



Darlene E. Ingersoll
Registrar of Voters

Blanca B. Torres
Assistant Registrar of Voters

Merced, CA 95340
Main: (209) 385-7541
Fax: (209) 385-7387
Toll-free: (800) 561-0619

www.mercedelections.org

MERCED COUNTY ELECTION OBSERVER PANEL PLAN November 2, 2021 Special Vacancy Election

Name of County: Merced County
Name of Contact: Darlene E. Ingersoll, Registrar of Voters
Contact Phone: (209) 385-7541 or (800) 561-0619
Date of Plan: **Revised, August 25, 2021**

I. VOTING SYSTEM USED: ES&S DS450, DS850, & ExpressVote

- **ExpressVote accessible ballot marking devices;**
- **DS450 & DS850 central count units** for counting vote by mail ballots and provisional ballots as part of the canvass.

II. PURPOSE:

The purpose of an Election Observer Panel is to:

- Provide the public with the opportunity to observe and make suggestions on ways to improve the election process.
- Help ensure the integrity of the election process.
- Remove some of the mystery associated with the election process in an effort to build voter confidence and encourage more people to take part.

III. INVITE

Between E-60 and E-30, prepare letters of invitation to the following:

- County Grand Jury
- Political Party Central Committee Members
- Advocacy Groups
- League of Women Voters

Other groups or individuals expressing an interest in observing Election Day activities may also be included in the observer panel.

IV. APPOINTMENT LETTERS

After the groups have provided the names of interested panelists, letters of introduction will be prepared for the panelist to use when visiting the Voting Assistance Centers and Elections Central Counting Site on Election Day. Materials to be prepared for each panelist will include a listing of the Voting Assistance Centers as well as the Elections Central Counting site location and hours of operation.

V. RULES FOR OBSERVERS

Provided rules that observers must be aware of and follow:

Observers are responsible for:

- Checking in at each site, whether voting assistance center or central counting site.
- Wearing an identification badge.
- Maintaining a professional manner while observing the election process.
- Ensuring they do not interfere with the election process.
- Following established county observation rules/policies.
- Being courteous to poll workers and election officials. Speak to them only when it is convenient and does not interfere with the conduct of the election.

Observers may:

- Observe the proceedings at the Voting Assistance Centers, including the opening and closing procedures.
- Obtain information from the precinct index that is posted near the entrance.
- Make notes and watch election procedures.
- View election-related activities at the central counting site on Election Day.
- View the canvass of the vote activities following the election.
- View vote-by-mail and provisional ballot processing.
- Ask questions of poll workers or voters at the voting assistance centers as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of any part of the voting process.
- Ask questions of supervisors at the central counting site as long as they do not interfere with the conduct of the election procedures.

Observers may not:

- Interfere, in the judgement of the elections official, with the conduct of the election.
- Physically handle any voting materials or equipment without the express permission of the elections official.
- Move or rearrange tables, chairs, or voting booths at the Voting Assistance Centers or central count facility.
- Sit at the official worktables or view confidential voter information on any computer terminal or document.
- Communicate with voters within 100 feet of the entrance to, or inside of, the Voting Assistance Centers, an elections official's office, or a satellite location, regarding the casting of a vote, or speak to a voter regarding his or her qualifications to vote.
- Display any election material or wear campaign badges, buttons or apparel.
- Wear the uniform of a peace officer, a private guard, or security personnel.
- Use cellular phones, pagers, or two-way radios inside the voting assistance center and/or within 100 feet of the entrance to the Voting Assistance Centers.
- Use the telephones, computers, or other voting assistance center facilities at the voting assistance centers or the central counting site.
- Talk to or attempt to stop the central counting site workers while they are processing ballots.
- Make physical contact with election personnel.
- Eat or drink in the Voting Assistance Centers or the Elections Central Counting Site.

- Assist in operations at any Voting Assistance Center or the Elections Central Counting Site.
- Prevent other observers from observing materials or a process.
- Enter secure areas without the express permission of the elections official.

Observers at Tabulation Locations:

- Well-designed video programs may provide a sufficient alternative, or way to supplement in-person observation by a small number of observers.
- If a video is not feasible, we will make allowances for the space and personal disinfection needs of the observers as you build out these work areas.
- Given that vote-by-mail ballots will make up a greater percentage of the results than in past years, we anticipate and plan for a greater number of requests to observe the mail process, whether by video or in-person.

Observers at Voting Locations:

- We will provide poll workers detailed guidance ahead of time on how they should manage observations at their site.
- We will assess how many observers can be safely accommodated at each site.
- We will prepare and provide simple messages for poll workers to use if more observers seek entry than permitted or refuse to comply with health guidelines.

VI. **Mechanism for Feedback**

Merced Elections welcomes feedback from Observers. We ask that you contact us directly during your observation period if you see an activity or action that is concerning. Following the Election, we welcome your feedback related to processes, equipment, the observer training that you received as well as overall observations.

Please remember that the November 2 2021 Special Vacancy Election is a mail ballot election. All eligible active registered voters will receive an official ballot by mail.