

Virginia Canvass Observer 2024 Guide



What's the Canvass?

The Canvass is the process that the Electoral Board in each City and County uses to “ascertain the results” of the election. It’s a review of the precinct returns (including the central absentee precinct) to ensure the returns are correctly completed and to tally the results. For local elections, the Electoral Board issues certificates of election to the candidates. For statewide and district elections (such as Presidential Electors and US House), the Electoral Board completes and Abstract of Results and forwards it to the State Board of Elections.

A related process that occurs around the canvass is the Provisional Ballot meeting, a multi-session meeting where the Electoral Board hears from voters who offered a provisional ballot and makes decisions about which provisional ballots will be cast and counted, and which will not.

When does it happen?

The Canvass must begin no later than 5 pm the day after the election, Wednesday, Nov. 6, and it must be completed no later than Friday, Nov. 15 (10 days after the election). City and County Electoral Boards set their own schedules.

Typically, the Canvass will begin on the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 6, with the election day precincts and the election day Central Absentee Precinct (all of the unofficial results that were posted after the polls close). That’s generally completed on Wednesday but could go over to another day.

Generally, the Canvass will likely reconvene on Friday, Nov. 8, in the afternoon. At that point the post-election Central Absentee Precinct will be canvassed (the last absentee ballots are those received by noon on Friday, Nov. 8 with a postmark of Nov. 5 or earlier).

The Canvass will likely reconvene on Tuesday, Nov. 12 or Wednesday, Nov. 13 (Monday, Nov. 11 is Veterans’ Day, a state holiday). The electoral board will likely conclude its provisional ballot meeting in the morning and upon its conclusion, canvass the provisional ballot precinct.

Remember all of these scheduling decisions are up to the electoral board for each city and county.

What does an Observer do?

Observers at the Canvass, which is an open meeting, follow along as the Electoral Board reviews each precinct and tracks 3 key pieces of information using the Canvass Precinct Report Form (available at va.protectthevote.com)—the Ballot Count, the Poll Book Count, and any other

noteworthy information about changes to the unofficial results, issues that arose at the precinct or otherwise unusual information. At the end of the day, these forms should be sent by e-mail to help@virginia.gop with the name of your city or county in the subject of the e-mail.

There are important tasks relating to the Provisional Ballot meeting too. When observers first arrive on Tuesday, they should request the Provisional Ballot log. It may not be available for several days because of the volume of provisional ballots, but make the request and find out when it will be available. Once secured, that log should also be sent to help@virginia.gop with the name of your city or county in the subject of the e-mail.

Only one observer is allowed in the Provisional Ballot meeting and must be designated by the local GOP Chair. That observer should use the provisional ballot log to mark down the disposition of each provisional ballot—eligible or ineligible.

What other resources are available?

Visit <http://va.protectthevote.com> -> Announcements -> Canvass Observer Information and Forms.

You can access this document, the Canvass Precinct Report Form, as well as training slides about the Canvass, and a link to Chapter 14 of the General Registrar and Electoral Board (GREB) Handbook, which provides additional details.

You may also wish to ask your General Registrar or Electoral Board members for a blank copy of the Statement of Results form so you can follow along with what they are using. They may also have developed a checklist to guide them in their review, you can ask for a copy of that as well.

What do I do if something goes wrong?

Just like on Election Day, the Hotline will be available to help:

- Email help@virignia.gop
- Call 804-600-4809
- Visit va.protectthevote.com -> Submit a Report