

Alaska Division of Elections Election Program Security Measures – 2006

In the 2006 Primary and General Elections, the Division of Elections will have available in each polling place one touch screen unit in addition to the traditional method of voting that has been offered in the polling place (optical scan and hand counted paper ballot). In order to comply with the Help America Vote Act of 2002, the Division of Elections will have available one touch screen machine in every polling place in the State that is intended to allow Alaska's visually impaired and disabled voters the ability to cast an independent ballot.

The Alaska Division of Elections is dedicated to the security and accuracy of our election process. The Division recognizes that any election system is susceptible to fraud if security measures are not in place. Alaska has extensive procedures, including multiple layers of security that includes a combination of people, processes, and technologies that help us conduct secure, trustworthy, and accurate elections.

The procedural controls and election processes used in Alaska protect the security of elections. The electoral process is designed in such a way that no single person or group can tamper with the results. Below is a brief outline of the security measures in place for Alaska elections:

The State of Alaska uses an in-state printer to produce its ballots, not the Accu-Vote software vendor.

At no time during the programming or testing of the optical scan or touch screen memory cards is the unit connected to the internet or LAN.

Each touch screen machine is equipped with a printer to produce a paper ballot. The voter will have the ability to review the paper ballot print-out to determine its accuracy prior to the ballot being cast on the touch screen machine. If the print-out is not how the voter intended to vote, the voter has the ability to cancel their vote and vote again on the touch screen machine or to use the method of voting also offered at the polling place (optical scan or hand count paper ballot). For visually impaired voters, the paper ballot will be read to the voter via a headset to determine the accuracy of the paper ballot before the ballot is cast.

Each optical scan and touch screen machine uses a memory card. Programming of the memory cards for both the optical scan and touch screen machines is done "in-house" by a Division of Elections employee using a stand-alone computer that is not connected to a LAN or the Internet during programming. Once the memory cards are programmed, a bipartisan State Ballot Review Board will run an auto-test on the touch screen units to see if the memory cards are reading votes cast for each candidate and ballot measure correctly. In addition to this auto-test, the State Review Board prepares test ballots to scan through the optical scan and for use as a basis for voting by the State Review Board on the touch screen machines to verify the programming on each of the memory cards.

The test results are printed from both the optical scan and touch screen machines and then compared to the actual test ballots for the optical scan and the paper ballots produced by the touch screen machines to verify the memory card is counting ballots correctly before being certified by the State Review Board for use.

The tested, certified memory cards are then shipped to the appropriate regional election supervisor. In each region, there is a bipartisan Regional Accu-Vote Review Board that runs another test on the memory cards used by the State Review Board and verifies that the results match those results certified by the State Review Board. Each optical scan and touch screen unit will also undergo functionality testing as well. Once the Regional Accu-Vote Review Board completes their test, the Board places the memory card in election mode and seals it in the optical scan and touch screen machine. The board records the seal number and serial number of the Accu-Vote machine.

The final test is completed on election morning by the bipartisan precinct election board. The precinct election board prints a “zero” totals report on the optical scan and touch screen machines before opening the polls to verify that no ballots and/or results have been placed in the machine. The zero totals report is secured inside the Accu-Vote unit.

Once the polls have closed, the election board then runs a memory card results report on each machine before uploading the results via the Internet or calling in the results to the appropriate Division of Elections regional office. This report shows how many votes were cast for each candidate and ballot measure. These reports are printed from the machines before the machines are ever connected to upload results.

Before certifying the election, all materials are returned to the State Ballot Review Board for inspection. This board conducts a thorough review of each precinct’s materials to verify the number of ballots cast at the precinct matches the number of voters who signed the register at the polls on Election Day. These materials are also compared to the results uploaded to the Division of Elections web site.

The State Review Board will conduct a hand count of one precinct in each of the 40 House Districts. The precinct will be randomly selected from those precincts that comprise at least 5% of the total number of ballots cast in that House District. If the results of the hand count are off by more than 1% between the results of the hand count and the count certified by the election board, the entire House District will be recounted by hand count. The paper ballots for the optical scan machines and paper ballots on the touch screen machines will serve as the official ballot cast and will be the record that is hand counted. Once the State Review Board is confident that the results reported are accurate, the election is certified.

There are multiple opportunities for the public to be involved in Alaska’s elections. The Division of Elections encourages people to get involved by serving on one of these various boards.