

San Benito County Observer Panel

Name of County: San Benito County
Name of Contact: Michael J. Hodges
Contact's Phone: 831.636.4016
Date of Plan: 5/1/2008
Voting Systems Used by County: Sequoia Voting Systems
DRE AVC Edge II and
Optech 400-C Optical Scan

Purpose -

Public observation and input assists in ensuring the integrity of the election process. All aspects of preparation for and conducting an election may be observed and San Benito County actively seeks input at every election in order to help improve service and confidence. Several code and voting system provisions require notice of the opportunity for observation of various aspects of the election process. The purpose of an Election Observer Panel is to:

- Provide the public with the opportunity to observe and make suggestions on ways to improve the election process.
- Help ensure the integrity of the election process.
- Remove some of the mystery associated with the election process in an effort to build voter confidence and encourage more people to take part.

Invite -

The following groups will be sent letters, approximately 30 days prior to the Elections, inviting them to participate:

1. County Grand Jury
2. Political Party Central Committee Members
3. Advocacy Groups
4. Bilingual Election Advisory Board
5. Board of Supervisors

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

Groups may also contact the Election Department to request an opportunity to ask questions about the process.

Appointment of Observer Panel -

After all names of interested parties have been submitted to the Elections Department, appointments to the Observer Panel will be made. Each individual appointed to the Observer Panel will be provided with the following:

- Introduction Letter – for panelist to use when visiting polling places on Election Day
- Listing of all Polling Places
- Central Count Information – to include site location and information regarding scheduled activities and hours of operation.

Rules of Conduct for Election Observers -

Observers may:

- Observe the proceedings at the polls, including the opening and closing procedures.
- Obtain information from the precinct index that is posted near the entrance.
- Make notes and watch election procedures.
- View election-related activities at the central counting site on Election Day.
- View the canvass of the vote activities following the election.
- View vote-by-mail and provisional ballot processing.
- Ask questions of poll workers or voters at the polls as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of any part of the voting process.
- Ask questions of management at the central counting site as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of the election procedures.

Observers are responsible for:

- Checking in at each site, whether polling place or central counting site.
- Wearing an identification badge.
- Maintaining a professional manner while observing the election process.
- Ensuring they do not interfere with the election process.

Observers may not:

- Interfere, in the judgment of the elections official, with the conduct of the election.
- Physically handle any voting materials or equipment.
- Sit at the official worktables or view confidential voter information on any work terminal.
- Communicate with voters (within 100 feet of the entrance to a polling place) regarding the casting of a vote, or speak to a voter regarding his or her qualifications to vote.
- Display any election material or wear campaign badges, buttons or apparel.
- Wear the uniform of a peace officer, a private guard, or security personnel.
- Use cellular phones, pagers, or two-way radios inside the polling place and/or within 100 feet of the entrance to the polling place.
- Talk to or attempt to stop the central counting site workers while they are processing ballots.
- Use the telephones, computers or other polling place facilities at polling places or the central counting site.
- Make physical contact with election personnel.
- Eat or drink in the polls or the central counting site.
- Assist in operations at any polling place or the central counting site.

Observer Panel Feedback -

Participants on the Observer Panel are encouraged to submit feedback regarding their experience. This feedback can be submitted in writing, by email or in person.

- Written Feedback can be submitted directly to the elections office via mail.
- In Person Feedback should be scheduled by contacting the County Clerk/Auditor/Recorder at 831.636.4016.

SAMPLE LETTER OF INVITATION

May 1, 2008

Dear Community Voter Observer Committee Member”

The San Benito County Department of Elections will convene an Election Observer Panel to observe activities associated with the Primary Election, which will be held on June 3, 2008. Representatives of political party county central committees, advocacy groups, and the County Grand Jury will be invited to participate in this program.

Typically, members of the Panel visit one or more polling places on Election Day and then visit the ballot counting center to observe the tabulation of ballots on election night. Panel members are also invited to observe the processing of vote by mail ballots at the Department of Elections. Members of the Panel will be provided with the information they need to participate in these activities.

Should your organization be interested in participating please contact Michael Hodges at 831.636.4016 by May 16, 2008 with the name and contact information for your representative. A meeting with panel members has been scheduled for May 21, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. in the Registrar/Recorder/Clerk office. All necessary materials for participation in this program will be distributed at the meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Hodges at the above referenced number.

Sincerely,

Joe Paul Gonzalez
San Benito County
Registrar of Voters/Clerk/Recorder/Auditor

SAMPLE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

June 1, 2008

TO: Precinct Inspectors

FROM: Joe Paul Gonzalez
San Benito County
Registrar of Voters/Clerk/Recorder/Auditor

SUBJECT: ELECTION OBSERVER PANEL

This letter introduces **NAME**, whom I have appointed to the Election Observer Panel for the June 6, 2008 Primary Election. Members of the Election Observer Panel are invited to observe activities related to the administration of an election, including visiting polling places.

No person, including a member of the Election Observer Panel, may interfere with the operation of polling places. **NAME** and other members of the Election Observer Panel may ask you to explain certain operations and procedures. Please extend every courtesy to **NAME**.

If you have any questions, please call me at 831.636.4016.

Thank you for your cooperation and your service to our county's voters.