



Election Observer Program San Mateo County

Purpose

San Mateo County welcomes all observers. The primary purpose and intent of the Election Observer Program is to encourage an avenue for public observation and involvement in the election process. This ensures that the election process is transparent, accurate and secure, which encourages and builds voter participation and confidence.

Invite

Prior to each election, the Elections Office invites the following groups to observe all of the ballot and polling place processes:

- County Grand Jury
- Political Party Officers
- Advocacy Groups
- Ethnic & Minority Groups
- League of Women Voters
- Media
- Candidates
- Jurisdictions with Candidates and/or Measures on the ballot

Other groups or individuals expressing an interest in observing Election Day activities are welcome to participate in the Observer Program. A copy of the Observer Handbook will be provided or you can view an electronic copy on our website: www.shapethefuture.org.

Letters of introduction are prepared for interested participants to use when visiting polling places on Election Day. Participants are also provided with a list of all of the polling places within the county as well as the central counting location and hours of operation.

Overview

Observers can meet with election staff to get an overview of the election process or request to see specific items. Election Observers may wish to observe the election at the following locations:

- Main Elections Office at 40 Tower Road, San Mateo
- 555 County Center, Redwood City during early voting
- Various locations around the county that hold Election Officer training
- Polling places throughout the county on Election Day

Election activities and procedures open to observers:

Pre-Election Day

- Security
 - View the card key access log for the Vote by Mail work area and the Warehouse.
 - View the logs that are kept for the vaults where seals and ballots are stored.
 - View the paper logs and card key access logs for the video-recorded Computer Room where ballots are created and votes are tallied.
 - Learn about requirements for Two-Person-Integrity in the ballot storage areas.
- Logic and Accuracy Testing (September 16-October 1)
 - Watch the testing of the accuracy of the eSlate electronic voting equipment and the Ballot Now paper ballot voting equipment. Equipment must have verification of one hundred percent accuracy before it is used during Early Voting and on Election Day.
 - Review final reports of L&A results.
- Functional Testing of the electronic voting equipment (September 17-October 24)
 - Watch the testing of each eSlate, JBC, and VBO that ensures they will function properly on Election Day.
- Predefinition of the voting equipment (September 17-October 24)
 - Watch the process where each eSlate, JBC, and VBO is assigned to a precinct, scanned, and sealed. Each JBC is issued a Chain of Custody log that follows it through the election to document its secure handling.
- Vote by Mail Signature Verification and Processing (October 6-November 12)
 - View our Pitney Bowes Relia-Vote system used to sort Vote by Mail ballots.
 - View the signature verification of ballots.
 - View the process of opening Vote by Mail envelopes starting 11 calendar days before the election.
 - View the scanning of Vote by Mail ballots starting 11 calendar days before the election. Ballots are scanned but vote counts are not accessed or released before the 8pm on Election Day.
- Training of the Poll Workers (October 2-November 3)
 - Attend any of the 3 different types of classes offered to the varying levels of Poll Workers: Apprentice, Journeyman, and Masters.
 - Visit the new dedicated Training Lab that gives Poll Workers another way to get hands on experience with the voting equipment.
- Early Voting Centers (October 6-November 3)
 - Visit our two Voting Centers at 555 County Center and the Main Elections Office at 40 Tower Road to observe voting on the eSlates or by paper ballot.
- Voter Outreach
 - Observer can see the ways we are interacting with voters away from the Elections Office:
 - The Shape the Future blog offers daily updates as to what is occurring at the Elections Office.

- The Elections Office works with various organizations across the county to get citizens registered to vote and to let the public vote on demonstration eSlates to familiarize them with the new machines.
- The Elections Office is reaching out to members of the military and their dependents and citizens living overseas and informing them of their right to obtain a Vote by Mail ballot in the November election using the Federal Post Card Application and their right to vote a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot by fax or mail if they do not receive their original ballot.

Election Day

- Polling Places (6am-9pm)
 - Observe setting up and closing the polls.
 - Observe the conduct of the election at the precinct throughout the day.
- Voter Phone Bank (6am-11pm)
- Field Technician Support phones (6am-11pm)
- Return and Processing of JBCs and Paper Ballots (8pm-done)
 - Watch the verification of security seals and custody logs. Discrepancies are noted and the equipment is set aside for inspection before further processing.
 - Watch the scanning of the JBCs and the removal of the Mobile Ballot Box cards which are then taken to the Tally Room.
- Return of Red Supply Cases (8pm-done)
 - Watch how each case is scanned back into Warehouse inventory.
- Election Night Tally Room Processes viewed through computer monitors
- Election TV (7pm-11pm)
 - On Election Day, the Election Office is using the local cable channel to broadcast “Anatomy of Election 2008”. In addition to live results and live interviews with candidates and officials, there will be pre-recorded clips of the election process.

Post Election Day

- Provisional and Vote by Mail Ballots Processing and Verification
 - Learn how a Provisional Voter is deemed eligible to have his/her vote counted.
- Processing Write-In Ballots
- Ballot Duplication
 - View the process of “copying” a ballot that was unreadable by the scanner or was voted provisionally by a voter in the wrong precinct.
- Ballot Reconciliation
 - View how the Elections Office audits and accounts for every ballot issued, voted, and those that were not used.
- Selection of Precincts for Manual Tally
- One Percent Manual Tally
- Return and Processing of voting equipment

Please note that dates may vary. Please call ahead to find exact dates and times.

Feedback

The Elections Office strives to continually improve the conduct of elections. Participation in the Election Observer Program contributes to this goal. The Elections Office encourages observers to call, write, email, or meet with us and offer suggestions

on how we can better serve the public. After the past several elections, the Chief Elections Officer and the Elections Manager have had round table meetings with returning observers who have recommended ways to improve internal elections processes. The Elections Office has implemented some of these recommendations, while others are under consideration for future implementation. An example of a recommended suggestion that we employed was the process of selecting precincts for the One Percent Manual Tally governed by CA Elections Code. This recommendation, upon implementation, immediately improved subsequent elections.

County Contact and Voting System Information

Contact: Narda Garcia, Election Supervisor
Phone: (650) 312-5365
Email: ngarcia@smcare.org
Vendor & Voting System: Hart InterCivic eSlate Voting System
Date: 10/06/2008

Observers are encouraged to meet with the Election Supervisor to participate in the Election Observer Program. Meeting times can be scheduled at the Elections Office at 40 Tower Road, San Mateo or at the Office of the Chief Elections Officer at 555 County Center, Redwood City.



Rules for Election Observers San Mateo County

Observers may:

- Observe the proceedings at the polls, including opening and closing procedures.
- Obtain information from the precinct index that is posted near the entrance.
- Make notes and watch all procedures.
 - View all activities at the central counting site on Election Day, including:
 - Field Tech Support Call Center
 - Voter Phone Bank
 - Vote by Mail Signature Verification and Processing
 - Ballot Removal
 - Ballot Duplicating
 - Election Night Tally Room Processes viewed through Computer Monitors
 - Return of JBCs and Paper Ballots
 - Return of Red Supply Cases
- View the canvass of the vote activities following the election.
 - Selection of Precincts for Manual Tally
 - One Percent Manual Tally
- View mail ballot and provisional ballot processing.
- Ask questions of poll worker staff or voters at the polls.
- Ask questions of supervisors at the central counting site.
- Use laptops or other computing devices if silent

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 processes.
- Not interfering with any of the elections processes.

Observers may not:

- Interfere in any way with the conduct of the election.
- Touch any voting materials or equipment or sit at the official worktables.
- Converse 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/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 of the polling place.
- Talk to central counting site workers while they are processing ballots.
- Touch election personnel.
- Eat or drink in the polls or the central counting site.
- Assist in operations at any polling place.



Warren Slocum

Chief Elections Officer & Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

40 Tower Road
San Mateo, CA 94402
phone 650-312-5222
fax 650-312-5348
email registrar@smcare.org
web www.shapethefuture.org

SAMPLE LETTER OF INVITATION

October 10, 2008

[merge field – name]
[merge field – address 1]
[merge field – address 2]

Dear [merge field – salutation]:

As the San Mateo County Chief Elections Officer, I am committed to an open and transparent election process. We have instituted procedures, policies, and a public information campaign to help voters better understand what is involved in the conduct of an election in San Mateo County to ensure the accuracy, security and reliability of their vote. It is my sincere hope that we will increase voter confidence in the process with greater access and transparency.

One of these efforts is our Election Observer Panel Program. This program allows interested parties to witness the conduct of elections from beginning to end. I am writing today to invite members of your organization to participate in this program as observers in this very important Presidential Election Cycle.

Some of you have participated in previous elections as an observer, and for this, I am most grateful. There are many items of interest for observers; the processing of vote by mail ballots, polling places voting, central vote count, and the official canvass.

We have published a comprehensive Election Observer Guide and it is available on www.shapethefuture.org. You can find it under the Elections tab or the Publications section. The guide reviews the processes, the code sections and county procedures that have been developed to ensure the security and accuracy of the process.

If your organization would like to be represented on the Election Observer Panel, please contact our Elections Supervisor, Narda Garcia, at (650) 312-5365 or email her at ngarcia@smcare.org to register as an election observer. Please respond by, Friday, October 17, 2008

Thank you for your interest and your commitment to fair, open, and secure elections.

Sincerely,

Warren Slocum
Chief Elections Officer &
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

Enclosure: Election Observer Program & Rules for Election Observers



Warren Slocum

Chief Elections Officer & Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

40 Tower Road
San Mateo, CA 94402
phone 650-312-5222
fax 650-312-5348
email registrar@smcare.org
web www.shapethefuture.org

SAMPLE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

October X X, 2008

TO: Precinct Inspector

FROM: Warren Slocum
Chief Elections Officer,
Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder

SUBJECT: ELECTION OBSERVER PANEL

This letter introduces [merge field – panel member], who is an Election Observer Panel member for the November 4, 2008 Presidential General Election. As you know from attending the poll worker training courses, observers are one of many components that help to make elections more transparent and secure. Members of the Election Observer Panel are invited to observe activities related to an election, including visiting polling places.

During their observation, members of the Election Observer Panel and other observers may ask you to explain certain operations and procedures. Please extend every courtesy to them as you would any voter. However, no person, including a member of the Election Observer Panel, may interfere with the act of voting and the operation of the polling place.

If you have any questions before, during, or after observers have visited your precinct, please call Hillary O'Connor at (650) 312-5294.

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