

Frequently Asked Questions Absentee Ballot Issue – General Election 2008

1. How and when was the error discovered?

Georgia law requires equipment testing be completed no later than three days prior to the election. Gwinnett County was performing these routine tests two weeks prior and discovered a problem with the ballot.

2. Does this mean those ballots won't be counted?

Those ballots that are unreadable by the optical scan units will be duplicated by elections workers in accordance with state law. The duplicate ballots will be read and then stored with the original ballot for audit purposes. Every voter who cast a ballot can be assured that each and every vote cast will count.

3. Will someone be watching the election workers duplicating to ensure they are really duplicating correctly?

Yes. As required by state law, each party will have a representative for a vote review panel. Additionally, each non-partisan candidate will be allowed to have a monitor. To help assure voters the Gwinnett County Board of Registrations and Elections has asked the Secretary of State's office for a monitor as well.

4. How do we know that the results will not be leaked to the press or other party officials?

Georgia law currently provides for a process in which all participants are sequestered. No media, cell phones, recording, or any other electronic devices are allowed, so the results from those ballots will not be seen before the close of the polls on Election Day.

5. Wouldn't it have been easier to reprogram the machines to read the ballot?

No, then the touch screen votes would not be readable by the tabulation server. Once the database has been completed and certified it cannot be changed. This helps to ensure the integrity of the election tabulation process.

6. What exactly is the problem with the ballots?

The oval itself is too thick and the optical scan units cannot read it as it was coded. This is the result of specific print driver being used that was not compatible with the ballot printer. The problem with the thickness of the oval itself is not obvious to the naked eye, unless you compare the two side by side.

7. Will all the absentee ballots have to be duplicated?

No. Once the error was discovered, corrected ballots were printed and those ballots are now mailed voters. The total number to be duplicated is unknown, but what is known is that approximately 19,000 were initially issued before the correction.

8. Will this delay the election results on election night?

No. Because of the laborious process of tabulating the paper absentee ballots, they are generally not completed until most polls have already closed. Once all ballots have been accounted for and tabulated, the results will be posted as in previous elections.

9. My ballot is being opened and duplicated. Does that mean the election worker will know how I voted?

The ballots are sealed within two envelopes. Once the white envelope has been removed from the “outer” yellow envelope, the ballot cannot be associated with a specific voter.