

NEWS

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Problem-free election to be followed by final ballot count

The County of San Bernardino conducted a smooth, problem-free election on Tuesday. With all of the early absentee and Election Day touch-screen votes successfully tabulated, county election staff are now focusing on sorting through a record number of late absentee, provisional, and optional paper ballots.

According to the Registrar of Voters, 409,477 votes representing 55.52 percent of the county's registered voters were counted after the polls closed at 8 p.m. on Tuesday. The registrar posted semi-official final results at 4:53 a.m.

As was the case in March, the county's touch-screen voting system once again performed without any glitches. The only situation that came close to being defined as a problem occurred when some machines in some polling places ran low on battery power. Technicians quickly addressed the issue and voting was never interrupted.

Additionally, all of the county's 410 polling places opened on time, and there were no substantive issues reported regarding the election in San Bernardino County.

The county credits the hard work of the registrar's staff, many of whom have worked 60-hour weeks since Labor Day, as well as approximately 3,000 poll workers – more than 600 of whom are high school seniors.

An estimated 75,000 to 100,000 ballots – including an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 paper ballots cast by voters who chose not to use touch-screen voting – will be sorted during the next two days. Election workers will verify the ballots, and then they will be counted and added to the running Election Day totals. The registrar plans to give priority to the closest races.

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Because of the high number of uncounted ballots (5,000 to 15,000 is the norm), the outcomes of some close races may remain uncertain for close to three weeks.

Three factors contributed to the high number of late paper ballots:

- An unusually high number of registrations very close to the Oct. 18 deadline. The county was still receiving thousands of new registrations from the state each day through the end of last week. These voters could not be added to the polling place voter rolls in time for the election, so they had to cast paper provisional ballots that must be verified by hand before being counted.
- A record high number of absentee ballots either delivered to polling places on Election Day or arriving in the mail too late to be tabulated in time for the Election Day count.
- A new state rule requiring the county to provide paper provisional ballots to voters who decline to use touch-screen voting. This alone accounts for an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 of the uncounted ballots.

Results from Tuesday's election and other election information is available at the Registrar of Voters website, www.sbcounty.gov/rov.