sector, "LA County Elections Goes Digital with New Chain of Custody System," July 14, 2020. URL is located at https://www.dlt.com/events/la-county-elections-goes-digital-new-chain-custody-system?utm_source=chatgpt.com April 17, 2025.

³⁵ U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Best Practices Chain of Custody," July 13, 2021. URL is located at https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/bestpractices/Chain_of_Custody_Best_Practices.pdf Accessed April 17, 2025.

assembled to assist evacuees. With no central ROV command center, an undetermined number of temporary workers just went home one night.

The ROV informed the Civil Grand Jury that it wants to continue to collaborate with the Riverside County District Attorney, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and the California Secretary of State Criminal Division on security issues including employee safety.

Another concern is that the Civil Grand Jury discovered that the cameras in the ROV ballot processing facility did not record during the two emergency evacuations. If someone entered the facility during the two emergency evacuations, there is no record of it. This is a serious security breach.

CONCLUSION

Riverside County's new Registrar has implemented several improvements to the ROV working environment, database management, ballot processing, community outreach, and both physical and electronic security. These enhancements were made while preparing for and conducting a Primary Election and General Election within a year of being formally assigned as Registrar.

The Civil Grand Jury's investigation concluded that key actions would enhance confidence in election results. These actions include:

- Conducting a comprehensive performance audit and making necessary adjustments.
- Proactively seeking additional ways to improve the accuracy of voter rolls.
- Automating signature verification.
- Electronically recording chain of custody documents.
- Installing high-definition cameras to live stream and continuously record ballot processing areas.
- Preparing permanent and temporary employees to respond swiftly and safely to emergencies.

FINDINGS

- F-1 After hiring a new Registrar, the new Registrar made security and ballot processing improvements.
- F-2 The ROV is cooperative with a community group interested in local election integrity.
- F-3 A community group is unable to independently verify ROV's certified election results, even when ROV provides the documentation it has available to them.
- F-4 Riverside County contracted for a procedural audit of ROV's procedures to improve its election processes.

- F-5 Comprehensive independent performance audits encompass a broader spectrum of election issues than procedural audits.
- F-6 Riverside County’s ROV exceeded voter roll maintenance legal requirements in preparing for the November 5, 2024, General Election.
- F-7 The ROV complies with state laws in its Vote by Mail signature verification process.
- F-8 Temporary ROV employees manually conduct Vote by Mail signature verifications.
- F-9 The ROV does not provide a comprehensive ballot audit trail for all issued, received, returned, and challenged ballots.
- F-10 Handwritten Chain of Custody documents for the 2024 Primary Election and 2024 General Election were not always legible.
- F-11 ROV does not conduct emergency drills with temporary employees.
- F-12 Cameras in the ROV ballot processing facility did not record during the two emergency evacuations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Civil Grand Jury submits the following recommendations to the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and the ROV Registrar as they continue to take actions to improve public confidence in the county's election processes.

- R-1 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors contract with a third-party, independent firm to conduct a performance audit of all aspects of ROV’s election processes and to take any necessary actions deemed appropriate by the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.
Based on Findings: F1 through F-12
Financial Impact: Moderate
- R-2 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters implement additional methods and resources to make voter rolls as accurate as possible no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.
Based on Findings: F-6
Financial Impact: Moderate
- R-3 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters explore the use of an automated signature verification process no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.
Based on Findings: F-7 and F-8
Financial Impact: Moderate

- R-4 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters explore automating ballot chain of custody processes no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.
Based on Findings: F-2, F-3, F-4, F-5, F-8, F-9, and F-10
Financial Impact: Moderate

- R-5 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters establish detailed emergency procedures and drills for all employees and practice those procedures for each ballot processing shift no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.
Based on Finding: F-11
Financial Impact: Minimal

- R-6 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters obtain high-definition cameras for all ballot processing areas, record all ballot processing sessions, and keep recordings for at least 12 months so that it is ready no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.
Based on Finding: F-12
Financial Impact: Moderate

- R-7 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors establish an election security task force to enhance a unified security environment surrounding elections no later than March 1, 2026.
Based on Finding: F-11 and F-12
Financial Impact: Moderate

REQUIRED RESPONSES

According to California Penal Code §933, governing bodies must respond to grand jury findings and recommendations within 90 days while an elected county officer must respond to grand jury findings and recommendations within 60 days. California Penal Code §933.05 outlines the limits within which governing bodies are allowable to respond.

Who	Findings	Recommendations
Riverside County Board of Supervisors	F1 through F-12	R-1 through R-7

INVITED RESPONSES

Who	Findings	Recommendations
District Attorney, Riverside County	F-12	R-7
Sheriff, Riverside County	F-11 and F-12	R-7

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Civil Grand Jury do not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury.

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