

DATA BRIEF

VA Early Voting Shows Spikes in Rejected Mail-in Ballots

Analysis by Rick Naigle, Senior Process Engineer / Analyst

Receipt-date inconsistencies and unmarked-ballot concentration analysis

Source: VA Dept. of Elections, Statewide extract DAL Oct. 23, 2026

Graphics Assistance from Super Grok (xAI)

This analysis reviewed Virginia's Daily Absentee List (DAL) extract of early voting data for Oct. 23, 2026, which covers 261,310 ballot-status reports across 3,016 locality-date rows (about 30 days of early voting data from 133 localities). We observe fifteen locality-date rows that show "unmarked" mail-in ballots at 50% or higher on totals of 20 or more (statewide median unmarked share is 1.3%). Other localities show zero unmarked ballots on totals of 50 or more. Both patterns are statistically extreme relative to the statewide distribution and warrant further review of processes and targeted public-records requests under Virginia Code §§ 24.2-709 and 24.2-709.1.

The Data

Source file: BALLOT STATUS (DAL202610-23 05-00-02.csv). Grand totals: Not Issued 3 · Issued 25 · FWAB 2 · Marked 134,970 · Pre-Processed 115,738 · Unmarked 10,572 · Grand Total 261,310.

High Unmarked Share (≥50% unmarked, total ≥20)

Locality	Date	Unmarked	Total	% Unmarked	Companion Status
Newport News City	10/7/2026	142	155	91.6%	5 Marked, 8 Pre-Processed
Waynesboro City	9/14/2026	16	21	76.2%	5 Marked
Stafford County	9/23/2026	72	103	69.9%	31 Pre-Processed
Norfolk City	9/30/2026	98	147	66.7%	49 Marked
Charlottesville City	9/23/2026	35	54	64.8%	18 Marked, 1 Issued
Prince William County	9/23/2026	355	555	64.0%	200 Marked
Halifax County	9/22/2026	13	21	61.9%	8 Marked
Fredericksburg City	9/23/2026	25	41	61.0%	16 Pre-Processed
Bedford County	9/23/2026	30	50	60.0%	20 Marked
Winchester City	9/23/2026	17	31	54.8%	14 Marked
Henrico County	9/22/2026	264	490	53.9%	226 Pre-Processed
Danville City	9/21/2026	22	41	53.7%	19 Pre-Processed
Portsmouth City	10/6/2026	65	124	52.4%	59 Marked
Campbell County	10/12/2026	11	21	52.4%	5 Marked, 5 Pre-Processed
Newport News City	9/30/2026	21	41	51.2%	6 Marked, 14 Pre-Processed

Note: Nearly every high-side row has zero Not Issued and zero Issued. Six of the fifteen rows fall on 23 September 2026.

Receipt-Date Inconsistencies

A ballot receipt date indicates the ballot has been returned to the locality. Under Virginia Code § 24.2-709.1, the general registrar marks the date of receipt upon actual receipt of a returned ballot and examines the envelope. Recording a receipt date on a Not Issued or Issued status is internally inconsistent with that sequence.

Not Issued with receipt date (3 total)

Fauquier County — 1 on 30 September 2026

Manassas Park City — 1 on 21 September 2026; 1 on 21 October 2026

Issued with receipt date (25 total across 17 localities)

Albemarle (2), Arlington (1), Charlottesville (1), Culpeper (1), Essex (1), Fairfax (2), Fluvanna (1), Frederick (2), Galax (1), Hanover (2), Henry (2), Hopewell (1), James City (1 on 7 August 2026), Lee (1), Lynchburg (4, including dates in 2025 and early 2026), Manassas City (1 on 30 October 2025), Page (1).

Low Unmarked Share (zero unmarked, total ≥ 50)

153 rows show zero unmarked ballots on totals of 50 or more. Twenty-one localities have three or more such rows. Volume in every case is in Marked or Pre-Processed columns; none is confined to Not Issued, Issued, or FWAB.

Leading localities by row count: Chesterfield County (8 rows, largest 211 total), James City County (7 rows, largest 773 total on 21 September), Fluvanna County (6), Arlington County (6), Gloucester County (6), Orange County (6), Alexandria City (5, including 540 all-Marked on 24 September), Roanoke County (5), Culpeper County (5), Virginia Beach City (4, including 629 all-Marked on 22 October), Spotsylvania (4), Albemarle (4), Fauquier (4), Stafford (3, including 588 on 24 September), and others.

This pattern is consistent with batches that entered the system already marked or pre-processed, skipping the unmarked stage. Virginia Code § 24.2-709 restricts return methods to mail (including commercial carrier), in-person by the voter, drop-off locations, or designated representatives under §§ 24.2-703.2 and 24.2-705. Personal courier delivery by other individuals is excluded.

Statistical Significance

Null hypothesis: unmarked share follows the statewide background distribution (mean 4.2%, median 1.3%) across 2,179 rows with totals of 10 or more.

High-side binomial tests

Each of the 15 high-side rows was tested as a binomial trial. P-values range from 1.88×10^{-10} (Campbell County, 12 October) to below 10^{-200} (Henrico County 22 September and Prince William County 23 September). Even the smallest entry (Halifax County, 13 of 21) yields $p = 2.1 \times 10^{-13}$ under the mean null. No high-side row is consistent with random variation from the statewide mean. Aggregate frequency (15 of 2,179 rows = 0.69% at $\geq 50\%$ unmarked) is orders of magnitude above chance.

Low-side tests

Probability of zero unmarked given each large total is vanishingly small under the mean null. Examples: Prince William County 30 September (2,264 total) $p = 2.65 \times 10^{-43}$; James City County 21 September (773) $p = 2.9 \times 10^{-15}$; Virginia Beach City 22 October (629) $p = 1.48 \times 10^{-12}$; Stafford County 24 September (588) $p = 8.75 \times 10^{-12}$. Aggregate: 153 observed rows versus approximately 22 expected. Observed is roughly 7 times expectation. Composition is 69 all-Marked, 24 all-Pre-Processed, 60 mixed; zero confined to Not Issued / Issued / FWAB.

September 23 cluster

Six high-side localities spike on a single date (Stafford 69.9%, Charlottesville 64.8%, Prince William 64.0%, Fredericksburg 61.0%, Bedford 60.0%, Winchester 54.8%). The 15 high-side rows occupy only 8 distinct dates. The concentration is itself a deviation.

Caveat: Binomial tests assume independent trials, which real intake processes violate through batching. P-values indicate displacement from the statewide norm, not proof of any specific mechanism. The low-side 7-fold enrichment is the more robust population-level finding.

Implications for Trust

Receipt-date anomalies on Not Issued and Issued statuses contradict the statutory sequence in § 24.2-709.1. High unmarked concentrations are consistent with bulk returned-envelope arrivals that have not yet been opened. Low unmarked concentrations at volume are consistent with intake that skips the unmarked stage entirely. Neither pattern alone proves misconduct. Both are data-quality signals that reduce the transparency of the chain of custody for mail ballots and justify targeted verification against locality records.

Recommendations

1. Submit Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests under Virginia Code § 2.2-3700 et seq. to the high-side localities (Newport News, Stafford, Norfolk, Prince William, Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Bedford, Winchester, Halifax, Danville, Portsmouth, Campbell, Waynesboro, Henrico, Montgomery) for chain-of-custody logs, delivery-method records, Envelope B scans, and pre-processing notes for the specific dates identified.
2. Submit FOIA requests to the low-side localities (Chesterfield, James City, Fluvanna, Arlington, Gloucester, Orange, Alexandria, Roanoke County, Culpeper, Virginia Beach, Spotsylvania, Albemarle, Fauquier, Stafford, Chesapeake, Hampton, Campbell, Rockingham, Louisa, Franklin, Danville, Botetourt) for delivery-method records (postal versus hand delivery), Envelope B examination logs, and records of ballots delivered by persons other than the voter or designated representatives.
3. Cross-reference the 23 September high-side cluster against any Virginia Department of Elections advisories or processing events for that date.
4. Compare these locality-date anomalies against prior DAL extracts to determine whether the patterns are recurrent.

About EPEC

Electoral Process Education Corporation is a Virginia 501(c)(3) nonprofit of volunteer technologists promoting voter participation and transparency in election technology through public voter-data analysis, publications, and a free research library. EPEC is non-partisan. Analysis of Virginia Department of Elections files is performed from purchased and public data; conclusions are those of the authors.

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Acronym List

CSV — Comma-Separated Values

DAL — Daily Absentee List

EPEC — Electoral Process Education Corporation

FOIA — Freedom of Information Act

FWAB — Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

UOCAVA — Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act