

Ballot Security and Election Integrity in 2025

For many people, the 2020 presidential election was their first taste of election fraud. Many laws and rules were changed with the only apparent reason being to facilitate changing the choice of the voters to their choice. In the days following that election we saw evidence and testimony presented which outlined procedures fraught with opportunities for mischief.

Counting machines were connected to the internet with stories of them being mysteriously reprogrammed just before the election. Politicians changed rules, that were in place to prevent cheating with mail-in ballots. One affidavit from a truck driver stated he delivered a truck load of voted mail ballots, that had never been folded, from another state.

Counting machines were set to reject a large percentage of ballots and then adjudicated by one person unsupervised.

Counting stopped and after watchers had left, boxes of ballots were brought out and counted in view of CCTV cameras which recorded the event. Some ballots appeared to be run through the counting machines multiple times.

Results of the election in some locations were reported to have been transmitted through foreign countries before coming back to be announced.

The results of these and other infractions left many doubting they could trust elections in the future.

As a result, I wanted to report on the status of election integrity in 2025 as I see it.

First, I have been involved in almost every election since 1984 as either a clerk, alternate judge, presiding judge or central count judge. I chaired the Ballot Security/Election Integrity Committee for several terms for the Republican Party in Harris County, the third largest county in the U.S. I served three terms on the state party serving on committees including the Election Integrity committee. I worked with True the Vote, the organization behind Dinesh D'Souza's movie, 2000 mules, in its beginning when they asked me to help them get started in election integrity and preventing fraud.

In other words, I've been involved in this for over 40 years. It's important to me.

Today, we have a choice of two legal methods of counting our votes. I wanted to tell what I believe are the pros and cons of each and how we got here.

In 2021, Gillespie County ditched its old counting equipment which received complaints in the 2020 election. The old equipment required judges to return their ballots to central count to be counted. In 2020, the previous elections administrator did not allow the parties to appoint election judges in central count and early voting. The county used its own people. There were reports of these people adjudicating ballots without allowing poll

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watchers or anyone to witness their work. Extra ballots were reported to have been seen in a ballot box as the day started. Poll watchers and county personnel had complaints about each other.

My wife and I had just moved here in June of 2020 and I volunteered as a clerk in Pct 13, which in that election was run by Debbie Campbell, no relation to me.

The following summer, I suggested to the county chair that he appoint personnel to central count and early voting by the July deadline and he did. The EA only allowed an appointment to Central Count. I was appointed Central Count Judge in the 2021 Constitutional Amendments election, which was the first election in which the county used its new Hart voting equipment. In August of 2022, I contacted the SOS office and told them the was still not letting the Party choose the judge for early voting. They called the EA and told her she had to follow the election code and the next day she and all of her employees quit their jobs.

In November 2022 I was appointed central count judge again and Jim Riley, who was then the Precinct Chair of Pct 1, was appointed the presiding judge of early voting. This party has appointed the central count and early voting judge for every election since.

The state only allows voters to vote a mail-in ballot if they are going to be out of town for all possible dates of voting, or if the voter is 65 or older. The voter has to request a ballot and when that request is received. Their registration is checked and then a ballot is sent. The voter has to include identifying information on the reply voting mailer. They have to sign across the seal of the envelope and the signature is matched with the request. The EVBB judge appointed by me and her staff process those votes.

The county uses Hart scanners and Knowink poll pads for its elections. I recently contacted both companies and asked them a lot of questions. Texas passed laws forbidding counting machines from being able to connect to the internet. There is no mechanism in the scanner than can communicate via the internet. The only cords that can connect are Hart cords for setting the clock and underlying machine language. The program for a specific election ballot is in the encrypted V Drive which is locked in the scanner during the election. The county orders the V Drives which come in two styles, one for specific precincts and ones for early voting, and mail ballots. The difference is the precinct V Drives will only count ballots for that precinct and the early voting and mail ballot drives must be able to count all precincts. Extras of these are ordered for testing and the ones to be tested are randomly drawn. During the test, done in public view, the test drives are put in scanners, ballots are created and voted and the results checked to see if the scanner program is counting

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correctly. Afterward, the drives are locked away until the election with the county and the sheriff having the keys.

The test drives are tested again twice on election day to see if they are still counting the same as they did before the election.

The Knowink poll pad is now the only poll pad certified by the federal government. Each year the company hires people to try to hack their system and no one has succeeded. No one has reported that any voters were added or subtracted by hacking.

So let me analyze the voting process the county is using. The voter arrives and usually uses a drivers license as ID. Then it is scanned to bring up the voter on the screen. The voter is asked if they are the voter at the address listed. If affirmative, the voter signs the screen. That signature is a legal affidavit that the voter agrees to, under penalty of perjury or voter fraud, that they are the person listed and they live at that address. The pad records how many voters have signed in and time stamps when they signed in.

The voter votes and then they place their own ballot in the scanner and if the scanner cannot read it, it spits it out and the voter adjudicates their own ballot, solving one of the problems from the 2020 election. Once the scanner accepts their ballot, it drops into a secure bag untouched by anyone except the voter. The scanner counts the number of ballots deposited and time stamps when it was deposited.

The pad and the scanner do not communicate with each other, as they are manufactured by different companies.

At the end of the day, each precinct runs the totals of their precinct and they know their pct's results immediately before traveling back to the county. (results are not sent to another country)

Judges check to make sure the number of people who signed in, got a ballot, and voted all match. The number of registered voters is displayed on the pads at all times and can be monitored to see if it changes.

Where are the flaws? It is possible to sign in for a voter without them being there, get a ballot and vote a ballot. Hopefully the operational procedures in place by the judge would prevent that, but if personnel are not paying attention, it could happen.

In the 2010 Houston Mayoral race, poll watchers reported some precincts in deep blue areas voted extra ballots at the end of the day, signing the paper poll pad for voters who had not shown up to vote and then voting for them. The Knowink poll pad and the Hart scanner would both time stamp such events and provide evidence of voting after hours. As it was, it was the poll watchers word against the judge and nothing happened.

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Within 72 hours after the election, three races in three random precincts are hand counted to check the accuracy of the machine's programming. So far, since 2021, no discrepancies have been found showing that programming has been manipulated.

Going back to the 2020 election problems, mail ballots have been addressed, however it is still possible for someone other than the voter to vote that ballot.

Scanners will only count a ballot once. I tried, when I was the central count judge during testing, to run a ballot through twice and it rejected it. This solves the 2020 problem of running ballots through the scanner several times. Ballots are counted the moment the voter puts their ballot in the scanner. Results are announced and known at the precinct before returning the equipment to the county. Results are not transmitted to the county to be revealed later.

The county then uses a computer not attached to the internet to simply add the results into one total, but again, the results are already known by pct, so if the totals change, we would know it.

The Party previously chose hand counting and paper poll pads on election day. The process appears similar to the voter. The voter must show ID usually a driver's license. Then they sign the combination form and their name is printed next to the signature. The signature on the pad serves as an affidavit as it did on the electronic pad. Voters receive a ballot and deposit the ballot in the ballot can. There is no programming that has to be checked or paid for. At the end of the day the number of signatures and the number of ballots voted must match. As with the electronic pad, a clerk could sign signatures at the end of the day and vote ballots. The difference is there would be no time stamp evidence left behind.

Ballots are hand counted which involves more workers and more training. In a primary where everyone is in the same party, judges must use care to ensure the counter and the watcher, the only ones to see the ballot when being counted, are not somehow working together to manipulate the vote. It is suggested a poll watcher be assigned to each counting team to be an observer. The party, however, is not allowed to assign poll watchers to its own primary, so it is left to candidates to do this and therefore I view this as a potential risk.

If the intent of the voter cannot be determined on the ballot, the judge adjudicates the ballot, not the voter, and again, the party cannot assign watchers so this is a potential risk as it was in 2020.

Results are determined at the precinct and this, as it is with the scanners, is a plus.

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The law does not allow a three precinct random audit or any audit when results are hand counted. This is a vulnerability. If cheating is done in counting, there is no procedure in which it will be caught.

Having mentioned pros and cons for each system of counting, I must add that I could not find a modern example of anyone, anywhere, trying to steal a Republican Primary. The problems reported, are in elections where the parties are opposing each other, usually in November.

We have spent a lot of time and effort debating the method for our Primary even though there is not much evidence of fraud in our elections or in Republican primaries. There was fraud reported and turned over to authorities in the 2024 Republican Primary here in our county. Three voters were allowed to vote twice in the election, once in the Democrat Primary and once in the Republican Primary. One of those voters voted early in the Democrat Primary and then in the Republican Run-off. The voter was clearly marked as having voted early in the Dem primary on the paper poll pad. The paper poll pad did not stop them from voting as the clerk did not notice the fact that voter had voted already. The electronic poll pad would have flashed a message in RED.

The other two voters voted in both Primaries on election day. I do not know which one they voted in first. The other party used electronic poll pads and we used paper. If we had both used electronic, I believe this fraud would have been thwarted. After all, isn't it fraud we are trying to stop.

In 2024, I believe the main focus was to hand count the election as an answer to the problems we all saw in the 2020 election. I think we successfully showed that we are capable of hand counting an election successfully.

"That said, I do not believe our county will be a target in the 2026 Republican Primary. In Galveston, people install hurricane shutters because the risk of storm damage is high, and the protection is worth the cost. Here, the likelihood of damage is far lower, so shutters aren't necessary. In the same way, I do not believe hand counting ballots or paper poll pads are warranted in the 2026 primary.

Costs: The county bought the current equipment in 2021 and some additional scanners since then. They are already paid for. Programming must be paid for whether we use scanners or hand count, because the required ADA voting device must be programmed with the same program. Hand counting costs extra. In 2024, we paid hand counters just over \$30,000. I do not believe the low threat level in our county justifies the expense.

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Each election should be evaluated as to where vulnerabilities might occur, and each county should make its determination based on the unique circumstances and equipment utilized in that location.

While Democrats across the country remain focused on attacking Donald Trump and Republicans who are out working to make America great again, we should be spending our time contacting our voters and communicating the successes of the Trump administration and our successes in the state legislative session.

That is my report.

September 2025

Bruce Campbell
County Chair
Gillespie County Republican Party