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CENTRAL COUNT STATION PLAN
Section 127.007 TEXAS ELECTION CODE

A: PURPOSE:

Section 127.001 of the Texas Election Code ("TEC") allows for the establishment of one or more Central Count Stations ("CCS"). Section 127.007 of the TEC requires the Manager of the CCS to "establish and implement a written plan for the orderly operation of the central counting station." The required plan under this section must be available to the public no later than 5:00 p.m. on the fifth day before election day.

Section 127.007 (b) of the TEC provides that a CCS Plan "must address the process for comparing the numbers of voters who signed the combination form or checked in via the poll pad, with the number of votes cast for an entire election."

B. LOCATION:

Pecos County Central Counting Station is located in the Election Room located in the Pecos County Annex, 200 S. Nelson, Fort Stockton TX, 79735.

C. CENTRAL COUNT STATION PERSONNEL:

All personnel for the CCS will be appointed as needed to fill the roles to complete the task at hand. CCS Clerks and Presiding Judges will be appointed by the CCS Manager.

The following are the roles and responsibilities inside the CCS, as contained in Sections 127.002-127.006 of the Texas Election Code:

- The **Election Administrator** will serve as the Central Count Station Manager to manage the overall administration of the station and supervision of personnel.
- The **Assistant Election Administrator** or designee will serve as the Tabulation Supervisor to operate the automatic tabulating equipment, Electionware.
- The **Presiding Judge** of the CCS will serve to maintain order at the CCS, administer oaths to other CCS personnel, and receive ballots for tabulation.
- The **Alternate Judge** of the CCS will serve in the capacity of the Presiding Judge in the event that the Presiding Judge is not present or available.
- Appointment of **Central Count Station Clerks** can occur, as needed, by the Manager, the Presiding Judge, or the Alternate Judge.
- All Central Count Station Personnel must meet the requirements as set forth by Chapter 127 of the Texas Election Code.

D. PROCEDURES FOR CONVENING THE CENTRAL COUNT STATION:

Section 87.0241 of the Texas Election Code dictates when an entity may convene to count ballots. The Central Count Station will convene at time designated by the Central Count Manager, it will not be later than 1 pm on Election Day. For most elections, the CCS will convene at 1:00 pm on Election Day.

E. ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS:

Section 127.0015 of the Texas Election Code prescribes a required oath for all CCS Personnel. The administration of oaths must take place prior to those appointed individuals commencing any of their duties at the CCS. The administration of this oath will be administered verbally to all members of the CCS.

For use in Primary Elections, General Election for State and county Officers and elections ordered by the Governor:

"I swear (or affirm) that I will objectively work to be sure every eligible voter's vote is accepted and counted, and that only the ballots of those voters who violated the Texas Election Code will be rejected. I will make every effort to reflect the voter's intent when it can be clearly determined. I will not work alone when ballots are present and will work only in the presence of a member of a political party different from my own. I will faithfully perform my duty as an officer of the election and guard the purity of the election.

For use in all other elections that do not contain party affiliations:

"I swear (or affirm) that I will objectively work to be sure every eligible voter's vote is accepted and counted, and that only ballots of those voters who violated the Texas Election Code will be rejected. I will make every effort to correctly reflect the voter's intent when it can be clearly determined. I will not work alone when ballots are present. I will faithfully perform my duty as an officer of the election and guard the purity of the election.

F. TESTING PROCEDURES:

Section 127.091 – 127.098 establishes the required testing of the automatic tabulating used for counting ballots at a Central Count Station.

1. Logic and Accuracy Test 1

- a. Conduct of test by the custodian of the automatic tabulating equipment shall publish notice of the date, hours, and place of the test conducted under Section 127.093 (b) in a newspaper at least 48 hours before the date of the test.
- b. When conducting a test for a primary election, the custodian of the tabulating equipment must notify the county chair at least 48 hours in advance of the test.
- c. The test is open to the public.
- d. The automatic tabulating equipment may not be used to count ballots voted in an election until a test is successful.
- e. On completing each of the Logic & Accuracy tests, the Presiding Judge shall place the test ballots and other test materials in a container provided for that purpose and seal the container so it cannot be opened without breaking the seal.

The test materials shall remain sealed for the period for preserving the precinct election records.

- f. The Container may not be unsealed unless the contents are necessary to conduct a test under Section 127 of the Texas Election Code or other official proceeding under this code.

2. Logic & Accuracy Test 2

- a. The second Logic & Accuracy test must be performed immediately before beginning to tabulate the election returns.
- b. If the initial test was unsuccessful, the Presiding Judge shall prepare a written record of the changes to the program, adjustments to the equipment, and other actions taken to achieve a successful test. The record shall be retained with the rest of the materials.
- c. When a test is successful, the Presiding Judge shall certify in writing that a test was successful and the date and hour the test was completed. The certification shall be retained with the test materials.

3. Logic and Accuracy Test 3

- a. The Third Logic & Accuracy test must be performed immediately after the completion of tabulating the election returns.
- b. The automatic count of ballots voted in the election is valid for certifying the election returns prepared at the CCS if a successful test is completed.

G. INTAKE OF BALLOTS, ELECTRONIC MEDIA, AND SUPPLIES:

Sections 129.051 and 129.052 of the Texas Election Code require the general custodian of election records to develop certain procedures related to inventory control and chain of custody of voting system equipment and electronic media associated with this equipment, providing for verification of equipment identifiers, verification of seals and verification of chain of custody.

1. Election Judges, or their designee, bring in the black trolley transfer bags containing the all voter related information to include voted ballots to the Pecos County Elections Administration Office.
2. Intake personnel will remove the external seal of the black trolley applied prior to the election worker leaving the voting location. Next, they verify the serial number of the equipment as shown on the black trolley bag with the seal number recorded on the chain of custody and the Official List of Registered Voters. Next the blue ballot box bag is verified as locked; key then located to allow opening of the blue bag containing media stick, ballots etc.
3. Intake personnel remove the USB stick for the polling location from the Blue Ballot box bag, along with the removed seal and tape from the DS200 showing the polls were closed.

4. The Presiding Judge receives USB, seal and closed poll tape from DS200 and verifies the Tabulation Supervisor reads the USB drive in to the tabulation computer to tally the totals into Electionware. The Presiding Judge and the Tabulation Supervisor shall verify that the vote totals on the electronic media match the vote totals on the printed results tape.
5. After uploading all precinct results to the central accumulator, the election official must verify and document that the central accumulator's total number of votes cast in an election matches the number of signatures on the combination form or verify totals from pollpads. If there is a discrepancy, the Presiding Judge of the CCS in conjunction with the Tabulation Supervisor shall determine if a further audit is necessary.

I. PREPARING BALLOTS FOR AUTOMATIC COUNTING:

At the direction of the CCS Manager ballots received by mail shall be prepared for automatic counting. The CCS manager shall have the ballots examined to detect any irregularly marked ballots and to determine whether the ballots to be counted automatically are ready for counting and can be properly counted. If an irregularly marked ballot needs to be duplicated, this will follow the process in the following section for duplicating ballots.

Ballots, not damaged, once resolved, shall be approved by CCS Manager and presented for counting by Presiding Judge.

H. DUPLICATION OF BALLOTS:

Duplication of certain damaged ballots may occur if they cannot be read with the equipment or have incurred damage throughout the mail in process.

1. The Presiding Judge, with any assistants deemed necessary, will duplicate any damaged ballot in accordance with Section 127.126 of the TEC.
2. In an election which contains party affiliations, at least one (1) member of differing political parties shall participate in the duplications of ballots.
3. Each duplicate ballot must be clearly labeled "Duplicate" and must bear the serial number of the original ballot (Section 127.126 (e) TEC)
4. The duplicate shall be substituted for the original ballot in the ballots prepared for automatic counting. The original shall be preserved with the other voted ballots for the same period. (Section 127.126 (f) TEC)

J. COUNTING WRITE-INS:

Write-ins must be resolved, if applicable, by the CCS members before results can be produced.

K. RECONCILIATION:

The process for comparing the number of voters listed as having voted and the number of ballots cast is done in 3 ways.

1. Early Voting in Person – Compare the number of early voting check-ins from the pollbooks, minus any ballots thrown out (Ex: spoiled) to the total number of ballots cast.
2. Early Voting by Mail – Compare the number of ballots entered on the Ballot Transmittal Form from the early voting ballot board to the number of ballots counted. (Sec. 87.021, 871221 TEC)
3. Election Day – Compare the number of voters on the ePollbooks and the Omissions List entries, minus any ballots thrown out (ex: spoiled) to the total number of ballots cast. (Sec. 127.007 (b) TEC)

L. PRINTING OF PRECINCT RETURNS AND ELECTION TOTALS:

Under Section 127.127 of the TEC, the Tabulation Supervisor is the only one authorized to operate the automatic tabulating equipment or handle ballots that are automatically counted. After the accumulation of vote totals has occurred, the Tabulation Supervisor of the CCS are responsible for preparing the precinct election returns. The Presiding Judge is required to sign the precinct returns to certify their accuracy. The returns will be stamped "Unofficial Results" until the final tally is done to include any outstanding ballots by mail, FPCAs, and provisional ballots.

The unofficial early voting election results shall be released as soon as available **but not before the last voter has voted and the polls have officially closed on Election Day**. The Presiding Judge of the CCS, in cooperation with the Elections Administrator may withhold the release of unofficial results until the last voter has voted. (Section 127.1311 TEC)

Unofficial election results will be released via following means: posting on front window of the Pecos County Annex, on the Pecos County webpage, www.co.pecos.tx.us/election-information, via email to any requests made before Election Day. Early voting results are projected to be posted by 7:00 pm and then subsequently after all precinct's voting equipment has been delivered and results uploaded. The unofficial results will be posted accordingly.

M. REPORTING RESULTS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE:

For certain elections, including Primary Elections, the General Elections for State and County officers, and Constitutional Amendment Elections, the SOS is required to tabulate the unofficial results statewide (SEC 68.001 TEC). This information must be reported to the SOS through their online portal or via telephone.

1. The Tabulations Supervisor will prepare reports with the requested totals for the SOS.
2. The Pecos County Elections Administrator will report the totals to the SOS using the online portal via TEAMS.

N. POLL WATCHERS:

Poll watchers are entitled to be present during the time the CCS has convened for the "purpose of processing or preparing to process elections results and until the election officers complete their duties at the station." (Section 33.055 TEC)

A watcher may not leave during voting hours on Election Day without the presiding judge's permission if the counting of ballots at the Central Count Station has begun. (Section 33.055 (b) TEC)

The poll watcher must deliver both their certificate of completion for the Texas SOS Poll Watcher Training and their certificate of appointment to the Presiding Judge of the CCS. The Presiding Judge must countersign and retain their certificate of appointment and certificate of completion.

All activities of poll watcher(s) shall comply with Sections 33.015, 33.055, 33.056 and the current *Poll Watchers Guide* issued by the Secretary of State.

O. DELIVERY OF MATERIALS TO THE GENERAL CUSTODIAN OF ELECTION RECORDS:

After the completion of the counting of the ballots both on Election Day and after Election Day, if necessary, voted ballots, electronic media, election records and election equipment will be retained by the Elections Administration office, who is the general custodial of election records, through the appropriate retention period in order to allow for the review of serial numbers as required.

P. SECURITY PROCEDURES

A licensed peace officer will be posted at the CCS as require at any time the CCS is convened.
(Section 127.1232 (a) TEC)