

2024-2025 Grand Jury Report
Riverside County Elections: A Pathway to Greater Voter Confidence
June 18, 2025
Riverside County Board of Supervisors

This response was prepared on behalf of the Board of Supervisors by the Registrar of Voters and Executive Office.

GRAND JURY FINDINGS:

Grand Jury Finding #1:

F-1 After hiring a new Registrar, the new Registrar made security and ballot processing improvements.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #1:

Respondent agrees with finding.

The County is committed to transparency, accuracy, and security. During fiscal year 2024-25, transparency was significantly enhanced by installing over 23 cameras to livestream every phase of our ballot processing offering real time visibility to the public.

Investments were made in key infrastructure upgrades to bolster efficiency and resilience: expanded processing workspaces, added observation windows for public viewing, and acquired a new mail sorter, three additional ballot slicers, and additional signature verification stations. Security improvements were prioritized as well, with the addition of enhanced lobby screening and a secure perimeter gate.

To foster greater public engagement, the observation program was revamped: viewers now benefit from improved observation zones, lobby TV screens, a dedicated check-in area with observer guides, and weekly tours promoted via press releases and social media.

Grand Jury Finding #2:

F-2 The ROV is cooperative with a community group interested in local election integrity.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #2:

Respondent agrees with finding.

The ROV is steadfast in its commitment to transparency and deeply values the time and contributions of all organizations that review our electoral processes and share

recommendations. Each suggestion is carefully evaluated in the context of operational feasibility, cost(s), timing, and legal requirements.

To support and engage with groups, ROV routinely:

- Provides access to relevant election documents
- Responds promptly to inquiries
- Offers in-person meetings to discuss findings or concerns

In this effort, the ROV goes beyond common practices, openly demonstrating pre and postelection certification audits and other procedures typically not accessible to the public.

The County has invested hundreds of hours and substantial resources to address all questions and concerns. The approach is highly collaborative and interactive, ensuring our communities receive a comprehensive understanding of the election operations. The County consistently aims to go above and beyond to uphold transparency and responsiveness.

This aligns with best practices encouraging election officials to facilitate observation and to maintain clear communication channels to continue to foster and enhance public trust.

Grand Jury Finding #3:

F-3 A community group is unable to independently verify ROV's certified election results, even when ROV provides the documentation it has available to them.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #3:

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

The ROV's methodology certifying election results strictly adheres to the requirements outlined in the California Elections Code.

Specifically:

- A public 1% manual tally is conducted during the official canvass. This involves hand counting ballots from randomly selected precincts, as mandated by Elections Code §15360.
- The process is fully observable by the public, with at least five days' advance notice provided regarding the time, place, and selection process of the tally.

Additionally, the ROV completes a Roster Audit, also in compliance with state law, ensuring systematic review and verification of voter records.

To further reinforce transparency, the ROV has consistently presented and explained these processes in several public presentations and meetings.

Whether or not a community group is able to independently verify ROV's certified election results depends entirely on that group's willingness to follow the requirements set forth in the Election Code.

Grand Jury Finding #4:

F-4 Riverside County contracted for a procedural audit of ROV's procedures to improve its election processes.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #4:

Respondent agrees with finding.

The County engaged two highly experienced, former elections executives as consultants to enhance our election operations:

- In late 2023, one consultant conducted an extensive operational review and provided over 70 actionable recommendations. The ROV has since implemented more than 60% of those recommendations, while continuing to evaluate the remainder based on timing, costs, and operational priorities.
- In 2025, the same consultant delivered a follow-up progress report outlining key focus areas.

One of the focus areas the ROV is further exploring with the consultant is to develop and implement a modern, electronic ballot chain of custody system. This initiative aims to leverage digital tools to enhance accountability, transparency, and the overall integrity of the election process.

Grand Jury Finding #5:

F-5 Comprehensive independent performance audits encompass a broader spectrum of election issues than procedural audits.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #5:

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

The ROV is routinely audited by the Auditor-Controller's Office (ACO).

The County engaged two highly experienced, former elections executives as consultants to enhance our election operations:

- In late 2023, one consultant conducted an extensive operational review and provided over 70 actionable recommendations. The ROV has since implemented more than 60% of those recommendations, while continuing to evaluate the remainder based on timing, costs, and operational priorities.
- In 2025, the same consultant delivered a follow-up progress report outlining key focus areas. The consultant remains actively engaged in ongoing follow-up and implementation activities.

The County invested in key infrastructure upgrades to bolster efficiency and resilience: expanded processing workspaces, added observation windows for public viewing, and acquired a new mail sorter plus three additional ballot slicers and additional signature verification stations. Security improvements were prioritized as well, with the addition of, enhanced lobby screening and a secure perimeter gate. Performance enhancements were achieved through several audits, including a DHS audit, a voter roll maintenance audit, and an ElecTask audit ensuring improved procedural and project compliance.

Grand Jury Finding #6:

F-6 Riverside County's ROV exceeded voter roll maintenance legal requirements in preparing for the November 5, 2024, General Election.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #6:

Respondent agrees with finding.

The ROV exceeded legal standards for voter roll maintenance ahead of the November 5, 2024, Presidential General Election. To support this, the department partnered with a third-party provider offering advanced data verification tools, to improve accuracy of voter contact information.

Going forward, ROV will continue to use this service ahead of all countywide elections, starting with the upcoming June 2, 2026, Primary Statewide Election.

The ballot vendor also performs thorough voter data review before mailing ballots. Simultaneously, the ROV has streamlined the voter file operations in collaboration with our election management system and mail sorter vendors to minimize disparities during data handling.

To keep voter rolls current and accurate, the ROV cross checks against multiple official data feeds:

- USPS National Change of Address (NCOA) - daily updates to capture recent moves
- DMV Change of Address data - processed daily for address updates
- USPS "undeliverable" mail reports - daily monitoring during mailing, flagging undelivered election mail or registration cards
- Mortality data - local monthly reports and state-level data received quarterly for cancellation of deceased registrants
- Felony cancellation data - reports from both local and state authorities updated weekly
- Conservatorship-related cancellations - local and state updates received weekly

Grand Jury Finding #7:

F-7 The ROV complies with state laws in its Vote by Mail signature verification process.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #7:

Respondent agrees with finding.

The County fully complies with all applicable state laws in its Vote-by-Mail signature verification process. The ROV ensures all staff receive thorough training on the Vote-by-Mail signature verification process. This training is provided by the California Secretary of State (SOS) in partnership with the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO) and reinforced by Registrar of Voters (ROV) supervisors.

ROV dedicates significant time to training, involving both full-time and temporary staff in hands-on instruction. These sessions focus on mastering the use of the Election Management System and include practical exercises using both Vote-by-Mail and Provisional ballot envelopes to ensure proficiency in real world scenarios.

Grand Jury Finding #8:

F-8 Temporary ROV employees manually conduct Vote by Mail signature verifications.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #8:

Respondent agrees with finding.

Temporary employees of the ROV are authorized to conduct manual signature verifications for Vote-by-Mail ballots. The ROV ensures all staff receive thorough training on the Vote-by-Mail signature verification process. This training is provided by the California SOS in partnership with the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials and reinforced by ROV supervisors.

ROV dedicates significant time to training, involving both full-time and temporary staff in hands-on instruction. These sessions focus on mastering the use of the Election Management System and include practical exercises using both Vote-by-Mail and Provisional ballot envelopes to ensure proficiency in real world scenarios.

Grand Jury Finding #9:

F-9 The ROV does not provide a comprehensive ballot audit trail for all issued, received, returned, and challenged ballots.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #9:

Respondent disagrees wholly with finding.

The ROV maintains a meticulous and complete ballot audit trail tracking all issued, received, returned, and challenged ballots.

In compliance with California Elections Code § 15302, our official canvass includes a reconciliation of the number of signatures on the roster with the number of ballots recorded on the ballot statement.

Should any discrepancy arise, the ROV further reconciles ballots received from each vote center with those cast, including spoiled, canceled, provisional, vote-by-mail, and write-in ballots, before final certification.

To ensure transparency and public trust, the ROV conducts a roster audit open to observers and simultaneously livestreamed. During these audits, vote center Ballot Statements and other pertinent documentation are referenced.

Additionally, the ROV cross references multiple reports from the Election Management System (EIMS) with the actual number of ballots scanned and counted by voting equipment, ensuring valid ballots are properly sorted, signature verified, and included in the final tabulation.

Summary data and audit results are also incorporated into the Secretary of State's election reporting and are reflected in the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS).

Grand Jury Finding #10:

F-10 Handwritten Chain of Custody documents for the 2024 Primary Election and 2024 General Election were not always legible.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #10:

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

The ROV acknowledges some handwritten chain of custody documents from the March 5, 2024, Presidential Primary Election were not sufficiently legible. To address this, the ROV assigned a dedicated team to oversee and ensure the legibility of all handwritten chain of custody forms for the November 5, 2024, Presidential General Election.

The ROV has since improved the documentation process and will continue ongoing monitoring to ensure all chain of custody materials remain clear and compliant.

Grand Jury Finding #11:**F-11 ROV does not conduct emergency drills with temporary employees.****Response to Grand Jury Finding #11:**

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

The County places strong emphasis on emergency preparedness. While the onboarding program for the 1,200+ temporary employees and the 900+ election officers, who are placed at voting centers, includes a thorough overview of emergency procedures, it is recognized that there is a need for more hands-on readiness. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been established and will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure compliance with legal standards and consistency in practice.

To strengthen our response capabilities:

- The ROV will introduce emergency drills for temporary employees in advance of the November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election.
- Unit supervisors will be responsible for conducting drills throughout the election period.

Although annual emergency drills are conducted, it is recognized that the timing may not align with when temporary staff are present on site. To address this, there is a plan to introduce additional drills scheduled during active election periods, ensuring all team members, including temporary employees, are effectively prepared for emergency situations.

Grand Jury Finding #12:**F-12 Cameras in the ROV ballot processing facility did not record during the two emergency evacuations.**

Response to Grand Jury Finding #12:

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

The Registrar of Voters (ROV) and the Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder (ACR) share a facility equipped with public facing and perimeter security cameras, which record continuously. These systems were fully operational during the evacuations occurring during the 2024 Presidential General Election. A similar recording security system is also in place at the ROV's secondary building, used for customer service and data entry.

In addition to security cameras, the ROV has installed over 23 livestreaming cameras within ballot processing areas to provide public transparency. These livestreams offer real time viewing of ballot operations but do not record. This approach reflects standard practice across California, where most counties offering livestream access do not retain footage, in order to protect staff privacy and maintain a safe work environment.

The County has carefully reviewed the recommendation to record all ballot processing activities and retain footage for at least 12 months. This review considered recent and upcoming improvements, infrastructure investments, and guidance from the Secretary of State. The ROV's camera systems serve two distinct purposes: security and transparency. The livestream system is one part of a broader public observation program, which also includes designated observation areas, lobby monitors, guided tours, and outreach via press releases and social media.

Previously, the ROV worked with the County's Human Resources Labor Relations Division to evaluate the feasibility of recording workstations. The livestream program was implemented only after completing the required Meet & Confer process. However, recording and storing footage of employee work areas poses serious concerns regarding privacy and safety.

Following a comprehensive analysis, the County has determined existing practices, combined with ongoing improvements, sufficiently address transparency and security. As such, recording livestream footage is not recommended or necessary.

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Grand Jury Recommendation #1:

R-1 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors contract with a third-party independent firm to conduct a performance audit of all aspects of ROV's election processes and to take any necessary actions deemed appropriate by the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.

**Based on Findings: FI through F-12
Financial Impact: Moderate**

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #1:

Recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

Several performance audits have been completed. The ROV continues to collaborate with the ACO, an elections consultant, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), to ensure ongoing improvements in operational integrity and facility security.

- In late 2023, the County contracted with a consultant who conducted an extensive operational review and provided over 70 actionable recommendations. The ROV has since implemented more than 60% of those recommendations, while continuing to evaluate the remainder based on timing, costs, and operational priorities.
- In 2025, the same consultant delivered a follow-up report outlining key focus areas.

The consultant will continue to support the ROV to further assess and implement the remaining recommendations.

Grand Jury Recommendation #2:

R-2 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters implement additional methods and resources to make voter rolls as accurate as possible no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.

Based on Findings: F-6

Financial Impact: Moderate

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #2:

Recommendation has been implemented.

The ROV exceeded legal standards for voter roll maintenance ahead of the November 5, 2024, Presidential General Election. To support this, the department partnered with a third-party provider offering advanced data verification tools, to improve accuracy of voter contact information.

ROV will continue to use this service ahead of all scheduled countywide elections, starting with the upcoming June 2, 2026, Primary Statewide Election.

The ballot vendor also performs thorough voter data review before mailing ballots. Simultaneously, the ROV has streamlined our voter file operations in collaboration with

election management system and ballot sorter vendors to minimize disparities during data handling.

To keep voter rolls current and accurate, the ROV cross checks against multiple official data feeds:

- USPS National Change of Address (NCOA) - daily updates to capture recent moves
- DMV Change of Address data - processed daily for address updates
- USPS "undeliverable" mail reports - daily monitoring during mailing, flagging undelivered election mail or registration cards
- Mortality data - local monthly reports and state-level data received quarterly for cancellation of deceased registrants
- Felony cancellation data - reports from both local and state authorities updated weekly
- Conservatorship-related cancellations - local and state updates received weekly

Grand Jury Recommendation #3:

R-3 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters explore the use of an automated signature verification process no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.

Based on Findings: F-7 and F-8

Financial Impact: Moderate

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #3:

Recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. The implementation time frame is noted in the response.

The ROV is actively working with the County Purchasing Department and the auto signature verification vendor to implement the new software. The system is scheduled for deployment by October 2025. The pilot implementation of this program is scheduled for the November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election.

Grand Jury Recommendation #4:

R-4 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters explore automating ballot chain of custody processes no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.

Based on Findings: F-2, F-3, F-4, F-5, F-8, F-9, and F-10
Financial Impact: Moderate

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #4:

Recommendation requires further analysis or study. The time frame is noted in the response, which shall not exceed six-months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.

The ROV will further evaluate this recommendation by researching best practices and exploring how other counties are automating the ballot chain of custody process. The ROV will continue collaborating with the election consultant to review and refine recommendations on this practice. The ROV will provide an update to the Grand Jury on its findings by December 18, 2025.

Grand Jury Recommendation #5:

R-5 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters establish detailed emergency procedures and drills for all employees and practice those procedures for each ballot processing shift no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.

Based on Finding: F-11
Financial Impact: Minimal

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #5:

Recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. The implementation time frame is noted in the response.

The County is committed to proactive emergency preparedness and continuous improvement as exemplified by pursuing ongoing operational improvements and assessments. To strengthen emergency preparedness, the ROV, in conjunction with the Human Resources Safety Loss Control Division, will build upon existing Safety Procedures and enhance training efforts to ensure all ROV employees are knowledgeable in emergency response protocols and have participated in a drill, reinforcing the importance of practicing these skills to improve confidence, coordination, and effectiveness in an actual emergency event.

The ROV will increase the number of Department Safety Representatives (DSR) in the department from two to eight, who will work closely with Human Resources Safety Loss Control to ensure the department is current on any required safety protocols, emerging trends, evolving safety requirements, and best practices. Each designated permanent ROV office location will have four DSRs, enhancing support and collaboration on safety-related matters. This enhancement will benefit the department, especially during election periods when staffing levels expand significantly.

While the existing ROV Emergency Action Plan (EAP) satisfies California Department of Industrial Relations (Cal/OSHA) compliance, the value of exceeding these requirements is recognized prior to November 4, 2025, Statewide Special Election.

Grand Jury Recommendation #6:

R-6 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters obtain high-definition cameras for all ballot processing areas; record all ballot processing sessions and keep recordings for at least 12 months so that it is ready no later than the next Primary Election on June 2, 2026.

Based on Finding: F-12

Financial Impact: Moderate

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #6:

Recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

The Registrar of Voters (ROV) and the Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder (ACR) share a facility equipped with public facing and perimeter security cameras, which record continuously. These systems were fully operational during the evacuations occurring during the 2024 Presidential General Election. A similar recording security system is also in place at the ROV's secondary building, used for customer service and data entry.

In addition to security cameras, the ROV has installed over 23 livestreaming cameras within ballot processing areas to provide public transparency. These livestreams offer real time viewing of ballot operations but do not record. This approach reflects standard practice across California, where most counties offering livestream access do not retain footage, in order to protect staff privacy and maintain a safe work environment.

The County has carefully reviewed the recommendation to record all ballot processing activities and retain footage for at least 12 months. This review considered recent and upcoming improvements, infrastructure investments, and guidance from the Secretary of State. The ROV's camera systems serve two distinct purposes: security and transparency. The livestream system is one part of a broader public observation program, which also includes designated observation areas, lobby monitors, guided tours, and outreach via press releases and social media.

Previously, the ROV worked with the County's Human Resources Labor Relations Division to evaluate the feasibility of recording workstations. The livestream program was implemented only after completing the required Meet & Confer process. However, recording and storing footage of employee work areas poses serious concerns regarding privacy and safety.

Following a comprehensive analysis, the County has determined existing practices, combined with ongoing improvements, sufficiently address transparency and security. As such, recording livestream footage is not recommended or necessary.

Grand Jury Recommendation #7:

**R-7 The Riverside County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors establish an election security task force to enhance a unified security environment surrounding elections no later than March 1, 2026. Based on Finding: F-11 and F-12
Financial Impact: Moderate**

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #7:

Recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. The implementation time frame is noted in the response.

The ROV as the lead department of elections, will establish a Security Task Force by March 1, 2026, ahead of the June 2026 election, to develop a unified and comprehensive security framework for elections.

Representatives from the various local, state, and federal agencies and County departments will be invited to participate.