



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA ITEM REPORT

Requested Board Meeting Date: 1/21/2025

**= Mandatory, information must be provided*

Click or tap the boxes to enter text. If not applicable, indicate "N/A".

***Title:**

2024 General Election After Action Report.

***Introduction/Background:**

Early Voting for the November 5, 2024, General Election was conducted by the Pima County Recorder's Office. The election consisted of federal, state and local contests.

***Discussion:**

The Recorder's Office has compiled an after action report detailing department activities and an analysis of staffing, training, equipment and election costs.

***Conclusion:**

Information provided in the report will provide transparency to the Board and help the Recorder's Office evaluate and improve upon processes and procedures for future elections.

***Recommendation:**

The Recorder's Office recommends the Board of Supervisors accept the 2024 General Election After Action Report.

***Fiscal Impact:**

None

***Board of Supervisor District:**

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☒ All

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EARLY VOTING OPERATIONS

After-Action Report

November 5, 2024, General Election

Submitted – January 21, 2025

This narrative is provided to the Election Integrity Commission and Board of Supervisors to review the Pima County Recorder's Office administration of Early Voting operations for the 2024 General Election.

EARLY VOTING OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

Important Dates

Event	Date	E-minus (days before the election)
Training Began	September 16, 2024	50
Ballots mailed to Uniformed and Overseas Voters	September 21, 2024	45
Registration deadline for new voters	October 7, 2024	29
Early ballots mailed/beginning of early voting period	October 9, 2024	27
Last day to request a ballot by mail	October 25, 2024	11
Recommended deadline to mail back ballot	October 29, 2024	7
Last day to vote in person at early voting sites	November 1, 2024	4
Emergency voting	November 2 & 4, 2024	3 & 1
Election Day	November 5, 2024	0

For the 2024 General Election, there were 661,054 active voters in Pima County. Of those active voters, 489,432 were on the Active Early Voters List (AEVL) and were automatically sent an Early Ballot by mail.

Additionally, 78,838 inactive voters were eligible to participate in the election. Inactive voters must update or confirm their address with the Recorder's Office before reactivation. By October 7, the cut-off date for voter registration, 739,892 voters were eligible to vote in the General Election.

Number of Eligible Voters for 2024 General Election

Total Active Voters	661,054
Total Active Voters on AEVL	489,432
Total Inactive Voters	78,838
Total Registered Voters (Active & Inactive) Eligible to Vote	739,892

The Recorder's Office entered an active election period on September 21, when we mailed 2,741 **Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) ballots** to Military or Overseas Voters.

The Early Voting period started on October 9 and ended on November 1. Emergency Voting was available to any Pima County voter on November 2 and November 4.

During the Early Voting Period, the Pima County Recorder's Office mailed 542,170 early ballots to voters. 489,432 AEVL voters automatically received a mail ballot. 16,377 voters who were not on AEVL requested an early ballot by mail.

Between October 9 and November 5, voters returned 284,801 early ballot packets by mail. During the Early Voting Period, 107,542 Early Ballots were dropped off in-person at early voting locations.

Breakdown of Ballots Received

- UOCAVA: 4,682
- Team Voting: 41
- Early Ballot Drop Off: 107,542
- Received by Mail: 284,801
- Site Issued: 45,232

TERMS:

UOCAVA – Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act voters, also referred to as Military and Overseas Voters are members of the military and their family members who are actively stationed outside of Pima County in other states or outside the country during the election period. Overseas voters are Pima County voters who are not in the United States during the election period. Voters must submit additional documentation to qualify for these designations and are eligible to vote and request a ballot up until 7pm on Election Day. This is a federally protected option.

Team Voting – Partisan teams assist voters who are physically unable to visit a voting location and who cannot otherwise receive a mail ballot in time to vote by mail. Staff makes an appointment with voter to visit their home, hospital, jail or other location where they are physically unable to leave to conduct voting at that location.

Early Ballot Drop-Offs- Voter receives a ballot by mail and returns it physically, in-person. Household members are legally allowed to drop off ballots for one another.

Received by Mail: Voters return their ballots by mail to the Recorder's Office. The Recorder's bi-partisan courier teams pick up directly from the Post Office and securely deliver to the Recorder's Ballot Processing Facility.

Site Issued – Ballots that were issued in-person, at an Early or Emergency voting site and voted on-site. Voters cannot remove the ballot from the voting location. Valid identification is required. Site-issued ballots are placed inside a ballot affidavit envelope and require the voter's signature.

Ballot Totals – General Election Comparison

	2020 General	2024 General
Mailed Early Ballots	525,425	542,092
Early Ballots Verified	459,777	442,409
Provisional & Conditional	18,696	6,849

Early Voting Site Issued Total – General Election Comparison

2018 General Election	2020 General Election	2022 General Election	2024 General Election
7,746	29,565	9,094	45,232

Information derived from early voting site-issued reports maintained by the Pima County Recorder's Office Voter Data application.

VOTER REGISTRATION

In the weeks leading up to the election a judicial ruling was made regarding a change to when Recorders must receive Documentary Proof of Citizenship (DPOC). The ruling states that a voter who submits an Arizona Voter Registration form must also submit Documentary Proof of Citizenship and Documentary Proof of Residency at the time of registration, or their voter registration would be rejected. However, the timeframe for voters to submit their DPOC and DPOR was extended to Election Day. Voters that could not provide DPOC and/or DPOR at the time of registration were recommended to register using a federal voter registration form and would enable them to register as a "Federal Only Voter." Federal Only voters are only eligible to vote in the Presidential, Senatorial and Congressional races. This created a lot of confusion for voters and required staff to spend more time triaging voters before recommending which form to complete and discussing the various forms of identification they could submit. This created long lines for voter registration and additional communication in various formats that prolonged the voter registration process.

Voters were receptive and attentive, and we were surprised to see many young people, especially college students arriving at our office with the correct documents. Our partnership with the University of Arizona and Pima Community College were helpful in disseminating the appropriate information.

This caused long lines for voter registration at our Downtown Office and crowd control techniques were utilized prior to actual voting, which was unexpected. Our office was able to remain agile and quickly responded to the additional questions associated with this drastic change. We were able to receive DPOC electronically and were able to change many voters' status from "Fed Only" to a "Full Ballot" in time for them to receive a full ballot.

EARLY VOTING:

We successfully operated 18 Early Voting Locations and 1 Ballot Drop-Off location over the course of 4 weeks. Of the 18 Early Voting Locations used by our office for Early and Emergency Voting, 10 locations were Pima County Public Libraries! In 2020 we issued 29,565 Site-Issued Early Ballots and in 2024 we increased that number to a record breaking 45,232 Early, Site-issued ballots.

Successes: We operated 18 Early Voting Sites and despite small equipment issues that were quickly resolved, there were no major interruptions to service. The sites that had longer waits were patient and there were no major complaints.

Challenges: The volume at several locations was consistently high and did not allow for staff to take breaks or eat lunches and required them to work well beyond the expected end time in order to perform closing duties each night in preparation for the next day. The volume of supplies needed also required additional courier runs and mid-day pick-ups that were difficult because of the amount of voters waiting.

ADDITIONAL EARLY VOTING DATES ADDED:

At the request of the Board of Supervisors, the University of Arizona Student Government leadership and others, we were able to add an additional week of Early Voting at the University of Arizona Student Union. The space was offered to us at no additional charge and was extremely popular among students, faculty and staff. Due to the judicial changes for DPOC/DPOR, which university students without Arizona Driver's Licenses were more likely to encounter, it was extremely beneficial that our office was able to provide that additional time for this population to resolve their voter registration issues in order to vote full ballots.

STAFFING:

The Recorder's Office increased staffing for the General Election in all areas to alleviate any issues with party balance at Early Voting Sites. The Ballot Processing Center staff also increased during this election with more staff dedicated to ballot processing, courier teams, and team voting.

Early Voting Election Staffing Overview:

49 Permanent Recording & Voter Registration Staff assigned to various election operations.
186 Intermittent Employees assigned to various election operations including:

- Ballot Processing
- Signature Verification
- Problem Ballot Processing
- Team Voting
- Site Couriers
- Early Voting Sites
- Phone Coverage
- Daily Data Entry

Successes: Increase in staffing to allow for 4 locations to have drive-thru ballot drop off, and an additional week of Early Voting at the University of Arizona. We maintained party balance for all locations for all but one instance when a staff member had an emergency, but back up was deployed within 30 minutes. Staff was well trained and took pride in their work.

Challenges: Election Aide starting pay is \$15.75, which makes it difficult to retain staff, shifts are dependent on mail volume which varies throughout the week, causing some shifts to be unpredictable. The Downtown Location required intermittent staff to pay for parking, therefore reducing their take-home pay. Heavy volume of voters made for 12-hour days for Early Voting Site workers which was difficult to sustain. Retirees make up the majority of our workforce and prefer to work early mornings, rather than after dark, when nighttime driving is a challenge.

VOTER OUTREACH & ELECTION COMMUNICATION:

The Recorder's Office enhanced the "Track My Ballot" feature on the department's website, allowing voters to sign up for text message notifications reporting the status of their returned early ballot as it moved through every stage of processing.

Staff answered 47,168 phone calls between September 21 and November 5. We were limited on the number of dedicated phone operators due to space and time constraints for training. In the future, we plan to have more phone operator trainings and additional operators who operate at various tier levels to allow for more general questions to be answered by temporary staff, whereas more complex questions will be answered by seasoned staff.

BALLOT COURIER OPERATIONS:

From October 9 to November 5, the Ballot Courier teams picked up 236,616 mailed ballots from the Cherrybell Post Office. Additionally, courier teams picked up 107,542 returned early mail ballots from EVS locations countywide. On Election Day, November 5, 3,205 voters dropped off Late Early Ballots at our Downtown Office and Country Club Ballot Processing Center. In addition, 32,594 late early ballots were dropped off at the 130 Election Day Vote Centers throughout the county and delivered by the Elections Department directly to the Ballot Processing Facility.

"PROBLEM BALLOT" - EARLY BALLOT CURE PROCESSING:

During every election, some returned early ballots need additional follow-up by our Ballot Curing Team. During the General Election, they helped 5,424 voters cure their ballots. They contacted voters by mailing letters, calling and texting to notify them that they needed to resolve an issue with their early ballot before it was submitted for counting.

The Pima County Recorder's Office also participated in the AZ Secretary of State's "TEXT 2 CURE" program, which provided voters another avenue to contact our office to cure their ballot. 576 Pima County voters used this option to ensure their early ballot was counted.

Supervisors approved an additional 220 ballots. Five ballots were re-assigned due to household mix-ups.

Overall, the Ballot Curing Team resolved 6,220 early ballot issues before the November 10 cure deadline.

PROVISIONAL BALLOT PROCESSING:

The use of e-poll books continues to reduce the number of provisional ballots issued at vote centers. 18,631 voters were issued early mail ballots but instead voted in-person at a vote center. They were issued a regular ballot rather than a provisional ballot as would have been standard in prior elections.

Provisional ballots must be individually investigated, which can take anywhere from a couple of minutes to more than 20 minutes. Each provisional ballot is unique and requires careful attention to voter registration forms and dates.

Vote centers issued 6,619 provisional ballots and 230 conditional provisional ballots. Voter staff verified 3,519 provisional ballots and 36 conditional provisional ballots eligible for tabulation.

ELECTION OBSERVERS:

From October 17 through November 14, political observers from both major political parties sent observers to review the signature verification process at the Ballot Processing Center.

- The Pima County Republican Party sent 13 observers spending 46.5 hours watching the ballot processing center's operations. Republican observers averaged 2.5 hours per visit.
- The Pima County Democratic Party sent 14 observers who spent about 38 hours at the facility, averaging 2.75 hours per visit.

NON-POLITICAL PARTY OBSERVERS:

The Ballot Processing Center also hosted one Congressional observer during the ballot curing period. These observers were given the same information as the political party observers and allowed to watch the ballot processing staff's operation from early ballot receipt to final turnover to the Elections Department for tabulation.

BALLOT DROP BOXES:

Pima County does not currently use unstaffed Early Ballot Drop-Off Boxes.

DRIVE THRU BALLOT DROP OFF:

Four locations had drive-through ballot drop-off services which were very popular and reduced the physical volume entering each site.

Challenges: Ensuring rotation of workers to abide by heat safety standards, extreme changes in weather, construction near drive-thru areas.

Success: We received wonderful feedback directly from voters. Many voters praised the accessibility of the drive through service. It reduced the volume of voters entering the building while still providing them with a sense of security and confidence that their ballot was secure. This service is most effective during a Presidential Election only.

ELECTION WORKER PHYSICAL SAFETY:

Physical safety issues continued to concern staff at our Early Voting Sites and the Ballot Processing Center. The elevated concerns for safety ahead of a major presidential election pushed several new recruits to walk out after safety trainings.

Our office continued to use VetSec, the county's contracted security service, at locations where no other security is assigned or where a police substation isn't within the same shopping plaza. Administrative staff also worked closely with officials to report suspicious behavior and threatening or menacing email and phone messages. All negative and aggressive contact with our office was deescalated and very few situations required any interventions by VetSec or local law enforcement.

BOMB THREAT:

On Election Day our office received word that several counties in Arizona had received what turned out to be bogus bomb threats throughout the day. As we approached the final hours of Election Day, Pima County received an email threat specifically mentioning the 240 N Stone location. Admin Team followed protocol, alerting building security, local law enforcement, staff, the Secretary of State and the Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center (ACTIC). It was quickly determined that the threat was in line with other threats that were being reported around the state and country. Tucson Police Bomb Squad checked for devices with a K-9 unit and deemed the location safe. Staff were given the option to leave if concerned for their safety, but none chose to do so. Due to the multiple trainings and

discussions regarding Election Day threats, our office was prepared and adequately followed our training. An investigation is ongoing.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

The Recorder's Office received predominantly positive feedback from the voting public about our early voting operations. We saw many positive comments on social media about the professionalism of our staff, the ease of voting and the tracking feature on our website. We also received several pleasant phone calls, and website comments, highlighting the professionalism and dedication of individual staff members and praising their knowledge and customer service.

However, we still received angry, abusive calls. Operators are trained to warn callers that inappropriate language will result in terminating the phone call. Phone calls, emails or social media comments that physically threaten our staff, or office will be forwarded to local law enforcement as per our safety protocols.

Abusive phone calls take a mental and emotional toll on our staff. We will design additional training so staff can better de-escalate these phone calls.

ONLINE BALLOT REQUESTS:

A district boundary error discovered in the weeks before the election led to an unavoidable delay in our vendor's printing and assembly of ballots. This delay caused concern, and despite assurances, many voters flooded the online form to request ballots.

We quickly realized that the unprecedented number of requests would not be able to be processed in a timely manner. As ballot requests were being processed, staff was finding that the majority of voters already had a ballot on the way due to the Active Early Voting List (AEVL).

On October 19, one week before the October 26 deadline to request a ballot, we deactivated the online request form and encouraged voters to instead call our office to request a ballot over the phone.

This sped up the process and allowed us to fulfill many ballot requests from voters not on the AEVL. Many of the ballot requests were could not be completed due to missing or incorrect information and would have required us to contact the voter anyway. It was also discovered that the ballot request system was not tied to the voter database, increasing the

opportunity for user errors to be input. The system was inherited from the previous administration and had not come to the attention of the current administration because the volume of a federal election had never overwhelmed that service.

We are confident that most voters who requested a ballot using our online form either received their already queued ballots, voted early in person, updated their addresses online or successfully requested a mail ballot.

We have already begun redesigning a new Ballot Request Portal that is linked to our Voter Application. We are prioritizing this important service and hope to make it more user friendly and responsive to the public.

We also plan to combine the Return Envelope with the Ballot Affidavit Envelope to reduce voter confusion and speed up processing time.

For more details on this situation, please see the attached document, *"Online ballot requests diverted to phone and email requests."*

FUTURE OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR 2026 ELECTION CYCLE:

Our office is conducting an in-depth debrief regarding the 2024 election cycle to identify areas for improvement. We want to expand on our successes and continue revising internal processes to increase workflow efficiency.

Improvement Ideas Include:

- Automated Online Ballot Requests
- New infographics related to Early Voting
- Increased automation during the ballot-processing phase
- Increased number of early voting sites or ballot drop boxes in rural and outlying areas
- Additional voter education resources on the Recorder's website
- Increased use of text messaging platform for voter notification
- Expanded voter registration training with voter engagement groups
- New reference guides for election workers

Early voting is extremely popular with Pima County residents, and we expect the number of returned early ballots to continue to increase in future elections. We have acquired a new space close to our current Ballot Processing Facility which is double the size and will allow us to house more staff, computer equipment and create better workflows which will lead to

faster processing of ballots and verification of signatures. The space will also include space for storage, site staging, equipment testing, training, offices and a dedicated space for phone operators.

CONCLUSION

Although the first Presidential Election overseen by the current administration had challenges, it was still wildly successful. With the help of many other county departments, we were able to provide efficient, convenient and welcoming services to the public. Our staff weathered the storms, despite those difficulties, with dedicated service and professionalism. Their commitment to the voters of Pima County was extraordinary and the success of the Early Voting period is due solely to the diligent efforts of our team.

This office is continually working to innovate our operations to ensure they meet the challenges of future Presidential Election Years and increase accessibility for all Pima County Voters. The Recorder's Office is committed to providing transparent, efficient and fair elections.

Thank you to the numerous Pima County Departments who played a role in the success of our elections and to the voters for participating in our democracy.

Thank you for voting.