

# INTERNAL ELECTION PROCEDURES JEFFERSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

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Written procedures last updated August 2014 to include Legislative changes

## Introduction

Beginning in 2006, a number of changes in Illinois law will allow for a number of different types of voting prior to Election Day and a number of new procedures in the processing and tabulation of ballots. Some of these changes include the following:

1. The addition of Early Voting and Grace Period Registration/Voting.
2. Two separate voting devices will be in use. These include M100 Optical Scan Ballot Readers, and handicap accessible AutoMarks. (AutoMarks only mark the ballot, then it is fed thru the same M100 Optical Scan Ballot Reader as hand marked ballots.)
3. "Early Voting" ballots will be cast and tabulated centrally in the County Clerk & Recorder/Election Authority's Election Office (herein referred to as County Clerk). "In-Person Absentee", Grace Period, Provisional and all mail returned ballots will be processed by Counting Center Election Judges.
4. More ballots may be tabulated in the County Clerk's office after Election Day than ever before. These include late-arriving Mailed-In Absentee, Grace Period, and Military ballots (return postmark by midnight the day before each Election), plus valid Provisional ballots.

It is necessary to explain these changes to the voting public, political parties, candidates, interested civic organizations and the media prior to the beginning of the voting period and Election Day. It is also necessary to adopt standard operating procedures to implement these changes. These procedures are aimed at assuring ballot security, transparency in the election process, and ultimately maintaining integrity and public confidence in the electoral process. A copy of these procedures will be distributed to affected parties and/or be made available for public display at the outset of the election cycle. The attached procedures will also be used internally as a reference for the County Clerk's office, employees and Election Judges working in the office during the election process and will be available upon request by any interested party.

## 1. VOTING BEFORE ELECTION DAY

### **Regular Absentee Voting Generally**

Absentee voting will be conducted beginning 40 days prior to each Election. In-Person Absentee Voting wherein a registered voter personally appears, and casts a ballot in the County Clerk's Election Office; Mail-Out Absentee Voting wherein a registered voter applies for a ballot to be mailed to their home address or some other location and returns ballot via mail or hand delivery; and Nursing Home & Hospital Absentee Voting. Also, the new Early Vote and Grace Registration and Voting. Different procedures will govern these types of Absentee Voting. No absentee ballots are *counted* prior to the close of the polls on Election Day.

### **In-Person Absentee Voting**

Those voters applying for a ballot in-person in the County Clerk's Election Office between 40 days prior to and until the day before each Election will process their ballot (the same optical scan paper ballot used on Election Day) into a M100 Optical Scan Ballot Reader (the same used Election Day) to allow for "second chance" technology that prevents over-voting, if memory cards for readers have been received and pretesting is completed. In the event our election pretesting is not complete, the ballot will be inserted into the locked auxiliary bin of the ballot box, removed in the presence of representatives from both major political parties, then inserted into the M100s after testing is completed. An **Absentee Application A-7** must be signed. Signature verification will be conducted at the time of application by County Clerk personnel. Failed signature verification will lead to a request for identification. A tally of ballots deposited will be kept and initialed each day. *In-person absentee voters may not withdraw their ballot and vote in their precinct polling place on Election Day.*

### **Mail-Out Absentee Voting**

Those applying for an Absentee ballot by mail shall complete an **Absentee Ballot Application A-7** (available on our web site or by calling the office to have one mailed to you) or **Military Voter's Application (FPCA, A-1 or A-2)**. Each application will be processed and verified as a registered voter comparing signature and current physical address. (*If a voter registered to vote by mail, they must vote in person their first time unless they enclosed a copy of their Government-issued identification at the time of registration.*) Optical scan paper ballots will be mailed, via United States Postal Service, on the same or next business day the application is received. If a mailed

out ballot is returned by the post office as undeliverable, the County Clerk's office will try to contact the voter for a better address, and make note in the computer of ballots return. If time permits, the ballot will be re-mailed to the corrected address. By State law, no mailed Absentee ballots can be mailed less than five days prior to the Election. Absentee voters may not withdraw a *returned* Absentee ballot and vote in their precinct polling place on Election Day. However, the voter may surrender the mailed-out ballot to Election Judges and vote on Election Day. A voter may also sign an affidavit stating they did not receive the mailed-out ballot, and vote a Provisional Ballot, or if Election Judges verify with the County Clerk's office that the mailed-out ballot has not been returned, the voter may vote a regular ballot. (The County Clerk's office will log such verification in case mailed-out ballot is received at a later date.) Mailed-in ballots returned on or prior to Election Day will be processed on Election Day by Counting Center Election Judges, from both major political parties. Mailed-in ballots returned after Election Day, but postmarked by midnight the day before election, will be processed with any valid Provisional Ballots, by Counting Center Election Judges, from both major political parties, 14 days or after each Election. (See procedures for tabulation of votes and Canvass of Votes.)

### **Nursing Home & Hospital Absentee Voting**

Nursing home residents who are registered Jefferson County voters may vote by Absentee ballot. Nursing home ballots will be personally delivered to voters by two Election Judges, one from each major political party, on the Friday morning preceding each Election for residents whom have returned a completed **Absentee Application A-6**. These voters must be registered to vote at the nursing home's address. Nursing home residents may choose to vote **by mail** by completing **Absentee Application A-7**(available on our web site, by calling our office, or contacting Social Service Director at the Nursing Home). Hospitalized voters (**Absentee Application A-12**) who qualify under State law and request personal delivery of a ballot will be accommodated on an as-needed basis by the voter's family, County Clerk or staff. To request this service the voter must be hospitalized within 14 days prior to Election, and their application must be signed off by their physician. All nursing home and hospitalized voters will vote on Optical Scan paper ballots, the same as used on Election Day. Sealed ballots will be returned to the County Clerk by the Election Judges or family member who delivered to the hospitalized voter. Nursing home ballots will be processed with mailed-in ballots, by Counting Center Election Judges, from both major political parties. Hospital Absentee ballots will be processed either Election Day or with late returning mailed-in ballots and Provisional ballots depending on when ballot was returned.

### **Early Voting**

Starting in 2006, Illinois voters may Early Vote prior to Election Day. Jefferson County's temporary Early Voting Site is the County Clerk's Election Office, 100 South 10<sup>th</sup> St., Room 105A, Mt. Vernon, Illinois. Those applying for a ballot in the County Clerk's office between 15 days to 3 days prior to each Election will be treated as Early Voters. An **Early/Grace Voting Application A-14** must be signed. Signature verification will be conducted by County Clerk staff. Failed signature verification will lead to a request for identification. All Early Voters will cast their ballot on optical scan paper ballots the same used on Election Day, and will deposit same ballot into a M100 Optical Scan Reader to allow for "second chance" technology that prevents over-voting, if memory cards for readers have been received and tested. In the event our M100 memory cards programmed for the Election have not been received and tested by the start of Early Voting, the ballot will be inserted into the locked auxiliary bin of the ballot box, removed in the presence of representatives from both major political parties, then inserted into the M100 Optical Scan Readers. A tally of deposited ballots will be kept and initialed each day. *Early Voters may not withdraw their Early Voting ballot and vote in their precinct polling place on Election Day.* All Early Voting ballots will be tabulated in the County Clerk's Election Office on Election Day after the polls close..

### **Grace Period Registration & Voting**

Grace Period registration and voting allows residents who have never registered to vote or failed to change their address or voting information to make these changes after the normal deadline. This window takes place only between the 27<sup>th</sup> day prior to the Election through Election Day. Grace Period voters must register or update their information by signing a new registration form in the County Clerk's office only, providing valid Government-issued identification containing current name and date of birth, and produce something mailed to them recently at their current physical address. Upon verifying an applicant's identity and updating their voter registration information, the County Clerk's office will enter the new or updated voter information into the voter registration computer which determines jurisdictions entitled to vote upon. Registrants will also need to sign the **Early/Grace Absentee Application A-14**. All Grace Period registrants will vote the same day in the County Clerk's Election Annex Office on the same optical scan ballots used Election Day, and process in the same M100s used Election Day to allow for second chance technology that prevents over-voting. Exception: Grace Registrants on the day before and Election Day will have their ballots sealed and processed with late arriving ballots per State Law. *Grace Period Voters may not withdraw their ballot and vote in their precinct polling place on Election Day.*

### **Listings of Those Voting Before Election Day**

A list of all voters requesting ballots prior to Election Day will be updated continually at the County Clerk's Election Office. Lists of voters will indicate the name and either resident address or mailed-out address of each applicant (unless "secure" registrants - victim of domestic violence, etc.), the date application was received, and the disposition of ballot. In the case of mailed Absentee ballots, lists will indicate ballot mail date and whether ballot has been returned and received by the County Clerk's staff. Lists of such voters will be available daily for inspection after 8:00 a.m. each business day, and may also be purchased for \$.25 per page. We also email lists to candidates, etc. whom request ahead of each election with our office (just call and give us email to send to). This information can only be used for bonafide political purposes and shall not be used under any circumstances for commercial solicitation or other business purposes, and that to do so may result in substantial penalty (Chapter 10 ILCS 5/4-8, 5-7 and 6-35, Illinois Compiled Statutes). Lists of Absentee Voters will be updated daily with the Illinois State Board of Elections.

Lists of those who have voted prior to Election Day will be sent to all Precinct Polling Places to ensure no voter is allowed to cast more than one ballot. Precinct poll rosters will also be marked to prevent this practice. In the event a voter does not receive their mailed-out ballot, they can go to their polling place. The Election Judge must first verify with the County Clerk's office that their ballot was not returned before issuing the voter a full ballot, or allow voter to vote a Provisional ballot.

### **Poll Watchers Permitted Prior to Election Day**

During the Absentee, Grace Period, and Early Voting period, poll watchers possessing valid credentials shall be permitted to observe the Election process in the County Clerk's Election Office. All usual rights and restrictions will apply to poll watchers as in the precinct polling place on Election Day. The County Clerk may, at her discretion, limit the number of poll watchers present if needed to maintain order and the conduct of the Election process. If poll watchers are limited by number, the County Clerk shall permit at least one poll watcher of each of the major political parties to remain at all times, but reserves the authority to dismiss any poll watcher that interrupts or is disruptive.

### **Security & Accounting Procedures for In-Person Voting**

All votes cast in the County Clerk's Election Office prior to Election Day shall be kept secure and private. Each will be accounted for on a daily basis. No vote totals will be released for any type of ballot prior to the closing of the polls at 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. Daily logs will be kept of number of ballots issued. Lists will also be kept of all voters requesting ballots. Only authorized personnel will handle any paper ballots.

Each M100 and AutoMark utilized for in-person voting will be tested prior to the casting of any ballot. A daily log will be kept of the number of ballots cast on each M100 Optical Scan Reader prior to Election Day. An employee of the County Clerk's office and/or Election Judge will read and verify the total number of votes cast on each M100 at the open and close of each business day and initial daily log. A separate daily log will be kept for each M100. This daily log will insure ballot box integrity as the Election Judge and/or staff member at the opening of the polls each day will attest that the number of votes on that machine is identical to the number of votes on that machine at the close of polls the previous voting day. All forms signed upon the open and close of the polls will be kept and made available to poll watchers upon request. During the time the polls are closed, no ballots shall be cast and the M100 Optical Scan Readers, ballot boxes, and memory cards will be locked in a secure place.

When the absentee voting period ends, memory cards for all votes cast on each M100 machine will be kept locked and in a secure room until the polling places close on Election Day. Memory cards will be tabulated after 7:00 p.m. on Election Day and results uploaded by County Clerk staff in the presence of Election Judges and/or poll watchers, if available. The Absentee summary totals report will be released before the first precinct is uploaded, if possible. No individual absentee precinct totals will be released.

Mailed-in Absentee ballots will be dated upon return and logged into the computer system to indicate their return. Mailed-in Absentee ballots will remain sealed in their certification envelopes and sorted by precinct. Mailed-in Absentee ballots will remain securely locked in the County Clerk's Election Office until processing.

## **2. ELECTION DAY TABULATION OF VOTES**

All votes not cast in precinct polling places will be tabulated in the Election Office of the County Clerk on Election Day.

Election Judges, from the two major political parties, will serve as Counting Center Judges. These Counting Center

Judges will be assisted by County Clerk staff as they request. Chairmen of the two major political parties or their designees may be present to observe these procedures. A reasonable number of poll watchers possessing valid credentials may be permitted to observe this process. All usual rights and restrictions will apply to poll watchers as in the precinct polling place on Election Day. The County Clerk, may, at her discretion, limit the number of poll watchers present if needed to maintain order and the conduct of the Election process. If poll watchers are limited by number, the County Clerk shall permit at least one poll watcher of each major political party to remain at all times.

Counting Center Judges will process all Nursing Home, Hospital, Mailed-In, Grace Voters from the day before and Election Day, and Provisional Absentee ballots cast for the Election which have been received by the County Clerk. Counting Center Judges will work as a team to examine each application, certification envelope and verify signatures on each just as they would have at a polling place. Judges will then process, initial and cast absentee ballots on M100 Optical Scan Readers.

In the event an Absentee ballot is challenged, Counting Center Judges shall make the determination as to whether the ballot should be counted. If an absentee is rejected for any reason, the Counting Center Judges must, within two days and before the end of the Provisional counting period, notify the voter in writing of the rejection, along with the reasons for such rejection, and stating that the voter may appear before or send notarized statement to the County Clerk and Counting Center Judges to state the reasons and provide evidence why the ballot should not be rejected.

Election Judges, poll watchers, and/or party chairmen or their designees can also observe tabulation of all Early Votes cast in-person at the County Clerk's Election Office. All votes will have been done on a paper ballot the same as used Election Day, and inserted into M100 Optical Scan Readers.

Once all absentee ballots are cast and the results uploaded, vote totals for centrally counted ballots will be tabulated, accumulated and totaled. Under no circumstances will tabulations be made or vote totals released prior to the closing hour of polling places, 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. No precinct totals for absentee Voting will be released separately to the public or media to insure the secrecy of the voters. An accumulated Absentee total sheet can be released at the County Clerk's discretion. As each precinct returns their supplies and memory cards, the Absentee totals will be added with the precinct totals and released. These totals will still be UNOFFICIAL due to late-arriving mailed absentee and Provisional ballots.

A county-wide accumulated report of results may be produced reflecting the results of all Absentee ballots, Early ballots and Grace Period ballots at the discretion of the County Clerk. This report will be posted in the County Clerk's Election Office and lobby. Only county-wide results will be posted and no results from individual precincts will be made available at this point.

In-precinct results will be tabulated by Election Judges in the individual precinct polling places. These results will be posted at the polling place after the close of the polls. In-precinct results will be uploaded to the central count computer as the various precincts report to the County Clerk's office on Election Night. Unofficial county-wide total reports will be updated periodically (usually after every five precincts) and released from the County Clerk's Office.

Once all precincts have reported their in-precinct results, an UNOFFICIAL county-wide totals report will be released. This report will not indicate final results since additional ballots may be tabulated after Election Day (late-arriving Absentee and Military ballots postmarked by midnight the day before each Election), and valid Provisional ballots.

### **3. CANVASS OF VOTES**

#### **Votes to be Cast After Election Day**

The final canvass of votes will be certified on or after 14 days after each Election. Before certifying the returns, the County Clerk will tabulate the following:

1. Mailed-In Absentee ballots postmarked on or before midnight on Monday before each Election, and received in the County Clerk's office following Election Day and prior to the deadline (14 days after).
2. Mailed-In Military ballots postmarked by midnight on Monday before each Election, and received in the County Clerk's office following Election Day and prior to the deadline (14 days).
3. Provisional ballots cast in precinct polling places on Election Day which are determined to be valid voters upon review by the County Clerk. (See below.)

**Determining the Validity of Provisional Voters**

Provisional ballots cast in-precinct polling places will be checked in accordance with State Statute by County Clerk staff. Voters casting Provisional ballots may provide additional evidence to the County Clerk within 5 days of Election Day to support a belief that he/she is properly registered and entitled to vote. The County Clerk staff will also check the County Clerk's Office Voter Registration files, canceled or inactive Voter Registration files, the Illinois Secretary of State's Office and the State Board of Elections statewide voter registration database to obtain evidence of a voter's validity or invalidity. The County Clerk staff will decide upon the status of each ballot and provide the proper means for each voter to determine whether or not their ballot has been counted. Ballots determined to be valid will be removed from their security envelope, initialed, and cast by Counting Center Judges 14 days after each Election. Ballots determined to be invalid will be marked as such on the face of the security envelope and left unopened.

**Final Results and Canvass of Votes**

All types of ballots to be counted after Election Day will be opened and tabulated 14 days after each Election, in the County Clerk's Election Office, by Counting Center Judges. No ballots will be opened, cast or tabulated after Election Day until the date of the final vote canvass. Counting Center Judges shall be sworn in to process and initial each valid Provisional ballot and Mailed-In ballot. A reasonable number of poll watchers possessing valid credentials may be permitted to observe this process. Once all valid ballots have been cast, results will be tabulated, uploaded to the main vote tabulation computer, and FINAL accumulated report and canvass report of votes produced. The final reports will be certified as the OFFICIAL Election Results by the County Clerk.

## JEFFERSON COUNTY ELECTION DAY EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

This emergency plan is designed to provide guidance in the event of an emergency so that the Election process may continue.

In the event of a **world wide terrorism attack** guidance from the Federal Government may be provided. If no guidance is provided, the Jefferson County Clerk/Election Authority and/or Sheriff will act accordingly and implement appropriate procedures and unless ordered otherwise Election operations shall continue.

**Fire or Fire Alarm:** If there is a fire or fire alarm that requires evacuation:

1. Blank ballots, applications to vote and signature book shall be secured by at least two Election Judges one from each major political party, removed from the building, and shall never be out of the Judges' sight.
2. Counting machines and ballot boxes should remain locked and be removed from the building by at least two Judges one from each major political party and await instruction from the Election Authority or Sheriff.
3. Upon the Fire Official's authorization to re-enter the building, Election Day procedure should resume.
4. If re-entry is not authorized, the Election Authority or Sheriff will issue instructions on a change of venue.\*
5. Election Judges shall note the time of departure and length of any interruption during the normal Election procedure.

**Electrical Outage:** If there is an electrical outage:

1. Counting machines have battery backup that should last up to 4 hours.
2. Assistance with emergency lighting will differ with each polling place and may include auxiliary emergency lighting, battery powered lanterns, flashlights, etc.
3. For short term outages, continue with normal voting and contact the **Election Authority (244-8020 ext 3)**.
4. For long term outages, the Election Authority or Sheriff shall arrange a change of venue.\*
5. Election Judges shall note the time of departure and length of any interruption during the normal Election Day procedure.

**Natural Disaster or Inclement Weather:** If there is a severe weather warning that required Election Judges and voters to seek shelter:

1. Blank ballots, signature book and applications to vote should be secured by two Election Judges one from each major political party and never be out of their sight.
2. Counting machines and ballot boxes should remain locked and be removed by two Election Judges one from each major political party and never be out of their sight.
3. A procedure should be discussed with each Election Judge located in the polling place as to the safest area (bathrooms, inner rooms, basements, etc.) to seek shelter within the building should need arise.
4. After an all clear is given, Election Day procedure should resume.
5. Election Judges shall note the time of departure and length of any interruption during the normal Election Day procedure.

### Change of Venue\*

In the event that any polling place is relocated by order of the Election Authority or Sheriff:

1. All Election Day materials shall be secured by the Election Judges and transported by at least two Election Judges, one of each major political party, to the auxiliary polling location as directed.
2. All ballot boxes shall remain locked and be transported unopened to the auxiliary polling location by at least two Election Judges, one of each major political party.
3. Notice shall be posted at the vacated polling location giving the location of the auxiliary polling location.

### Effect on Poll Watchers

All poll watchers **may observe** any emergency procedure listed above, but may not assist or interfere in any way.

**Based on availability, the change of venue polling sites shall be:**

1. Jefferson County Courthouse, 100 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Mt. Vernon, Illinois.
2. Jefferson County Justice Center, 911 Casey Avenue, Mt. Vernon, Illinois.
3. As directed by **Election Authority (244-8020 ext. 3)** or **Sheriff (244-8004)**.