

# **ELECTION BULLETIN**

## **FOR the MARCH 2<sup>nd</sup> PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION**

To: All Town Clerks

From: Melanie L. Jacobs, Elections Administrator

Re: **Tally and Summary Sheets and the Official Return of Votes**

Date: February 20, 2004

This package contains the Tally Sheets, Summary Sheets, and the Official Return of Votes forms for the Presidential Primary election. **If you are missing anything in the packet, or if you received a form that does not have the correct town name at the top, please call us immediately.**

The tally and summary sheets have been customized. The names of all candidates on the ballot will be printed on your sheets. The codes at the top left indicate the county, town and polling place.

We are required to provide Tally and Summary Sheets. If you have another system that you prefer to use instead of our tally and summary sheets, you may use your own system for tally and summary functions.

**In all towns or cities, you must complete the Official Return of Votes (ORV) forms on our forms or on photocopies of our forms.** This is required by statute. These ORV forms are a single sheet so you will need to make a copy for yourself. As soon as possible send the original copy to the Elections Division at the Office of the Secretary of State. We have enclosed a U.S. Postal Service "Express Mail" (postage-paid) envelope for you to send your ORV to our office.

**THE ELECTIONS DIVISION MUST RECEIVE YOUR OFFICIAL RETURN OF VOTES FORM BY THURSDAY, MARCH 4<sup>th</sup>. WE MUST COMPLETE DATA ENTRY OVER THE WEEKEND, SO WE MUST HAVE YOUR FORMS BY THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2004. (PLEASE USE THE ENVELOPE WE HAVE PROVIDED TO RETURN YOUR ORV IF YOU ARE NOT DELIVERING IT IN PERSON.)**

For each polling place in your town, you should receive:

- One TALLY SHEET FOR EVERY FIFTY VOTERS
- One set of SUMMARY SHEETS for each office
- One OFFICIAL RETURN OF VOTES FORM

Procedures for counting and recommendations on how to use tally sheets, summary sheets and official returns are listed on the following pages, so that you can copy them for any additional presiding officers in your town.

If we can help, please call us at 1-800-439-8683, 828-2363, 828-2304, 828-0175, or 828-0771. **On Election Day Kathy DeWolfe, Melanie Jacobs and David Crossman will be available at these numbers from 7:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. to assist you with any questions.**

Instructions for ballot counting and use of Tally and Summary sheets  
FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION on MARCH 2, 2004

Here are steps we recommend, once the polls close at 7:00 p.m. on election day:

1. The Presiding Officer makes sure that only election officials are within the guardrail before any counting or other post-election process begins. However, the public has a right to view all parts of the process, including counting. If this is done in another room, there must be space for interested citizens to view the entire process.
2. The Presiding Officer then sees that the entrance and exit checklists, properly labeled, are tallied. If the numbers do not balance, find the discrepancies, make a list of them, for example, name on entrance not on exit, or vice-versa, and put it in the ballot bag. Place the exit checklist in the ballot bag, **keeping the entrance checklist in the vault**, so that no person has access to it without the Town Clerk's permission. If the board of civil authority has voted not to use an exit checklist, then alternative material must be stored in the ballot bag. The alternative material must provide at least the following: number of registered voters, the total number of persons marked on the entrance checklist as having voted, and any discrepancies between that number and the number of voters. **Do not put your entrance checklist in the ballot bag—this must be available as a public record.**
3. The entrance checklist is a public record, kept within the control of the Clerk but copies must be made available at cost beginning on the day following the election. If there's a recount, a copy should be sent to the Superior Court.
4. The Presidential Primary Election includes federal offices so the BALLOT BAGS must be stored for 22 months.
5. A group of fifty ballots is a good size for counting, but some clerks prefer groups of 25 and others like groups of 100. (Remember as your election officials get tired, if they lose track, 25 or 50 may be easier to handle.) Give a group of ballots, along with a tally sheet, to each pair of election officials doing the counting. Each pair should represent a mixture of political interests, if possible. Also, try to balance personalities, so that you don't pair a very domineering official with a very timid official, if possible.
6. Before counting begins, all election officials should have some instruction on how to count ballots. (Some clerks review the rules while two officials are comparing the checklists.) The discussion in the Elections Perspectives 2002 book beginning on page 26 can be used as an outline. It includes samples of various ballot-marking errors. (See also 17 V.S.A. ' 2587) For each office counted on each tally sheet, the total number of all checkmarks (named candidates, write-ins, spoiled and blank ballots) must equal the number of ballots per packet that you have given to the officials.
7. The names of each write-in candidate must be added to the tally sheet. The law was changed so you do not need to record fictitious names such as "Mickey Mouse." If there are more write-in candidates than there is room on the tally sheet, attach additional sheets. Leave enough room after each write-in candidate so that checkmarks can be added for each vote.
8. Insist that each member of each pair sign the tally before turning it in to the person in charge of the summary sheets. The summary sheet official checks that all offices add up to the total number of ballots in the packet and that all write-ins are listed. Then copy the information from the tally sheets onto the appropriate page of the summary sheet.
9. Have each pair bind the ballots they have counted, wrapping the tally sheet with the ballot, and place the whole package in the ballot bag before beginning another set of ballots. Remember to give them a new copy of a tally sheet for each new bundle they receive.
10. In all cases, if you use your own tally sheets, you must include the lists of all write-ins, and account for all votes, including blanks, for each office to be filled by nomination in the ballot bag materials.

If you need assistance, please call us toll free at (800) 439-8683. Kathy DeWolfe (802-828-2304), Melanie Jacobs (802-828-0175) or David Crossman (802-828-0771) will be available from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

USING THE SUMMARY SHEETS AND OFFICIAL RETURNS PROVIDED FOR  
THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION on March 2, 2004

The summary sheets are 8 ½ by 11 paper, one page for each race. Each page includes places for listing the results gathered from each tally sheet on the front, including write-ins. Take the information off each party tally sheet and add it to the appropriate place on the summary sheet.

You would begin by finding the total votes for the first candidate listed on the tally sheet and putting that number next to his or her name under the number "1" on the summary sheet. Complete entries for all of the candidates and all of the offices in this manner on the summary sheet.

List the names and votes for write-in candidates in their places on the summary sheet. If the counters have done their job correctly, the votes for each write-in candidate will appear together on the tally sheet. In any case, make sure you carefully transfer the information on write-ins from the tally sheet to the summary sheet, name by name.

Transfer the number of spoiled and blank votes from the boxes on the tally sheet. Total the number on the summary sheet in the space under "Total," as another check on the tally counters' total.

Repeat this process for the different candidates on the tally sheet, until each office is completed. Then repeat the entire process for each tally sheet, using the column marked "2" under the words "Tally Sheet" for the second tally sheet you receive, and so forth. When the time comes to transfer write-ins from tally sheet #2 to the appropriate line on the summary sheet, simply put the numbers each has received under the column marked "2" on the summary sheet next to the appropriate candidate's name. If the name does not appear on the summary sheet, write his name in a blank space provided for write-ins and the number of votes in the blank space to the right of the name.

When you have completed all of the tally sheets, you will then have the total votes cast for each candidate in each party at your polling place in the space at the right hand side of the summary sheet.

When all tally sheets have been reviewed and the information on them transferred to the summary sheets, the Presiding Officer totals each of the columns on the summary sheet. The Presiding Officer and one other election officer chosen by the presiding officer should sign each page. At this point, all tally sheets, counted ballots, unvoted and unused ballots (except those still in unopened cartons), the exit checklist (or alternate materials) and the statement of discrepancies are bagged in ballot bags, tagged and sealed. Fill out the tag by listing: contents of the bag, date, name of election, town or city and sign it. Then deliver the bags to the vault or other secure storage.

## The Official Return of Votes

The Official Return of Votes does not need to be completed by the Presiding Officer on the night of the election. It may be done the next morning, but you must have another election official present when you complete the forms. Do not allow the summary sheet(s) to leave your control during the intervening period. **Please either hand deliver or send your ORV's to us in the enclosed U.S. Postal Service "Express Mail" (postage-paid) envelope.**

The Official Returns are used to complete the Official Report of the Canvassing Committees and Certificates of Election. You must complete this sheet by transferring information from the summary sheet. **YOU MUST USE THE OFFICIAL RETURN OF VOTES FORMS SENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE OR PHOTOCOPIES OF OUR FORM.**

Transfer totals from summaries to the Official Returns by taking the total from each column on the front of the summary sheet, to the line for each candidate to the appropriate box on the Official Return of Votes for that race and party. Do the same for Total Write-in votes, Spoiled and Blank votes. Write-ins should be taken from the summary sheet, if possible in the order of the number of votes received, beginning with the highest. Make an independent total under "Total Votes Counted" on the Official Return to check your own work.

**The total number of votes counted (including spoiled, blank and write-ins) should match the "number of voters checked off entrance checklist" as reported in the "Ballot Accountability" section at the top of the form.**

If you have a discrepancy between the number of ballots in the box and the number of voters checked off the checklist, don't panic. These things happen. Simply report what you find and add a short explanation if you know why there is a discrepancy. If you don't know why, just note "We know about the discrepancy between ballots and voters."

**Once the Official Return of Votes is complete, the Presiding Officer, along with another election official, should sign the Return and deliver it to the Town Clerk. The Clerk will send it immediately to the Elections Division at the Office of the Secretary of State, using the pre-addressed envelope provided. Remember that speed is of the essence.**

1. Make a photocopy of the original to keep for your records.
2. Please send the **original** copy to the Secretary of State. This is a permanent record in the Secretary of State's Office.

Thank you for your assistance.