

2020 GENERAL ELECTION—FACTS, ANSWERS AND REMINDERS

As we near Election Day, I wanted to share factual information, answer a few questions that have been asked, and provide a few reminders to ensure that your vote is counted and that you are confident in the election process in Nassau County. Again, I will share my favorite quote that is still relevant today:

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of fact.” John Adams

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Election Workers and Election Team for the excellent job they are doing! As of October 24th, I am pleased to report that over 46% of the voters in Nassau County have voted by mail or early voted. Great job, Nassau County voters! Early voting will continue every day from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. through Sunday, November 1, 2020.

For over a year, we have been told that misinformation/disinformation would be one of the main issues we would face in the 2020 Election Cycle. Unfortunately, there have been social media posts regarding the following incident that occurred earlier this week at an early voting site. The day after the incident, after all information was confirmed by those in the polling room, the following response was posted on our website and is still a factual account of the incident today:

On Wednesday, October 21st, one of the ballot on demand printers used at the voter check-in station at the Atlantic Avenue Recreation Center early voting site had a mechanical malfunction and was not printing ballots correctly and, therefore, the tabulators would not accept those ballots. The ballot tabulators were thought to be the issue initially as the humidity has been very high and that can cause ballots to jam, etc. Within a few minutes of a Supervisor of Elections technical staff member arriving at the site, the actual cause of the issue was determined to be a particular printer.

Pursuant to Florida Administrative Rule, in a situation where the tabulator is not accepting ballots, the Emergency Ballot Bin is utilized to securely collect the ballots until the issue can be resolved. The Emergency Ballot Bin is an integrated part of the larger bin with a separate lockable storage area and door. If the Emergency Ballot Bin is used during the day, after the polls close each night the Election Workers announce that the Emergency Ballot Bin is being opened and any ballots inside it are scanned through the tabulators.

Any ballots that could not be scanned into the tabulators (Unscanned Ballots) are secured by the election workers in containers and the numbers recorded on the Election Report Form, an accounting of the number of voters who were issued ballots to the number of ballots that were cast. Any Unscanned Ballots that could not be tabulated at the early voting site/polling place will be delivered to the Canvassing Board in sealed containers and scanned into tabulator(s) during a Canvassing Board meeting.

To receive factual information on laws, rules, procedures, etc., and answers to any questions you may have, please contact the Nassau County Supervisor of Elections at 904-491-7500.

It is really quite simple—a printer malfunctioned, it was initially thought to be the tabulators, the issue was resolved, all ballots cast during that timeframe either have been tabulated at the early voting site or will be tabulated by the Canvassing Board. It has been confirmed that no election worker during that timeframe had voters’ ballots in her hands “waving them in the wind” as was posted on social media. It

didn't take a social media post for election workers and my team to begin to troubleshoot the problem. Everything has been accounted for and is in good order. The facts speak for themselves and every vote cast will be counted!

However, in the event you are in the polling room when ballots are being handled by election workers during early voting and on Election Day, there are certain procedures that must be followed to ensure that the tabulators run smoothly and ballots are stored securely, as follows:

- During early voting only, Vote by Mail Ballot Drop Boxes located at all five sites are available for voters to drop vote by mail ballots only during early voting hours. Florida law requires that ballots from the Vote by Mail Ballot Drop Box be retrieved at the close of polls each night and counted, the number of ballots recorded on a Chain of Custody form and delivered to the Supervisor of Elections office immediately thereafter. This process will take place inside the polling room with all election workers and two election staff members, and any poll watchers or the public who are in the room after 6 p.m. each night to observe the closing process.
- The number of ballots tabulated in each tabulator are monitored by the election workers and staff to determine when the ballots need to be retrieved, boxed with seals that are signed by election workers and sealed with tamper evident tape, and delivered to the Elections office with chain of custody forms. *Beginning at approximately 2:43 p.m. on October 21, 2020, at the Atlantic Avenue Recreation Center early voting site, the VSS and staff boxed up the ballots in the tabulators as the bins were getting full. The VSS was straightening the ballots out to place them in the security transfer boxes. When ballots drop in the bin they drop in a variety of orientations and they have to be straightened out before they can be placed in the boxes. The VSS, Assistant VSS and election staff work together to box and secure the ballots as part of the security procedures. The Clerk, VSS, and Assistant VSS then signed the seals, placed tamper evident security tape on the boxes, completed the Chain of Custody forms and they were delivered to the Supervisor of Elections office and secured in a room with 24-hour camera surveillance and access control.*
- If a ballot will not scan into the tabulator, a voter has the choice of spoiling that ballot and voting another ballot, or they can leave the ballot with the VSS/Clerk if they do not have time to vote another ballot. This is known as an "Unscanned Ballot." These ballots are secured and delivered to the Canvassing Board to be duplicated, if needed, and/or scanned into a tabulator(s).
- It is expected that printers and tabulators will have problems from time to time and Florida law provides procedures for those occurrences. You can be confident that every ballot that is cast in an early voting site/polling place is secured and tabulated. Provisional Ballots are an exception to this as the voter's eligibility must be confirmed before a provisional ballot can be counted. Voters have until 5 p.m. on Thursday after Election Day to provide written evidence supporting their eligibility.

It is very easy to make allegations about what goes on in a polling place, but I can assure you that we have extremely well trained election workers with different political party affiliations who carry out the duties for our citizens with the highest level of professionalism, ethics, accuracy and transparency. I commend them and am very grateful for their service to our county!

A few reminders for the upcoming General Election on November 3, 2020:

- Vote by Mail Ballots must be received in our office or the drop box outside our Yulee office no later than 7 p.m. on November 3, 2020 to be counted.

- Voted Vote by Mail Ballots cannot be dropped off at a polling place on Election Day. They must be delivered to the Elections office.
- On Election Day, polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and voters must go to their assigned polling place to vote. A person is not permitted to vote in a precinct other than the one in which the person resides. Don't forget to set your clocks back one hour on November 1st.
- Visit www.VoteNassau.com to view your voter record, find your polling location, track your vote by mail ballot, and for other information. If you are unable to view your record online, please contact our office for assistance.
- If a need or an emergency arises, a voter can designate someone to pick up a vote by mail ballot for them by using the Ballot Pick-up Forms available on the homepage of our website. The designee must have the voter's signed, written authorization with him/her in order to be able to pick up a ballot for the voter.

Please contact our office if you have questions or if we can be of assistance to you in any way. We are hoping for the best turnout in Nassau County's history!