

Kane County Clerk – Elections Department

Vote By Mail Ballot Processing Overview



Receiving & Sorting

- Ballots are only accepted into the custody of the Kane County Election's Office by a bi-partisan team of election judges or staff.
- A bi-partisan team of judges retrieve ballots from drop boxes and the Kane Co. mail room and return them in security-sealed carrier bags.
- Chain of Custody logs track the receipt of each carrier bag, recording the unique security code on its seal.
- Ballot envelopes are removed from the containers in the secure ballot processing room, inventoried on the Ballot Control Log, and readied for sorting.



Signature Review

- Running the envelopes through the BlueCrest sorting machine captures an image of the voter's signature and date stamps the envelope.
- The EIMS system pulls up the voter record matching the label on the envelope, allowing bi-partisan teams to compare signatures and challenge those that do not match the voter's registered signature on file.
- On the second pass, the BlueCrest machine puts good envelopes in batches to be scanned and pulls challenged envelopes for voter contact.



Ballot Extraction & Inspection

- Batches of sealed ballots then move to the Opex machine, which slices the certification envelopes open.
- Bi-partisan teams extract voted ballots, inspect them for machine-readability and flatten them for scanning.
- Empty envelopes are moved to storage, while ballots are placed in trays and proceed to the secure ballot scanning area.
- Bi-partisan judges flag ballots printed on non-standard paper (primarily Military & Overseas ballots) and damaged or otherwise unscannable ballots.



Ballot Replication

- Bipartisan Judges (who are under oath) print a blank ballot of the same ballot style/precinct and carefully replicate the selections from the original. A record is kept of the number of ballots (and ballot style) printed and which team of bipartisan Judges accomplished this task for auditing.
- Replicated ballots are reviewed again before scanning to ensure the voter's markings were transferred correctly.
- The replica goes with the batch of ballots to be scanned, while the original is marked spoiled, archived and is not counted.



Ballot Scanning

- A bi-partisan team runs each batch of ballots through the voting system scanner in the secure tabulation room.
- The scanner creates an image of each ballot and records the voter's choices. These images are recorded on a V-Drive to be tabulated on election night.
- After scanning, the team of bi-partisan judges record information from the Ballot Control Log for each batch. The Log shows:
 1. How many ballots came in on a given day,
 2. What batches they were sorted into,
 3. How many ballots in each batch were challenged or otherwise unscannable, and how many were scanned.



Ballot Storage

- Processed ballots are locked in the secure elections ballot storage vault until completion of the post-election audit.
- After the canvass, ballots and ballot declaration envelopes are transferred to long-term storage for the statutorily required timeframe.

Vote By Mail Chain of Custody Overview

“A Tight Chain of Custody Ensures Election Integrity.”



Vote By Mail ballots can only be received into the custody of and processed by the Kane County Elections Department bi-partisan team of election judges or staff.
Election judges operate under oath taken each day that they work in the Kane County Election’s Office.



A ballot can only be accepted for tabulation when a bi-partisan team of election judges verify the signature of the voter.



If a judge from either party cannot remain present at any point in the Vote By Mail ballot processing, the ballots are sequestered using a numbered security seal.
To resume processing the Vote By Mail ballots, the bi-partisan team of election judges must verify the seal number.



Every Vote By Mail ballot task (receiving, sorting, signature verification, opening, extracting, scanning, and storing) is completed by a bi-partisan team of election judges who must document Chain of Custody on the VBM Ballot Transfer Affidavits, Blue Binder Forms and Daily VBM Control Log.



Informed observers or pollwatchers add to the security of the process, serving as witnesses to the bi-partisan nature of all VBM ballot work. Each pollwatcher must have and present credentials issued by the Kane County Clerk or the IL State Board of Elections.