



**38<sup>th</sup> Annual  
National Conference  
Orlando, FL**

**2023 Professional Practices Program  
Certified Election Observer Program  
Contra Costa County, CA**

**Submitted by:**

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Willing to do Webinar/Workshop? Yes**

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# Contra Costa County Clerk-Recorder-Elections Department

555 Escobar Street  
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Clerk-Recorder

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## Certified Election Observer Program

### Abstract

In a continuum of programs to combat misinformation, election skepticism, and public mistrust of elections, the Contra Costa County Election Division added a new program to its outreach menu in 2022 with the goal of bringing the public up close and personal into the elections process. While tours and public access have always been widely available at the office, leadership saw a new potential appetite for more in-depth and informational opportunities to learn about elections in our county. In June of 2022, in conjunction with the primary election, staff piloted the first Certified Election Observer (CEO) Program, giving constituents an intensive, guided, multi-day, “behind the scenes” tour of the entire elections process in Contra Costa County. The members of the public who participated in our first two cohorts became ardent fans of the department and well-equipped ambassadors to spread the word about the work of our election team.

### Background: The Opportunity

Election officials across the nation recognize the need for robust voter education and outreach programs to build public trust in elections and to combat mis-, dis-, and mal-information (MDM). While most election offices, including ours, are available to the public for observation and tours, many constituents don’t know about these opportunities, and therefore do not avail themselves to the myriad of offerings to come into the election office and observe the various processes that go into an election. Even when observers do come to the division during an election, it is usually to observe one specific activity, and oftentimes, especially after the 2020 Presidential Election, observers may come in with a predisposed negative, and even antagonistic view of the work being done.

The CEO Program offers Contra Costa residents an opportunity to follow the elections process from beginning to end and to learn why and how each part of the process is important and protects voters. This type of in-depth, soup-to-nuts course-style tour is generally only offered to elections staff as they come on board into their positions. Our leadership recognized that this opportunity was missing for the public at large and could help in dispelling some of the false narratives being shared and at the same time cultivate public advocates for our work.



### Description of the Program

The Contra Costa County Election Division is running the CEO program to increase public trust in elections by providing an even more transparent and educational view into the entire elections process by in effect, “lifting the veil.”

The program is rigorous with a combination of online and in-person sessions that provide a complete elections experience and understanding. There are up to four personal visits scheduled to the Election Office to observe processes related to the vote counting system, vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot processing, and canvass activities. Polling place activities include attending a poll worker training class and visiting an early voting site or polling place on Election Day. The total time each applicant is expected to dedicate to the program is approximately 12-14 hours.

The program begins with the public logic and accuracy test of the voting system during an election cycle and includes a facility tour, observation of the machinery used to sort ballot envelopes, presentations from staff on the path a ballot takes, and review of security measures among other parts of the process. After each part of the election process has been observed/explained, the participants receive a stamp from the election staff member who leads that part of the process in a specially designed passport to designate completion of that segment. The passport gives the program a fun way to highlight each destination in the elections journey for the participants.



Because of the limited space of our operations, the maximum number of participants in each cohort is 10 people. Upon completion of the program, the newly minted CEOs receive a certificate of appreciation and a special CEO pin. To date, three cohorts have been established and embarked on the program.

## Results/Success of the Program

The CEO Program has offered Contra Costa constituents an invaluable view into the elections process. After each program, we have asked for feedback from our participants and in each of the cohorts, every one of the participants have expressed their surprise at some part of the process that they were unaware of previously. Providing this awareness and understanding of the elections process to members of the public is one of the primary goals of the program. Here are some results as described by participants:

- "I was not aware of the adjudication and one percent tally, but it was very helpful that I learned it. I have gained more trust in the election process because of not only the accommodation of mail-in ballots, but the security as well." -Dhrti (participant in the June 2022 Primary Election CEO cohort)
- "I thoroughly appreciate the time and care everyone in the election office takes to affirm/validate voters in our community." -Shawn (participant in the June 2022 Primary Election CEO cohort)
- "I was not aware of all the procedural steps and safeguards, the number of workers involved in each election, and the outreach to voters to cure their ballot." -Renee (participant in the 2022 General Election CEO program)
- "I was not aware of all the checks and balances that ensure the integrity of ballot counting." -Patti (participant in the 2022 General Election CEO program)

After each of our cohorts, we have asked participants to nominate new members for the next program. Each of our successive programs has grown larger in terms of the number of people who are interested in joining. While the program is very time-intensive, we have seen the interest grow with each new opportunity. Our goals for growing the program have been exceeded after only three cohorts. We had 15 initial participants for our third cohort and our first cohort started with 6 initial participants. With each cohort, we gain additional ambassadors to spread the word about the great work being done in elections.

## Next Steps/Looking Forward

The Certified Election Observer program was new in 2022, and our short-term goal of bringing our constituents into the inner workings of the election to boost confidence in the process has been a success. Our longer-range target is to continue to grow the number of residents who know about the program and want to participate in the program to continue to demystify the elections process for our residents and create ambassadors out in the community. We would also like to find ways to broaden our reach for the program to those in our county who may not otherwise have ease of access to our office. Whether that is creating a "roadshow" or providing transportation for residents from other areas in the county who don't have reliable transportation and can't easily reach our office (youth, underserved communities), we will continue to gather feedback and work to expand the program.



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### Certified Election Observer Schedule (March 7<sup>th</sup> Special Election)

Schedule	Activity	Location
Homework due by February 3	Complete Application to <a href="mailto:dawn.kruger@cr.cccounty.us">dawn.kruger@cr.cccounty.us</a>  Review Election Observer Guidelines  Check your voter status: <a href="http://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov">voterstatus.sos.ca.gov</a>  Sign Up with BallotTrax: <a href="http://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov">wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov</a>	Online/At Home
February 10 9:00 am-12:30 pm	Orientation Logic & Accuracy Testing Meet Department/Division Heads Voter Registration	In-Person
February 13-17	Homework Review Binder Sign-up for Poll Worker Training Classes	Online/At Home
February 20-24 (exact dates/times tbd)	Attend In-Person and/or Online Pollworker Classes	In-Person/Online
March 3 9:30 am-12:00 pm	Vote By Mail (Scan, Sig, Sort, Extract)**  In Person Early Voting	In-Person
March 6 <b>(Tentative)</b>	Ballot Tabulation System **	In-Person
March 8 <b>(Tentative)</b>	Provisional/CVR Processing  Balancing & Reconciliation Basics  Polling Place Supplies  Ballot Duplication  1% Manual Tally	In-Person
March 21 <b>(Tentative)</b>	Board of Supervisors Meeting Presentation/Awards	In-Person

All In-Person activities will be at the Election Division located at:


Contra Costa County Clerk-Recorder-Elections Department  
555 Escobar Street  
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\*\* This schedule is subject to change as the elections process is dependent upon volume of ballots and staffing.



# CONTRA COSTA COUNTY ELECTIONS DIVISION

[www.contracostavote.gov](http://www.contracostavote.gov)

 ContraCostaElections

## FACT SHEET

### Topic: Election Security

#### Four Pillars of Election Security

- Securing Facilities
- Securing Networks
- Securing People
- Securing Processes

#### Facilities

- Physical security assessments are conducted regularly.
- Designated high security areas have limited access to only authorized employees; proximity access cards are used to limit access to necessary staff.
- Election areas are secured with alarm systems with limited access and 24/7 motion-detection video surveillance.
- Access to the voting system is password-protected and all activity is logged by the voting system. Administrative passwords are only known by designated elections officials.
- The Elections Division maintains positive partnerships with security agencies and law enforcement at the Federal, State, and local levels to provide safe, secure, and transparent elections for our residents and jurisdictions.
- Observers and other members of the public are escorted and supervised at all times.

- Emergency and disaster planning is conducted to ensure ballots and equipment are secure in the event of an emergency.

#### Networks

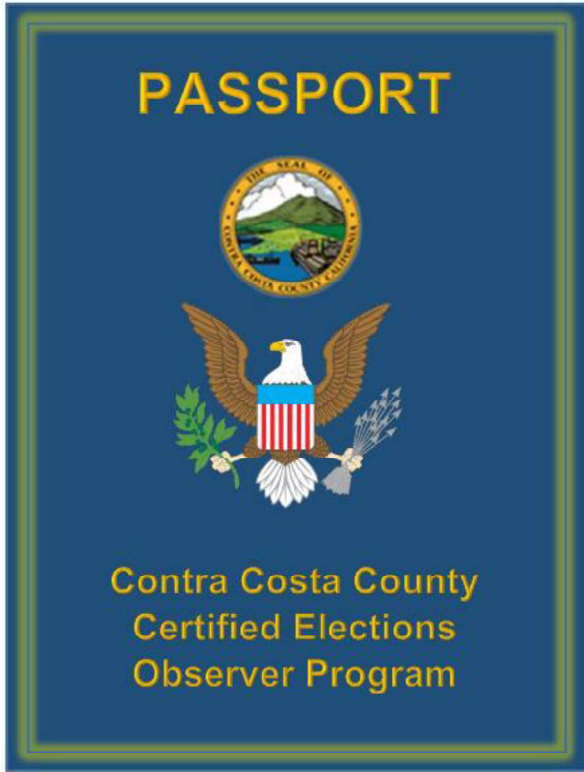
- Multi-factor Authentication is present on all systems and a robust password policy is in place.
- Cybersecurity awareness, phishing, and other cyber trainings are required for all staff.
- Voting systems are NEVER connected to the internet or the county network; internet capabilities are deactivated at the BIOS level. Computers within a voting system are only connected to one another.
- USB Ports on systems are sealed to prevent access.
- The voting system is physically restricted under lock and key and only authorized personnel are allowed access; proper chain of custody protocols are observed.
- The “Trusted Build” – the certified software and firmware which controls the voting system and is required to conduct an election - is received directly from the Secretary of State and reinstalled before each election.
- Firewalls, virus blocking software, and active monitoring are used on all systems connected to the VoteCal Statewide Voter Registration Database.

## **People**

- All Elections staff, both permanent and temporary, must take an Oath of Allegiance and pass a background check with fingerprinting. ID Badges must be worn at all times.
- All staff are trained and supervised in safety, security, election code, policy and procedures, and best practices.
- Chain of custody policies are followed by requiring a two-person rule at all times with all ballots and voting equipment.
- Observers are identified with unique ID badges, are escorted by staff, and are never left unsupervised. Observers must acknowledge and follow all Observer Rules and shall not interfere with the election process.
- Staff follow standard uniform operating procedures throughout the department.
- Election officials remain vigilant with security, staying abreast of emerging trends/threats, and continuing with ongoing efforts to safeguard their voting systems and election operations.
- Voting systems are a paper-based, optical scan ballot system.
- Election staff ensure that specific procedures for programming, deployment, and use of voting equipment during elections are met.
- Strict chain of custody procedures, two-person teams, and ballot inventory controls are required.
- E-pollbooks at polling places have real-time access to the voter database, ensuring a voter is only able to vote once.
- Vote-by-Mail ballots go through a signature verification process for ballot security; a voter is given the opportunity to “cure” his or her signature if a signature is missing or declared a mismatch to the voter’s registration record.
- Mandatory pre-election Logic and Accuracy testing ensure tabulation equipment is counting ballots accurately, and a post-election 1% Manual Hand Tally ensure the paper ballots have been properly tabulated and reported.
- Ballots and other canvass materials must be kept secure for 22 months after the election.

## **Processes**

- Elections are designated as “critical infrastructure” by the Department of Homeland Security.
- Adherence to California Elections Code, administrative regulations, and local ordinances are strictly enforced and followed.
- Voting systems that counties use to count ballots must be certified by the California Secretary of State under one of the most strenuous testing and certification programs in the country.
- Voting system security is a multi-layered process with multiple factors, multiple checkpoints, multiple people, and multiple systems that makes systematic fraud nearly impossible.



Contra Costa County  
Elections Observer Program

Passport Issued to: \_\_\_\_\_

Class of: 2023



Ask your presenter for each assignment to stamp and initial your passport, as you learn about the many aspects of Elections.



Contra Costa County  
Elections Observer Program

Election Observer Guidelines

Visit the Department Website

Visit the Facebook Page

Dawn 1

Voter Registration

Jessica 2



Contra Costa County  
Elections Observer Program

Sign up for BallotTrax

Dawn 3

View Public L & A Testing  
(Logic and Accuracy)

Travis 4