

SOUTH CAROLINA

ELECTION COMMISSION

October 2025

AN IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF LEE COUNTY'S BALLOT RECONCILIATION WORKSHEETS FROM THE NOVEMBER 2022 GENERAL ELECTION

The mission of the South Carolina State Election Commission (SEC) is to ensure every eligible citizen can register to vote and participate in fair and impartial elections, knowing that every vote counts and every vote matters.

Pursuant to S.C. Code §7-3-20(D)(3), the SEC is authorized to conduct audits of county boards of voter registration and elections to ensure those boards' compliance with applicable state or federal laws or SEC policies, procedures, or standardized processes regarding the conduct of elections or the voter registration process by all persons involved. These audits are conducted by the SEC's Audit Division.

Additionally, S.C. Code §7-3-25(A) authorizes the SEC to identify any compliance failures and establish and implement a corrective action to remedy such failures. Recommendations in this report will require implementation of a corrective action plan that is developed by the county and approved by the SEC's Audit Division.

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE ELECTION COMMISSION

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Summary of Results

For Lee County's ballot reconciliation worksheets from the November 2022 General Election, 58% were completed, and 63% were reconciled. Of the 42% of worksheets that were partially completed, this was, in part, due to the lack of a requirement from the State Election Commission (SEC) to fill every field, even if zero.

For the 37% of worksheets that were not reconciled, this was due to not accounting for hand-marked paper ballots, incompleteness, and electronic pollbook connectivity issues. Adequately completing and reconciling the ballot reconciliation worksheets for each polling location may give greater assurance that the results include all valid ballots cast.

Background

As defined by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, ballot reconciliation is the method in which election officials keep track of each ballot that has been printed or issued to a voter. Tracking the number of ballots printed, used, and unused during an election cycle ensures election officials have accounted for every ballot created and the election results include every valid ballot cast.

In South Carolina, printed paper ballots were not common until the state's current voting equipment was implemented in all 46 counties in 2020. Prior to then, the state used a direct recording electronic, or DRE, as part of its voting system. A DRE is a vote capture device in which ballots are displayed, selections are made, and results are stored all via electronic format. The exceptions to this were the ballots printed for voters whose right to vote had been challenged at the precinct or who had moved but were still allowed to vote and the printed ballots used in emergency situations. Since these ballots were the only ballots in paper form, these were the only ballots that could be accounted for at the time.

South Carolina's transition in February 2020 to a paper-based voting system, with 100% printed paper ballots, significantly altered the process of accounting for ballots. In preparation for the change to this new system, the SEC developed a ballot reconciliation worksheet in September 2019 to account for and reconcile ballots supplied, used, not used, and lost as well as the number of voters who voted. Over the last five years, there have been minor updates to the worksheet, but it remains generally the same as the September 2019 version. Figure 1 below is an image of the ballot reconciliation worksheet used during the 2022 November General Election. It is important to note that a description of the worksheet and the terms used within are included in the analysis that follows.

Figure 1: S.C. State Election Commission's Election Day Ballot Reconciliation Worksheet

County _____ Precinct _____ Date _____

Ballots Supplied		
A	Ballot Cards (Completed by County Office)	
B	Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Completed by County Office) (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional)	
C	Additional Ballot Cards	
D	Additional Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional)	
		Total 1

Ballots Used		
E	Ballots Scanned (Ballot Cards and Emergency Ballots) (Number displayed on the Scanner/DS200)	
F	Provisional Ballots (Hand-Marked Paper Ballots/Envelopes)	
G	Spoiled Ballots (Ballot Cards + Hand-Marked Paper Ballots)	
		Total 2

Ballots Not Used		
H	Ballot Cards	
I	Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional)	
		Total 3

Voters Checked In		
J	Electronic Poll Book (EPB)	
K	Paper Poll List (Include Provisionals NOT entered in the EPB) (DO NOT Include Curbside Poll List)	
		Total 4

Total 2 + **Total 3** = (Should equal Total 1)

Total 4 + **G** = (Should equal Total 2)

Explain any discrepancies:

Are you returning any Emergency ballots that have not been scanned? Yes ☐ No ☐
(Do NOT include Provisional or Failsafe Provisional ballots)

SEC FRM 1150-202208

every vote matters.

every vote counts.

Source: S.C. State Election Commission

State Law and SEC Requirements

While state law only requires ballot reconciliation for election day, the SEC’s standardized operating procedures mandate this process for absentee and early voting as well. However, the scope of our audit was limited to election day ballot reconciliation, specifically for the 2022 November General Election. Therefore, the following sections provide an overview of the legal requirements for ballot reconciliation and the SEC’s ballot reconciliation worksheet as they pertain to election day.

Overview

S.C. Code §7-13-1150 requires poll clerks—the lead poll managers—to account for all ballots delivered to them and return the number of ballots supplied, spoiled—ballots that were defaced or marked in error—unused, voted, and lost, if any. S.C. Code §7-13-1410 requires poll managers to count the number of individuals who voted as well as unused and spoiled ballots. Between the two sections of the law, a poll clerk must account for ballots supplied, ballots used—including spoiled and lost ballots—ballots unused, and voters who voted. This accounting of ballots is also referred to as ballot reconciliation.

By Voting Type and Election Type

In the abovementioned sections of state law, the use of the terms poll clerk and precinct suggest that ballot reconciliation is performed by a clerk at a precinct, which only occurs on election day. As for election type, Title 7 of the S.C. Code of Laws applies to all types of elections—primary, general, special, and runoff. As such, ballot reconciliation is required to be performed for all types of elections. Because these worksheets are intended to ensure all valid ballots in an election have been cast, they are to be completed prior to a county’s certification—a statement by the county’s board of canvassers that election results are a true and accurate accounting of all votes cast in a particular election.

Overview of the Ballot Reconciliation Worksheet

The SEC’s ballot reconciliation worksheet is intended to be used by poll clerks to document, by precinct, the total ballots supplied, used, unused, and voters who voted. This worksheet accounts for these required components and contains two formulas, which are meant to ensure the appropriate values reconcile with each other. The following describes each section of the worksheet and the terms used.

Ballot Reconciliation Worksheet Top Portion

The top three-fourths of the worksheet contains 11 rows labeled A–K to record ballots supplied, used, and not used and voters checked in. Note, the worksheet accounts for voters who voted in the section “Voters Checked In,” as only voters who voted are checked in at a polling location. Specifically, rows A–K include the following:

ROW	ACCOUNTS FOR	INCLUDES
A	Ballots Supplied	Ballot Cards
B		Hand-Marked Paper Ballots
C		Additional Ballot Cards
D		Additional Hand-Marked Paper Ballots
E	Ballots Used	Ballots Scanned
F		Provisional Ballots
G		Spoiled Ballots
H	Ballots Not Used	Ballot Cards
I		Hand-Marked Paper Ballots
J	Voters Checked In	Electronic Pollbook
K		Paper Poll List

Rows A–B are completed by county office staff, and rows C–K are completed by the poll clerk after the polls close. The terms used in the worksheet and referenced in the table above are defined below.

BALLOT CARD

The paper cardstock provided to a voter for the purpose of recording his vote selections using a ballot-marking device (definition below).

BALLOT-MARKING DEVICE

A piece of voting equipment that allows a voter to electronically select valid contest options and then produces a human-readable paper ballot. Ballots are not cast on this device.

HAND-MARKED PAPER BALLOT

A paper ballot marked by hand by a voter using a blue or black pen. A hand-marked paper ballot is used at the polling location for emergency voting, via an emergency ballot, and provisional voting, via a provisional or failsafe provisional ballot (definitions below).

EMERGENCY BALLOT

A hand-marked paper ballot used in the event the ballot-marking device is inoperable or otherwise unavailable. Generally, these ballots are cast at the polling location.

PROVISIONAL BALLOT

A hand-marked paper ballot used when a voter's eligibility to vote is challenged, which may occur, for instance, if he has already received a ballot in the mail but insists on voting at a polling location.

FAILSAFE PROVISIONAL BALLOT

A hand-marked paper ballot used when a voter has moved from one precinct to another within the same county and failed to update his address or has moved from one South Carolina county to another within 30 days of the election.

Provisional and failsafe provisional ballots are not counted on election day. Instead, they are stored in individual sealed envelopes and kept separate from ballots that have been cast; these are the envelopes referred to in row F on the worksheet. After the polls close but prior to certification, the voter’s eligibility is reviewed, and a determination is made to either accept or reject these ballots based on this review by the county board of canvassers. Accepted ballots are then counted.

SCANNER/DS200

A piece of voting equipment used to read the voter selections from a ballot card or a hand-marked paper ballot. Ballots are cast on this device.

SPOILED BALLOT

A ballot that has been defaced or marked in error. For example, a voter may make a selection by mistake and then return the ballot to a poll clerk for a second ballot. The term “spoiled” is then written on the back of the ballot and retained for records. State law also refers to a spoiled ballot as a soiled, marred, and defaced ballot.

ELECTRONIC POLLBOOK

A piece of election equipment in the form of a tablet that contains the electronic version of the voter registration list, which is used to determine whether a person is eligible to vote in an election and in the precinct. These pollbooks also have the ability to capture a voter’s signature, which is evidence that a voter took the voter’s oath. Ballots are not cast on this device.

PAPER POLL LIST

A form containing the voter’s oath and signatures of voters who have taken the voter’s oath. Paper poll lists are used when the electronic pollbooks are not available or when voters must be checked in manually.

Ballot Reconciliation Worksheet Bottom Portion

The bottom one-fourth of the worksheet contains the reconciliation portion, which is also to be completed by the poll clerk. Line 1, as follows, is intended to reconcile the number of used and unused ballots with the total ballots supplied.

Line 1: Total 2 Total 3 Total 1
 (Ballots Used) + (Ballots Not Used) = (Ballots Supplied)

Line 2 below is intended to reconcile the number of voters checked in with the number of ballots used.

$$\text{Line 2:} \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{Total 4} \\ \text{(Voters Checked In)} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{G} \\ \text{(Spoiled Ballots)} \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total 2} \\ \text{(Ballots Used)} \end{array}$$

Beneath the reconciliation formulas, there is a space to address any issues, including ballots that were lost or unscanned.

Worksheet Color Coding

For ease of completion, ballot reconciliation worksheets are meant to be printed in color. Four different colors are used for Totals 2 through 4 as well as for spoiled ballots:

Color	Corresponds to	
None	Total 1	Ballots Supplied
Yellow	Total 2	Ballots Used
Blue	Total 3	Ballot Not Used
Orange	Total 4	Voters Checked In
Green	Row G	Spoiled Ballots

Each color at the top of the worksheet has a corresponding color at the bottom, where reconciliation is performed. These colors are meant to assist the user in transferring the data from the top to the correct field at the bottom. It is important to note the color yellow for Total 2 and the color orange for Total 4 can often appear similar in appearance when printed.

Sample and Results

We reviewed a random sample of ballot reconciliation worksheets from the November 2022 General Election for Lee County to determine if they were adequately completed and reconciled. For this election, the county completed its worksheets by precinct. Per S.C. Code §7-13-1150, ballot reconciliation worksheets are to be completed by precinct. However, since counties, at times, consolidate multiple precincts into a single polling location, we conducted our analysis by polling location. For this election, the county had 21 polling locations. The random sample included 19 of the 21 polling locations, and the results were calculated at a 99% confidence level and margin of error of ± 10 percentage points. Therefore, these results can be generalized about all of Lee County's polling locations during the 2022 General Election.

For this review, the term "completed" meant rows C–K contained values. If a field in rows C–K was blank, zero was assumed unless zeros were used elsewhere on the worksheet. The total boxes for each section (Total 1, Total 2, Total 3, and Total 4) were not included within the definition of completed, as they were a separate method of counting ballots and voters to what was presented in rows C–K. Additionally, the term "reconciled" meant the addition in Line 1 and the resulting value in N equaled the value in Total 1 (Total Ballots Supplied), and the addition in Line 2 and the resulting value in Q equaled the value in Total 2 (Total Ballots Used).

Figure 2 below provides a diagram of what was considered completed and reconciled on the worksheet. Note, information in red was added to the diagram to distinguish otherwise unidentified fields and sections of the worksheet.

Figure 2: Worksheet Diagram for the Definition of Completed and Reconciled

County _____ Precinct _____ Date _____

Ballots Supplied		
A	Ballot Cards (Completed by County Office)	
B	Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Completed by County Office) (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional)	
C	Additional Ballot Cards	
D	Additional Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional)	
		Total 1

Ballots Used		
E	Ballots Scanned (Ballot Cards and Emergency Ballots) (Number displayed on the Scanner/DS200)	
F	Provisional Ballots (Hand-Marked Paper Ballots/Envelopes)	
G	Spoiled Ballots (Ballot Cards + Hand-Marked Paper Ballots)	
		Total 2

Ballots Not Used		
H	Ballot Cards	
I	Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional)	
		Total 3

Voters Checked In		
J	Electronic Poll Book (EPB)	
K	Paper Poll List (Include Provisionals NOT entered in the EPB) (DO NOT Include Curbside Poll List)	
		Total 4

Line 1 Total 2 **L** + Total 3 **M** = **N** (Should equal Total 1)

Line 2 Total 4 **O** + G **P** = **Q** (Should equal Total 2)

Explain any discrepancies:

Are you returning any Emergency ballots that have not been scanned? Yes ☐ No ☐
(Do NOT include Provisional or Failsafe Provisional ballots)

Poll Clerk Signature: _____ Time: _____

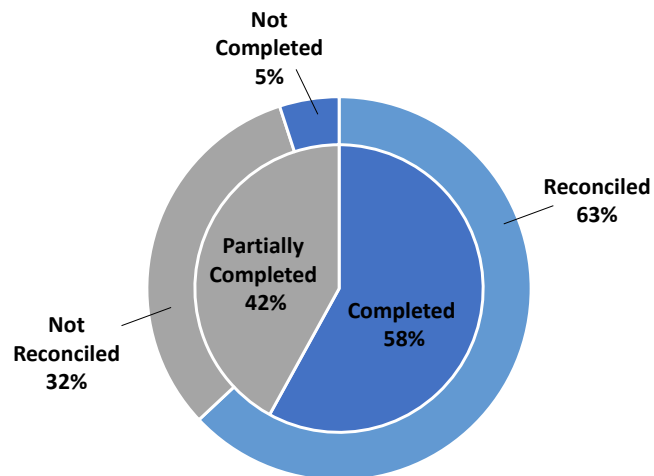
SEC FRM 1150-202208

**every vote matters.
every vote counts.**

Source: S.C. State Election Commission

For Lee County, 58% (11/19) of its worksheets were completed, and 42% (8/19) were partially completed. Additionally, 63% (12/19) were reconciled, 32% (6/19) were not, and 5% (1/19) were not completed. Figure 3 below provides a breakdown of the completion and reconciliation status of these worksheets.

Figure 3: Overall Completion and Reconciliation Status of the Worksheets



Source: Analysis of Lee County's Ballot Reconciliation Worksheets, 2022 General Election

For six of the eight partially completed worksheets, one or more fields were left blank, but other fields on the same worksheet contained zeros. If the user had filled in zeros in these rows, then 89% (17/19) of the worksheets would have been completed. The State Election Commission's (SEC) instructions for the worksheet did not require a user to fill all fields. However, as a third-party reviewer, it was difficult to discern if an empty field was an oversight or intentional. Requiring a value for all fields on the worksheet will likely improve clarity to all users. In December 2024, a recommendation was made to the SEC to require a value, even if zero, be written in each of the worksheet's fields.

For the remaining two worksheets that were partially completed, both were missing non-zero values, including values in rows:

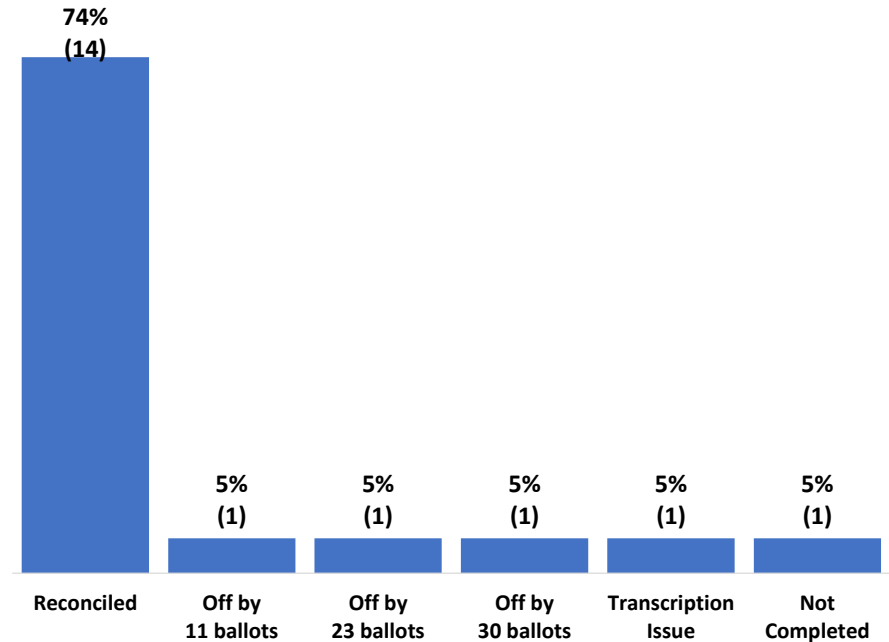
- C (Additional Ballot Cards), D (Additional Hand-Marked Paper Ballots), G (Spoiled Ballots Used), I (Hand-Marked Paper Ballots Not Used), and K (Voters Checked In/Paper Poll List) for one worksheet.
- H (Ballot Cards Not Used) and I (Hand-Marked Paper Ballots Not Used) for the other worksheet.

According to a county election official, it did not have a process to ensure the worksheets were completed and reconciled. However, starting in February 2024, the county created a check-in and review station on election night at which staff review the worksheets with the clerks and makes corrections, if needed. This review process is likely to ensure each field on the worksheet is completed.

Reconciliation of Line 1

As for reconciliation, 74% (14/19) of the worksheets reconciled on Line 1, 21% (4/41) did not, and 5% (1/41) were not completed. Of the sample, 1 was off by 11 ballots, 1 was off by 23 ballots, and 1 was off by 30 ballots. Figure 4 below provides a breakdown of the reconciliation status of Line 1.

Figure 4: Reconciliation Status of Line 1



Note: Off by 1% due to rounding.

Source: Analysis of Lee County's Ballot Reconciliation Worksheets, 2022 General Election

For the worksheets off by 11 ballots, 23 ballots, and 30 ballots, the unused hand-marked paper ballots were not accounted for. For example, on one worksheet, 11 hand-marked paper ballots were supplied (row B), but zero was written for both used provisional ballots (row F)—a type of hand-marked paper ballot—and unused hand-marked paper ballots (row I). If the poll clerk had written 11 for the unused hand-marked paper ballots, the line would have reconciled. This occurred on the other two worksheets as well. Per a county election official, since June 2024, poll clerks are trained with two examples on completing worksheets with an opportunity to ask questions after. Additionally, clerks are given the opportunity to observe how to complete the worksheets during the early voting period. Ensuring this training addresses accounting for unused hand-marked paper ballots can resolve this issue.

On one worksheet, the totals at the top of the worksheet were not transcribed to the bottom of the worksheet, rendering it not completed. Specifically, Total 2 and Total 3 from the top were not transcribed to

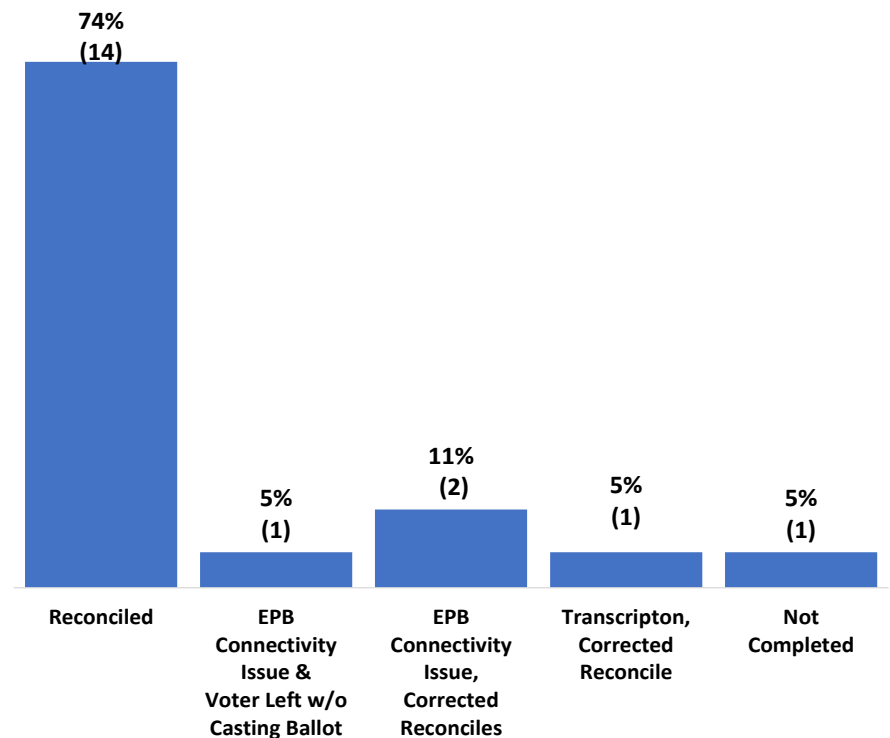
Total 2 and Total 3 at the bottom to Line 1. If the values had been transcribed, the line would have reconciled. Again, the county's ballot reconciliation worksheet check-in and review station is likely to identify similar instances of transcription and incompleteness.

Lastly, on one worksheet, the line was not completed. Specifically, there were five fields between rows C–K that were incomplete as well as Line 1 and Line 2. As such there was not enough information to determine the issue on the worksheet. During the county's review process, having county staff complete blank worksheets based on returned election materials—results from the voting equipment (row E), provisional ballot envelopes (row F), spoiled ballots (row G), unused ballots (rows H and I), paper poll lists (row K)—and the turnout report (row J), which is the data logged by the host server that shows the count of voters who were issued voting credit, can improve the reconciliation of these worksheets.

Reconciliation of Line 2

As for Line 2, 74% (14/19) of the worksheets reconciled, 21% (4/19) did not, and 5% (1/19) were not completed, as mentioned above. Figure 5 below provides a breakdown of the reconciliation status of Line 2.

Figure 5: Reconciliation Status of Line 2



EPB=Electronic Pollbook

Source: Analysis of Lee County's Ballot Reconciliation Worksheets, 2022 General Election

For the 5 worksheets that did not reconcile, the following table explains the imbalances.

# OF WORKSHEETS	MAIN ISSUE	ISSUE DESCRIPTION
1	Electronic Pollbook Connectivity Issue & Voter Left Without Casting Ballot	<p>This worksheet was off due to an electronic pollbook (EPB) connectivity issue as well as a voter leaving without casting his ballot. On the worksheet, the clerk overstated the voters checked in by two. After updating the worksheet with turnout report data—data logged by the host server that shows the count of voters who were issued voting credit—there was one more voter checked in than ballots voted. It is important to note that EPBs can have connectivity issues at polling locations, which can, at times, cause devices to display incorrect totals for voters checked at the polling location. However, the accurate log of checked-in voters is recorded in the turnout data. It is uncertain that the impact of these connectivity issues was known at the time of this election.</p> <p>With one more voter checked in than ballots voted, this is likely due a voter checking in but not his casting ballot. When a checked-in voter receives a ballot but does not cast it, there are three scenarios that may occur: a voter may return the ballot to a poll manager, abandon the ballot during the voting process, or leave the precinct with the ballot. Per the 2022 General Election poll manager handbook, when a voter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returns his ballot, the poll manager needs to spoil the ballot and cancel the voter’s participation in the EPB; this would not cause a reconciliation imbalance. • Abandons his ballot during the voting process and does not inform the poll managers, they must assume the voter intended to cast the ballot. Two poll managers must place the ballot in the Scanner/DS200. This would not cause a reconciliation imbalance. • Leaves with his ballot, the poll manager who is the exit monitor—the poll manager who instructs voters on how to scan their ballots and provides “I Voted” stickers—needs to alert the voter. However, it can be difficult to always know if a checked-in voter has left with his ballot or stop a voter from taking his ballot; this would cause a reconciliation imbalance. Under this circumstance, noting such a situation in the notes section on the worksheet is the only option to the poll clerk.
2	Electronic Pollbook Connectivity Issue, Corrected Reconciled	These worksheets contained EPB connectivity issues, as described above. Using the turnout data, the worksheets reconciled.
1	Transcription Issue, Corrected Reconciled	This worksheet had a transcription issue that prevented reconciliation. Specifically, row G (Spoiled Ballots Used) at the top of the worksheet was incorrectly carried down to the bottom of the worksheet. If it had been transcribed correctly, the line would have reconciled.

1	Not Completed	This worksheet did not reconcile because it was not completed. Specifically, rows G (Spoiled Ballots Used), I, (Hand-Marked Paper Ballots Not Used), and K (Voters Checked In/ Paper Poll List) were blank and, therefore, did not contain enough information to determine reconciliation.
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Again, enhancing its worksheet review process to correct transcription issues and by having county staff complete blank worksheets based on returned election materials—spoiled ballots (row G), unused hand-marked paper ballots (row I), paper poll lists (row K)—and the turnout report (row J), can improve the reconciliation of these worksheets. Adequately completing and reconciling the ballot reconciliation worksheets for each polling location may give greater assurance that the results include all valid ballots cast.

Recommendations

1. The Lee County Voter Registration and Elections Office should enhance its poll clerk ballot reconciliation worksheet training to feature:
 - Accounting of hand-marked paper ballots.
 - Color coding of the worksheet for transcription purposes.
2. The Lee County Voter Registration and Elections Office should, during its worksheet review process:
 - Complete blank worksheets or blank rows based on returned election data, including results from the voting equipment, provisional ballot envelopes, spoiled ballots, unused ballots, and paper poll lists.
 - Compare the worksheet to the host server turnout data and make corrective edits to the worksheets, as needed.

Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

This report provides the results of our compliance audit of the Lee County Voter Registration and Elections Office and its use of the ballot reconciliation worksheet. We conducted this audit under the provision of S.C. Code §7-3-20(D)(3). The review period for the audit was for the November 2022 General Election, and the objective was to determine whether precinct ballot reconciliation worksheets from this election were adequately completed and reconciled. To conduct this audit, we used a variety of sources of evidence, including:

- Federal and state laws.
- S.C. State Election Commission (SEC) policies and procedures.
- SEC training materials.
- Interviews with and surveys of county election officials.
- Information from South Carolina and other state agencies as well as the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.
- Contracts and information from Election Systems & Software and its vendor, Printelect.
- Ballot reconciliation worksheets.

Criteria used to evaluate compliance was based on federal and state laws and agency policies, procedures, and training material. We reviewed internal controls in several areas, including SEC policies and procedures; county policies, procedures, and practices; and agency training. Our findings are detailed in this report.

Appendix B: Lee County Comments



To: SC SEC Audit Department

Subject: Ballot Reconciliation Worksheet Audit – 2022 General Election

Dear Audit Team,

Regarding the Ballot Reconciliation Worksheet Audit for the 2022 General Election, I would like to note that I was not serving as Director during that time and therefore I am not familiar with the specific processes that were in place.

Since taking on the role of Director, I have implemented several best practices to improve the ballot reconciliation process. These include:

- **Enhanced Clerk Training:** All Clerks now receive additional training on completing the reconciliation worksheet. This includes hands-on exercises using two sample worksheets and a color-coded version accompanied by step-by-step instructions.
- **Group Review & Q&A:** After completing the exercises (provided by the SEC), we review the worksheets together and provide an opportunity for questions to ensure understanding.
- **Observation Opportunity:** Clerks needing additional support are invited to observe the reconciliation process during early voting and receive further guidance.

Additionally, on **Election Night**, we created a **dedicated reconciliation workstation**.

Before leaving, each Clerk is required to review their completed worksheet with the Deputy Director. If any part of the worksheet is incomplete or unclear, the Deputy Director and Clerk walks through the reconciliation together.

We are committed to maintaining transparency and accuracy and are open to any feedback or recommendations you may have to further improve our process.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kaulonda Lewis".

Kaulonda Lewis, Director

Lee County Voters Registration & Elections