



★ VIRGINIA ★
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

Official ELECT Advisory

DATE: September 3, 2024

SUBJECT: Ballot Proofing Timeline and Instructions for the 2024 November General and Special Elections

WHY THIS IS NEEDED: Presidential candidate determinations have been made and the Presidential Qualified Candidates List has been posted to ELECT's [website](#). ELECT would like to send a sincere THANK YOU to all of the localities that helped us process presidential candidate petitions. We could not have done it without you!

Vendors and localities may now complete the creation of ballots and submit the proofs to ELECT for final approval. This advisory will provide information needed to ensure ballot proofing is done correctly and in a timely manner.

HOW THIS AFFECTS YOU: **Qualified Candidates List Note:** After the candidate list was posted to our website, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. withdrew his candidacy in Virginia. The list on the website has been updated to remove him.

- General registrars and locality staff should perform a thorough review and comparison of all offices, candidates, and referendums as they appear in VERIS and all ballot styles. Localities should use ballot access documents filed by candidates, all special election and referendum writs filed by courts, the State Board of Elections (SBE) [Ballot Standards](#), and the below list of most common mistakes to complete the reviews. **Careful reviews at the locality level should catch most errors and will significantly reduce approval delays.**
- Localities may now pull Ballot Styles Detail, Certification of Candidates, Certification of Statewide Candidates, and Certification of Referendums reports from VERIS for full ballot creation and proofing purposes. All four reports are found in VERIS > Reports > Reports Library > Category: Election.
- The State Board of Elections (SBE) has the authority to prescribe ballot standards for elections within the Commonwealth ([Va. Code § 24.2-613](#)). Ballots must comply with all applicable Virginia Code sections and these

[standards](#). These standards apply to all official ballots within the Commonwealth unless stated otherwise.

- **As a reminder, Presidential races have different requirements for the office header, candidate list, and candidate ballot name.** (See pages 25 and 31.)
 - There are certain instances where a [Ballot Standards Waiver Request](#) can be submitted. See the [form](#) for these instances.
 - The [SBE Ballot Standards](#) are located in [FormsWarehouse>Election Management](#)).
- Your ballots must display the correct abbreviations and candidates must be listed in the correct ballot order. Remember, party designation should **not** be listed for local offices (Va. Code [§ 24.2-613](#)). The ballot order drawn and party abbreviations approved by the SBE are as follows:
 - Democratic: D
 - Republican: R
 - Green: G
 - Libertarian: L
 - Independent: I

Note: The ELECT-613 Explanation of Political Party Abbreviation sign has been updated in [FormsWarehouse>Posters and Publications](#). This sign must be posted in all voting locations.

Submitting Ballot Proofs to ELECT:

- **PrintElect customers:** Everything is done through PrintElect's Workflow. ELECT staff will pull your proofs and provide feedback via PrintElect's Workflow.
- **All others:** Submit ballot proofs through the [Ballot Proof Submission Forms site form](#).
 - **Only upload one ballot per "style."** It is not required to upload every precinct's ballot for proofing.
 - Refer to the VERIS Ballot Styles Detail report for each "style."
 - This differs from post-election, when you will need to submit a voided copy of each precinct's ballot(s) with your abstracts after the election.
 - Exception: If your vendor sends all of your proofs to you as one large PDF, you can just send that entire PDF.

CORRECTING ERRORS IN VERIS NOTE: If a VERIS entry error is found during ballot proofing, **it must be fixed**. Elections are created in Enhanced Ballot and Enhanced Results using VERIS data. Democracy Works also uses VERIS data for the What's On My Ballot tool on ELECT's website. **If something is wrong in VERIS it will be wrong in Enhanced and What's On My Ballot.**

****SPECIAL BALLOT PRINTING NOTE**:** There is a possibility of ELECT receiving appeal requests and/or lawsuits from presidential candidates who did not qualify. ELECT advises localities that unless you hear otherwise from ELECT, to HOLD OFF printing and to tell your vendor to **WAIT to print ballots for as long as feasible**. If there is an appeal or lawsuit, and ELECT's determination of "*not qualified*" is overturned, holding printing may prevent ballots having to be reprinted.

REMINDER ABOUT SCHEDULING YOUR L&A TESTING: While ELECT has several staff members that will be dedicated to proofing ballots as fast as possible, turnaround time will not be immediate. Localities should plan for a 24 to 72 hour approval turnaround time and schedule L&A testing accordingly. Make sure what you submit to ELECT is accurate and submit as soon as possible as we will be working first in, first out.

Regarding Enhanced Ballot:

Once ELECT has created the 2024 November General election in Enhanced Ballot and completed set up, **an advisory will be sent notifying you that the election is ready for locality use.**

- WAIT for that advisory notification. **Going into the election in Enhanced Ballot before it is ready could result in duplicate work on your part.**
- ELECT will have an Enhanced Ballot Walk Through Webex **live online training session on Monday, September 16, 2024 from 10 am to 11 am.**
 - [REDACTED]
 - **Password:** [REDACTED]
 - Anyone with access to Enhanced Ballot may attend. Registration is not required.

MOST COMMON BALLOT MISTAKES:

1. Incorrect election designation in the header.

- a. Due to the Constitutional Amendment, **all full ballots should have "General and Special Elections" in the header.**
 - b. **Federal Only and Presidential Only ballots** should have "**General Election**" in the header (since the Constitutional Amendment is not on these ballots).
2. Leaving out the precinct number and/or name. Both must be listed in either the header or footer of the ballot.
 - a. **It is acceptable to add Full/Fed/Pres or some other designation to the precinct name and number.**
3. Leaving out the write-in instruction. Examples can be found in the [SBE Ballot Standards](#).
4. Putting parenthesis around the "Vote for..." sentence in the office header. Parenthesis should **not** be put around this language.
5. Incorrect candidate and/or office ballot order. Correct office ballot order can be found in the [SBE Ballot Standards](#). Correct party order and abbreviations can be found above.
6. Stating "no candidates" for an office. If an office does not have any qualified candidates then only the write-in line(s) should be there. You do not indicate that there are no candidates.
7. Missing middle name/initial in ballot name. If the candidate's voter record indicates they have a middle name, it must be represented in their ballot name. Guidelines for ballot names are located on the back of the Certificate of Candidate Qualification (501) and in the [SBE Ballot Standards](#). *If you are unsure if the ballot name requested by the candidate is acceptable, email ea@elections.virginia.gov.*
8. The middle name/initial must go before the nickname. Guidelines for ballot names are located on the back of the Certificate of Candidate Qualification (501) and in the [SBE Ballot Standards](#). *If you are unsure if the ballot name requested by the candidate is acceptable, email ea@elections.virginia.gov.*
9. Incomplete names. For ballot names that are longer than 25 characters (including spaces, periods, and commas), every time you open the candidate's record in VERIS using the edit (pencil) icon, VERIS will cut off everything after the 25th character in the Ballot Name box. Ensure all ballot

names are complete on the ballots and in VERIS. If VERIS has cut off some of the candidate's ballot name, you will need to go back into the record, complete the name in the Ballot Name box, and click save (every time the record is opened using the pencil icon). See correcting errors in VERIS note above.

10. Not putting an instruction at the bottom of the ballot pointing voters to the back of the ballot if it continues to the back for more offices/issues.
11. Spelling errors.
12. Ballot proofs sent by email will not be accepted; you must submit them through the [Formsite form](#) (Or through the PrintElect Workflow for PrintElect customers).
13. Submitting a vendor or VERIS report instead of the actual ballot proofs.
14. Submitting a mock-up from the vendor instead of the actual final ballot proof (generally, mock-ups will not have the full header or any instructions). If it doesn't look exactly like the final ballot, it's not what ELECT needs and will not be accepted.
15. Submitting proofs in a format that cannot be opened. Please only submit as a PDF or jpeg.
16. Only submitting the front page. We also need the back of the ballot to confirm that the seal or seal placeholder is present.
17. Not submitting Federal Only and Presidential Only styles.
18. Using multiple Formsite forms to submit or submitting a different Formsite form for each proof. All proofs should be submitted on the same Formsite form. *If you have multiple PDFs and cannot figure out how to upload them all to the same form, contact your Liaison for help.*

ACTION ITEMS:

- [To prepare ballot proofs:](#)
 1. Conduct a final review and comparison of filed paperwork, VERIS screens, and VERIS reports to ensure accuracy across the board.
 2. Run the **Ballot Styles Detail Report** in VERIS to provide to vendors and use during ballot proofing. **Ensure you review to confirm accuracy before sending to the vendor.**

- a. The Ballot Styles Detail Report will show the different styles needed and which precincts will use each style.
 - b. It also shows candidates in the correct ballot order.
 - c. **If you choose to run the Certification of Candidates report**, make sure you **also run** the 1) Certification of Statewide Candidates and 2) Certification of Referendums reports.
 - d. All four reports are found in VERIS > Reports > Reports Library > Category: Election.
3. Use the **SBE Ballot Standards** and Most Common Ballot Mistakes list above to **carefully proof your locality's ballot styles before approving in PrintElect's Workflow or submitting to ELECT**.
- a. If you submit a [Ballot Standards Waiver Request](#) , it must be approved before you can submit your ballots for approval through PrintElect's Workflow or ELECT's Formsite form.
- [To submit ballot proofs:](#)
 - **PrintElect customers:** Use PrintElect's Workflow process for ballot proofing. ELECT will pull proofs and approve them from there.
 - **All other localities:** Submit ballot proofs using the [Ballot Proof Submission Formsite form](#).
 - NOTE: GRs need only upload one (1) ballot per style (it is not required to upload every precinct's ballot(s) for proofing).
 - Fix all VERIS entry errors found during ballot proofing.
 - Unless you hear differently from ELECT, instruct your vendor to hold the printing of ballots as long as feasible.
 - Display the updated ELECT-613 - Explanation of Political Party Abbreviations Sign (rev. 9/2024) in all voting locations. The sign can be found in FormsWarehouse > [Posters and Publications](#).

CONTACT: **For technical matters:** Submit a JIRA ticket to the System Support team for all VERIS-related issues (**provide the ticket number to your liaison**)

For Election Admin: EA@elections.virginia.gov

For all other matters:

Region 1 (Tidewater) Viki Mainwaring 804-593-2274 victoria.mainwaring@elections.virginia.gov

Region 2 (South Central) Viki Mainwaring 804-593-2274 victoria.mainwaring@elections.virginia.gov

Region 3 (North Central) Monique Semple 804-774-4694 monique.semple@elections.virginia.gov


Region 4 (South Western) Tanya Pruett 804-864-8931 tanya.pruett@elections.virginia.gov

Region 5 (Northern) Matthew Norcutt 804-801-6435 matthew.norcutt@elections.virginia.gov

Region 6 (Western) Conrad Faett 804-774-4700 conrad.faett@elections.virginia.gov

Region 7 (Southern) Viki Mainwaring 804-593-2274 victoria.mainwaring@elections.virginia.gov

ADVISORY NUMBER:

 **COMM-734** - Ballot Proofing Timeline and Instructions for the 2024 November General and Special Elections **CLOSED**