



New Hampshire  
Department of Justice

Office of the Attorney General

# Democracy Fest – June 2007

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New Hampshire Attorney General's  
Office



- Ballot Count Reconciliation
- Polling Place Inspection
- Advocates as Allies - New Hampshire Success with solving problems as they occur on election day



# Election Night Ballot Count Reconciliation



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Moderators are obligated to ensure that votes are counted accurately.

RSA 659:60



# Ballot Inventory

The inventory of ballots is the starting point for the election night reconciliation of ballot counts.

The ballot inventory establishes a baseline of how many ballots were used at the election.



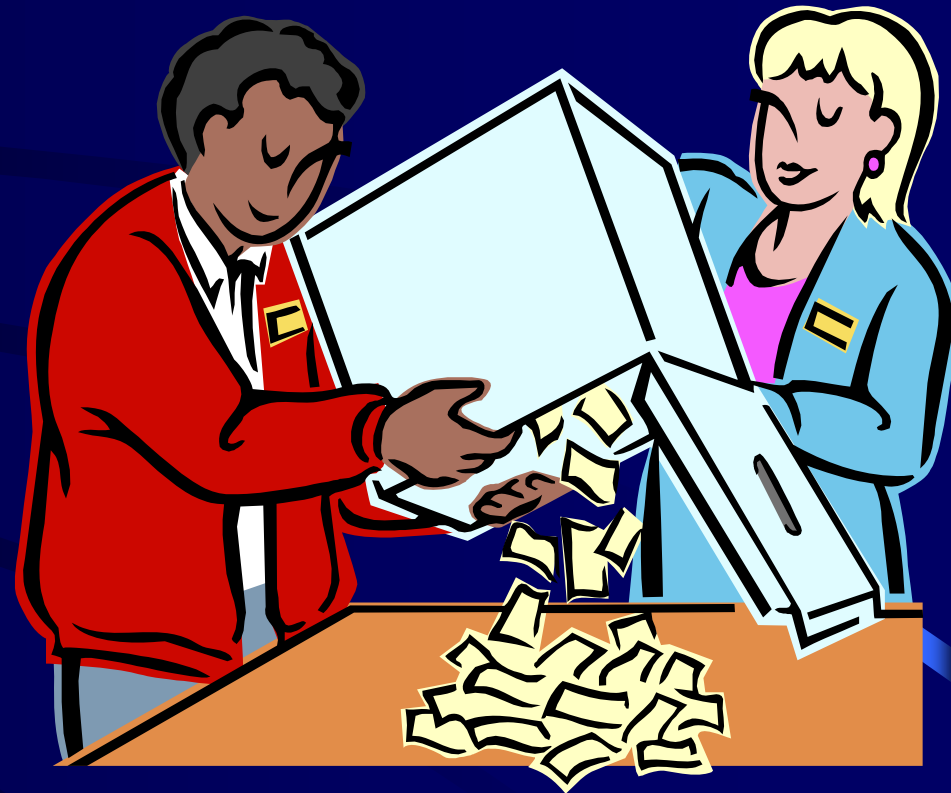
# Ballot Inventory

**Election Day Ballots received from SOS = \_\_\_\_\_**  
**+ Ballots from IVS \_\_\_\_\_**  
**+ Absentee Ballots Cast \_\_\_\_\_**  
**+ Absentee Ballots/Photocopy ballots  
used for election day ballots \_\_\_\_\_**  
**- Spoiled Ballots \_\_\_\_\_**  
**-- Election Day Ballots not used \_\_\_\_\_**  
**= Total Ballots Cast at the Election \_\_\_\_\_**



# Ballot Inventory

Under no circumstances should the total number of votes for all candidates plus the total number of ballots on which no vote was cast for any candidate in any office exceed the number of ballot used.





# Voters Participating



The Supervisors of the Checklist must count the total number of voters who are checked off on the checklist as having voted.



# Voters Participating

Count the total number of voters marked on the check-in checklist as having voted (include both election day and all absentee voters - including federal races only voters )

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# Voters Participating

Ballots used =

Voters checked in =

Voters checked out or

Total machine counted + entirely  
hand counted ballots.



# Total votes/abstentions by office/question

For each office (vote for no more than one):

All votes for first candidate +

All votes for second candidate +

All voters for . . . . Candidate +

All write in votes +

All ballots with no vote for this office =

**Total votes counted**



# Reconciliation

Small differences in the number of ballots used, number of ballots cast, and number of voters on the checklist sometimes occur even when counts are accurate due to human error in marking the checklist. If you are certain there is no counting error, declare the final results even if a small difference exists.



# Reconciliation

Make the existence of that difference part of the record of the results. The difference usually will not be an issue, unless the margin of victory is less than the difference. In that case usually a candidate will request a recount.



# ARE THERE TOO MANY VOTES?



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Top of the ballot races have predictable numbers of voters who will cast a ballot, but not vote in that race.



# Votes/Abstention = total voting

Votes Tabulated **GOVERNOR** (or any single seat State Race)

Enter the total votes for the Republican Candidate

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+

Enter the total votes for the Democratic Candidate

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+ Enter the total votes for third party candidates

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+ Enter the total number of write-in votes

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+ Enter the total number of ballots with no vote for Governor(**blanks**)

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(This number includes overvotes-more than one candidate marked)

**TOTAL VOTES/ABSTENTIONS COUNTED**

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# Predictable Undervotes

Divide the total number of blanks into the total votes.

Blanks \_\_\_\_\_ / Total of all votes \_\_\_\_\_ = . \_\_\_\_\_

The result is the percentage of blank votes or the percentage of voters who voted but did not vote in the race for Governor or who overvoted (voted for two or more candidates).



# Predictable Undervotes

Divide the total number of blanks into the total votes.

## Example

Blanks 9 / Total of all votes 300 = .03

**(3% of the voters did not vote for this office).**

The result is the percentage of blank votes or the percentage of voters who voted but did not vote in the race for Governor or who overvoted (voted for two or more candidates).



# Predictable Undervotes

This statistic is usually referred to as the "undervote."

In 2004:

2.43% of the voters did not vote for Governor,

3.89% did not vote for United States Senator,

4.7% did not vote for Representative to Congress



# Undervotes

An unusually high number of blanks or undervotes may be the result of atypical voting patterns, however, it may also result from adding or transposition errors, from an unusual number of improperly marked ballots, or an error in calculating the total ballots cast/total voters voting number..



# Secure Enough Assistance to Keep the Process Manageable

We **strongly endorse** the practice of some Moderators who have chosen to recruit a volunteer Math teacher, Bookkeeper, CPA, Accountant, or someone who is both skilled in working with numbers and who works with numbers daily to serve the Moderators as an assistant for the purpose of verifying counts before the final results are determined.



# Why Reconcile on Election Night

- It is the law.
- Voters deserve accurate ballot counts
- Voter confidence in elections is eroded when recounts disclose election night errors.
  - Fewer voters participate
  - Election Officials are accused of partisan malfeasance.
- It is less work than a recount.



# New Hampshire Election Day Polling Place Inspections

- Assistant Attorneys General
- Attorney General's Investigators
- Specially Trained Deputy Sheriffs
  - Target historical problem sites
    - College town polling places
    - Sources of past voter complaints
  - Random inspections of other polling places.
  - 30 minute response



# Problems at Polling Places

- Vast majority of election officials want to do it right.
- Character of approach can make a difference
  - Share the goal of a fair election
  - Be a resource
  - Address resistance by going up the chain of command



# Why Reconcile on Election Night

**It is the Right thing to Do!**

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