



# NORTH CAROLINA

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## STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

*Mailing Address:*  
P.O. Box 27255,  
Raleigh, NC 27611  
  
(919) 814-0700 or  
(866) 522-4723  
  
*Fax:* (919) 715-0135

### Answers to Voter FAQs about Ballot Tabulation

#### **What if I don't want to put my ballot in the tabulator?**

In North Carolina, all ballots are counted by machine. G.S. § 163-182.2(a)(6). There is no option for a voter to have their ballot counted by hand.

#### **What if I want to take my ballot out of the voting place?**

Official ballots may not leave the voting enclosure during the time voting is being conducted there, except as provided by law for curbside voters. G.S. § 163-166.7.

#### **Will my ballot be counted if I take it out of the voting place?**

No. If you take your ballot out of the voting place, it will not be counted, and you will not be able to vote in the election. 08 NCAC 10B .0104.

#### **What if I decide not to vote?**

If you have not yet received your ballot, you may have the precinct official cancel your check in. You will be permitted to vote if you return at another time.

If you have already received your ballot, you will not be permitted to vote at a later time, even if you haven't voted it yet. 08 NCAC 10B .0104(e).

#### **Why are ballots counted by tabulator instead of by hand?**

The use of voting equipment in the conduct of elections is not new. The first voting equipment was used beginning in the late 1800s. Computer-based tabulation was introduced in the 1960s.

Ballots are counted by machine to ensure accuracy of the vote count, prevent tampering or fraud, prevent reliance on paper with no backup for official election results, and provide timely election results. When ballots are counted by hand, they are subject to human error in the count, particularly when there are multiple contests on the ballot. Counting ballots by machine ensures that the results match what the voter selected. Pre- and post-election testing, which are open to the public, confirm the accuracy.

Ballots are tabulated at the voting place before transport, and three copies of the paper results are kept as a backup. This prevents reliance solely on a single paper record of the voter's ballot, which could be lost or damaged when they are transported to the county board of elections office. Also, if ballots were counted by hand, it could take months before the election results would be known.

Voters can have confidence that their ballot has been counted as soon as they put it in the tabulator. You can see the number tick up and know that the machine has already counted your selections.



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### **How can I know that the voting machines haven't been hacked?**

State law prevents any voting system from being connected to any network, including the internet. Election results must be uploaded manually using an external media device (like a USB stick) from the voting devices onto the computer that tabulates results. This computer is never connected to any network, including the internet. Election results must then be transferred manually into a separate computer to report election results to the media, public, and public-facing websites.

Voting machines in North Carolina do not contain modems.

When not in use, each piece of voting equipment is stored in a secure, monitored location with no access permitted, other than by election officials. Prior to each election, each piece of voting equipment is tested and checked during a process called Logic and Accuracy testing. Any member of the public is allowed to be present to observe. Immediately following each election, a series of audits takes place including a sample hand-to-eye audit. In this audit, one contest on the ballot, typically the top contest on the ballot, is selected and all ballots in at least two voting sites are counted by hand to confirm the accuracy of the voting equipment. G.S. § 163-182.1(b)(1). Voters are encouraged to attend public testing of voting equipment as an additional layer of accountability and transparency in our election processes. They also are encouraged to sign up to serve as pollworkers.