



# **ELECTION CENTER**

**40<sup>th</sup> Annual  
National Conference  
Salt Lake City, UT**

**2025 Professional Practices**

**Ballot University  
Morgan County, Colorado**

**Submitted by:**

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**<https://morgancounty.colorado.gov/clerk-and-recorder>**

**Willing to do Webinar/Workshop? Y**

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## BALLOT UNIVERSITY

### Introduction

Silence from election officials creates an opportunity for those looking for fraud to fill the void with unfounded allegations. In recent years, outreach efforts have increased across the country to explain how elections are secure and trustworthy. To further that goal in our local community, we created Ballot University—a first-of-its-kind, immersive educational experience. With this program, we place a mock election directly in the hands of those who have questions, concerns, or simply a desire to learn. Participants walk through every step of the election process, from ballots being mailed out through the close of the election and a mock risk-limiting audit. They are encouraged to ask questions at any time, putting the learning process directly in their hands.

### The Process

In the days leading up to Ballot University, our staff prepares a mock election in Colorado’s statewide database (SCORE), programs the mock election in our Dominion Voting System (including creating ballots with questions such as favorite color, favorite movie, etc.), and prepares various “curveballs” including ballots, unusual voter IDs, and other scenarios. These items provide participants with a holistic and realistic view of how an election unfolds.

When participants arrive, they are escorted into our secured processing area, which contains all of our secured election equipment, including our scanner, adjudication, and our administration computer with the server. They receive a ballot containing their information and vote it—this is their “mail ballot.” They are also offered the opportunity to vote an in-person ballot. If they choose to do so, we verify their ID, complete the necessary forms, and allow them to vote using our ICX voting machine. This step gives us a chance to discuss one of the most common myths—that Colorado does not vote using paper ballots. We clarify that both in-person and mail ballots are paper and identical in format and function.

After voting, participants are given badges with either a pink (Bubble Gum) or yellow (Lemon Drop) lanyard—these are their “political parties” for the evening. This opens a discussion about how elections are conducted by bipartisan teams at every stage. We also review security protocols, demonstrating how none of the equipment is connected to the internet and showing live feeds from security cameras throughout the building. We explain the importance of seals and seal logs, how they are used, and how integrity is maintained at every checkpoint.

### Voting and Ballot Handling

Participants deposit their completed ballots into either our 24/7 outdoor drop box or an indoor drop box in the office. A team of participants then uses the seals and seal log to properly remove the ballots and transport them into the processing area. Once inside, ballots are scanned, date-stamped, and counted. They are then received into SCORE and forwarded to signature verification.

## Signature Verification

Participants are broken into small groups, each led by a staff member, to go through the signature verification process. We begin by showing them the official signature that is on file. Then we explain what to look for when comparing signatures and reviewing envelopes. Participants review their own ballots (if they wish) and a series of prepared “curveballs” that include signatures requiring further scrutiny. Each group follows official procedures and votes on whether each signature should be accepted.

## Ballot Processing and Adjudication

Ballots are then moved into processing, where participants observe how bipartisan teams open and sort them. We explain how judges separate the voter’s identity from their ballot and how ballots are randomized before scanning into batches. During adjudication, participants are shown how to determine voter intent and walk through real examples. Together, the group reviews ballots flagged for adjudication and votes on each one. This section includes more “curveballs,” including overvotes, blank ballots, undervotes, write-ins, pen rests, check marks, and many other common scenarios that arise during an election.

## Results and Risk-Limiting Audit

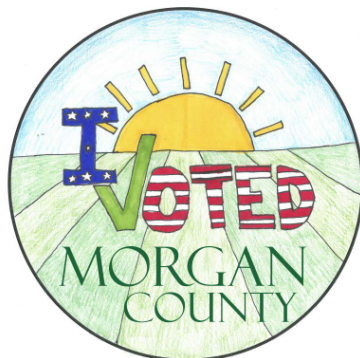
After adjudication, ballots are published and mock results are presented. We walk participants through how results are verified by our county and transmitted to the Secretary of State. Finally, we conclude with a mock risk-limiting audit. Because participants have written their names on their ballots, we are able to pull files from the Dominion system and compare the tabulated results to what each individual marked on their ballot. This powerful ending reinforces the message that our elections are both safe and secure.

## Who Is Invited?

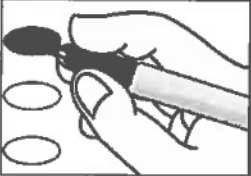

Ballot University is open to the general public, local schools, political parties, and anyone interested in learning more about how elections work. Before each election, we hold a special session for all candidates appearing on the ballot. We’ve invited high-profile participants such as Representative Lauren Boebert, Senator Michael Bennet, and candidates in our local races. Our hope is to foster greater understanding and reduce post-election acrimony by including candidates early in the process.

## Results and Community Response

Through the many classes we’ve held, we’ve seen a measurable shift in the tone and type of questions being asked at community and political meetings. Instead of repeated doubts about election integrity, we now receive more informed, process-based inquiries. We’ve received direct thank-yous from participants, and local groups have asked for private sessions tailored to their members. While the outcomes may not be easily quantifiable, they speak for themselves: through transparency and direct engagement, we believe we’ve made a real difference in how our community views elections.



# Official Ballot for Ballot University Morgan County, Colorado

<p><b>Making selections:</b></p> <p>Fill in the oval to the left of your choice. You must fill in the oval for your vote to count. Do not cross out your vote or make any marks outside the voting oval or your vote might not count. If you make a mistake, ask a poll worker for another ballot.</p> 	<p><b>Optional Write In:</b></p> <p>To vote for a declared write-in candidate that is not on the ballot, fill in the oval to the left of "Write In" and print the name clearly in the space provided.</p> 
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Warning: Ballot is meant for educational purposes only. Not an official ballot.

Write Your Name	Favorite Musician(s) (Vote for One)	Favorite President (Vote for One)
<p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Write-in <u>Kevin</u></p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Taylor Swift</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Rolling Stones</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Beyonce</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Michael Jackson</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Beatles</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Elton John</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Garth Brooks</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Rihanna</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Write-in <u>Beach Boys</u></p>	<p><input type="radio"/> George Washington</p> <p><input type="radio"/> James Madison</p> <p><input type="radio"/> John Adams</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Abraham Lincoln</p> <p><input type="radio"/> John F. Kennedy</p>
<p><b>Favorite Color (Vote for One)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Blue</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Green</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Red</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yellow</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Purple</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Pink</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Orange</p>		

TURN OVER - VOTE BOTH SIDES

## Morgan County Clerk and Recorder's Office

231 Ensign St.

Ft. Morgan, CO 80701



### **Who: Anyone Interested in Learning About Elections**

**What:** Ballot University Class by Morgan County Clerk and Recorder's Office **When:** August 23rd at 5:00 pm

**Where:** Morgan County Clerk and Recorder's Office  
231 Ensign St. First Floor.  
Fort Morgan, CO 80701

**RSVP to:** [kstrauch@co.morgan.co.us](mailto:kstrauch@co.morgan.co.us)  
(970)542- 3522

Morgan County Clerk and Recorder, Kevin Strauch and his team invites you to their Ballot University Program on August 23rd at 5:00 pm in their office in Fort Morgan.

Ballot University provides a hands-on learning experience about the essential aspects of conducting an election. While the election itself is simulated, the procedures, security measures, and systems are genuine.

During the program, participants will engage in a simulated election by completing a mock ballot with questions such as favorite color and movie preferences. The process includes voting and placing these ballots into a drop box, which begins the mock election process. Working in bipartisan teams, participants will be involved in various tasks, such as collecting, verifying signatures, opening, scanning, adjudicating, and executing a Risk Limiting Audit.

Due to limited space in our election areas, we kindly request your RSVP to the provided email address or phone number. Please note that this is a non-partisan educational event, and we appreciate your commitment to keeping political discussions aside.

Thank you for considering this invitation. Your participation in Morgan County's Ballot University contributes to the continuous improvement of Colorado's electoral processes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Strauch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Morgan County Clerk and Recorder

## LATEST HEADLINES

# Morgan County Clerk and Recorder takes local residents through 2023 voting system



By **ROBIN NORTHRUP** | The Fort Morgan Times

PUBLISHED: September 19, 2023 at 2:54 PM MDT

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The Morgan County Clerk and Recorder's Office held a Ballot University class in the Clerk and Recorder's Office at the end of August.

Morgan County Clerk and Recorder Kevin Strauch answered questions alongside Election Specialist Pat Mendoza, Chief Deputy Clerk and Recording Manager Randee Aleman, and Election Clerk Vicki Casados and took the class from the ballot box to the Clerk and Recorder office. Participants were allowed to follow each step of the process, from beginning to end.

“Voting in person this year will be done on the new Dominion voting machines that have replaced previous machines this year,” said Strauch. “There is no Wi-Fi or Bluetooth connection in the machine. They are directly connected to the server with no internet access. This eliminates any possibility of remotely accessing the system.”

The group filled out their ballots and were issued badges with pink and yellow annotations representing different political parties. No two people affiliated with the same party can work together alone. Strauch also pointed out that the camera system can watch someone from outside and track their movement through the building. In the ballot processing areas, every piece of equipment is on camera, and cameras in the election office cover every inch of the area.

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Ballots are collected daily from the ballot boxes, except on Election Day, when ballots are collected at least two to three times during the day. A bi-partisan team collects the ballots, which are placed in a verified sealed bag. The seal is broken and both clerks record and verify the seal number. Ballots are counted as they are put in the bag. The bag is resealed, logged, and verified by both judges. Ballot boxes in the building are collected the same way.

After ballots are brought into the building, the ballot bag seal is broken and recorded, the ballot count is verified and logged. Each bag that ballots are moved in is sealed and seals must be broken and recorded by two people. Ballots are counted, date-stamped, and secured in batches of 20. If you are signed up for Ballot Trax, you will receive a notification that your ballot has been received. Ballot Trax also will send you a message when your ballot is validated and processed. Signing up can be done on the Clerk's website or through a website found on your ballot envelope.



[Read More](#)

00:00

02:00

The ballot batches are then taken into a room where the voter's signature is verified on a computer (by a team of bi-partisan signature judges) to at least the past three years of signatures on file. If there is a problem with the signature, the ballot will be logged as signature discrepant and placed in the vault while the voter is notified. The voter will have eight days after Election Day to come in and complete the ballot. Every opportunity is given to accept your ballot.

A team of bi-partisan judges then run the ballots through a machine that opens the ballot envelope. The ballots remain completely anonymous. Another team of bi-partisan judges separates the ballots from the envelopes and forwards the ballots to the next team of bi-partisan judges to be reviewed for tears or write-ins. Ballots with tears or write-ins are separated from the others and manually viewed by bi-partisan election

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No blue or black pens are allowed in the election judge's processing room so that no vote can be changed. Ballots that are mailed are due by 7 p.m. on Election Day. Teams of bi-partisan judges go to the post office and pick up the final ballots. If your ballot is received after 7 p.m. on Election Day, it will be date and time stamped and logged as rejected. The ballot must be in the hands of the election office by 7 p.m.

Strauch explained that there is a lot of confusion about elections.

“There are a lot of things that aren't common knowledge about elections and that leads to misunderstandings and confusion. Our goal is to show the security and integrity of the process and get people's eyes on and hands-on and a better understanding of the process.”



**Representative Dusty A. Johnson**  
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**COMMITTEES**  
House Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources  
House Education  
House Health & Human Services

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STATE OF COLORADO**  
**DENVER**

June 5, 2025

RE: Support for Morgan County's Ballot University Program

To Whom It May Concern;

I am writing in support of Morgan County's Ballot University Program (Ballot University) and their award funding application.

Ballot University was created by Morgan County Clerk & Recorder Kevin Strauch about three years ago and is continuing to be led by Clerk Strauch and his team. It is no secret that there tends to be a lot of confusion around elections, which is because there is not a lot of common knowledge about the process. The purpose and goal of Ballot University is to show the security and integrity of the process by allowing the public to see the process firsthand with an interactive approach.

Having been able to join two of the Ballot University classes, I can honestly say that I learned something in both classes and was shocked at just how much went on in the election process that I never even thought about. The best way to stop misinformation or distrust in a system is through educational efforts that promote transparency for the public, and I wish we had more programs like Morgan County's Ballot University across our state.

Thank you for your consideration in awarding Morgan County's Ballot University Program with funding. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Thank you

Dusty A. Johnson  
Colorado State Representative