

October 2025

AN IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF SUMTER 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.

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Summary of Results

For the November 2022 General Election, 66% of Sumter County's ballot reconciliation worksheets were completed, and 56% were reconciled. On the worksheets that were partially completed, this was, in part, due to a lack of a requirement from the State Election Commission (SEC) to fill every field, even if zero.

For the 44% of worksheets that were not reconciled, this was primarily due to not accounting for hand-marked paper ballots, electronic pollbook connectivity issues, not using or counting signatures from the paper poll list, and worksheets that were not completed or not available. 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 _Precinct ______ Date _____ County __ **Ballots Supplied** A Ballot Cards (Completed by County Office) Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Completed by County Office) (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional) Additional Ballot Cards Additional Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional) Total 1 **Ballots Used** 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 Ballot Cards** Hand-Marked Paper Ballots (Emergency/Provisional + Failsafe Provisional) Total 3 Voters Checked In Electronic Poll Book (EPB) 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
В		Hand-Marked Paper Ballots
С		Additional Ballot Cards
D		Additional Hand-Marked Paper Ballots
Е		Ballots Scanned
F	Ballots Used	Provisional Ballots
G		Spoiled Ballots
Н	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 2 below is intended to reconcile the number of voters checked in with the number of ballots used.

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.

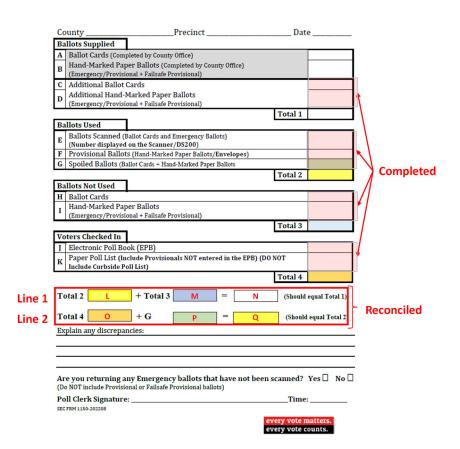
Sample and Results

We reviewed a random sample of ballot reconciliation worksheets from the November 2022 General Election for Sumter County to determine whether 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. The random sample included 41 of the 53 polling locations. After selecting the polling locations, there were five locations that contained two worksheets—one for each precinct in the polling location; in these instances, one of the worksheets for each location was randomly selected and included in the analysis. The random sample was calculated at a 99% confidence level with a margin of error at ± 10 percentage points. Therefore, these results can be generalized about all of Sumter 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.

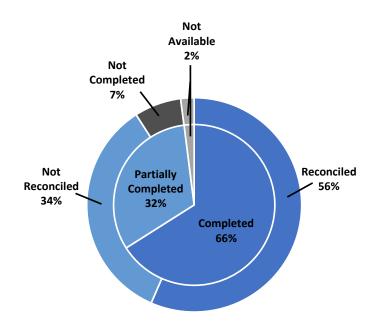
Figure 2: Worksheet Diagram for the Definition of Completed and Reconciled



Source: S.C. State Election Commission

For Sumter County, 66% (27/41) of its worksheets were completed, 32% (13/41) were partially completed, and 2% (1/41) were not available. For reconciliation, 56% (23/41) were reconciled, 34% (14/41) were not, 7% (3/41) were not completed, and 2% (1/41) were not available. Figure 3 below illustrates the overall completion and reconciliation status of these worksheets.

Figure 3: Overall Completion and Reconciliation Status of the Worksheets



Note: Outer ring off by 1% due to rounding.

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

Retention of the Worksheets

Two percent of the worksheets (1/41) for the sampled polling locations were not provided. S.C. Regulation 12-517.5 requires county election offices to maintain election-related documents for two years after an election. The request for this information was in August 2023, approximately a year after the 2022 General Election. This worksheet was not included during the initial collection of requested documents and not available during a follow-up request in April 2025. A county election official stated ballot reconciliation worksheets are placed in a precinct binder with all other forms the clerks are instructed to complete and return to the county office. It is unclear if the county did not collect this worksheet from the poll clerk or collected it but did not retain it. Implementing a process that ensures all ballot reconciliation worksheets are collected from poll clerks and retained by the county staff for two years can ensure the county meets retention requirements.

Completion of Worksheets

For most of the worksheets that were partially completed, 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 93% (38/41) 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 rows. However, as a third-party reviewer, it was difficult to discern if an empty row was an oversight or intentional. Requiring a value for all rows 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.

Of the remaining partially completed worksheets, 5% (2/41) were missing values in rows E–K. According to a county election official, in 2022, ballot reconciliation worksheets were not checked for completion. The official also stated that, in 2024, the county started to review these worksheets at times before and at times after certification. Updating this review process to occur prior to certification and ensuring each field on the worksheet is completed can improve the completion rate of these worksheets.

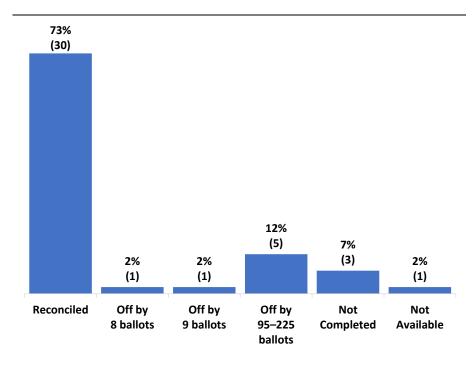
Reconciliation of Line 1

As for reconciliation, 73% (30/41) of the worksheets reconciled on Line 1, 17% (7/41) did not, 7% (3/41) were not completed, and 2% (1/41) were not available. Of the sample:

- 2% (1/41) were off by 8 ballots.
- 2% (1/41) were off by 9 ballots.
- 12% (5/41) were off by 95–255 ballots.

Figure 4 below provides a breakdown of the reconciliation status of Line 1.

Figure 4: Reconciliation Status of Line 1



Note: Off by 2% due to rounding.

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

For the worksheet off by eight ballots, the issue appears to be a result of not counting individual ballot cards. It is important to note, the ballot card packaging process weighs rather than counts ballot cards and could,

therefore, cause packages to be off by $\pm 2\%$; a package of 250 could be over or under by as many as 5 ballot cards. If county staff and poll clerks count the ballot packages and not the individual ballot cards, the values in rows A and C could be incorrect and, therefore, cause Total 1 (Total Ballots Supplied) to be incorrect.

Per a county election official, county staff do not count individual ballot cards before sending them out to the polling locations, but its poll clerks are trained to count them one package at a time. It is important to note that the county has a DS450—a high-speed tabulation device/scanner, which can count blank ballot cards at a rate of 75 per minute. Counting individual ballot cards in the office will likely reduce miscounts in the number of ballots supplied.

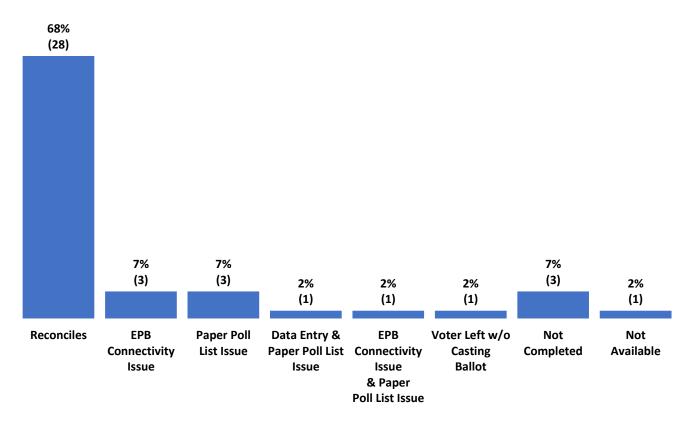
For the worksheet off by nine ballots, the issue is unclear due to unreliable data. Specifically, there were two numbers written down in row A (Ballot Cards Supplied) and nine different numbers written for row B (Hand-Marked Paper Ballots Supplied). It appears the clerk may have been trying to indicate a different number of ballots was actually supplied than stated by the county office on the worksheet, yet none of the supplied amounts were crossed out. Without certainty to the number of ballots supplied, it is not possible to determine what caused the worksheets not to reconcile. Again, updating its worksheet review process to ensure corrections to the worksheet, including strikethroughs of incorrect totals for ballots supplied, can improve this issue.

For the 5 worksheets off by 95–255 ballots, the unused hand-marked paper ballots were not accounted for. For example, on 1 worksheet, 95 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 95 for the unused hand-marked paper ballots, the line would have reconciled. This occurred on the other 4 worksheets that were off by 95–255 ballots. Per a county election official, the county did not provide training on ballot reconciliation worksheets other than what was included in the SEC's poll clerk training; however, this information was not detailed or hands-on. Since then, the county has added to the SEC's training on these worksheets with a hands-on exercise, using different number scenarios. Ensuring this training addresses how to account for used and unhand-marked can rectify this issue.

Reconciliation of Line 2

As for Line 2, 68% (28/41) of the worksheets reconciled, 22% (9/41) did not, 7% (3/41) were not completed, and 2% (1/41) were not available. Figure 5 below provides a breakdown of the reconciliation status for Line 2.

Figure 5: Reconciliation Status of Line 2



EPB= Electronic Pollbook

Note: Off by 3% due to rounding.

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

For the nine worksheets that did not reconcile and the three worksheets that were not completed, the following table explains the issues.

# OF	Main	ISSUE
WORKSHEETS	ISSUE	DESCRIPTION
3	Electronic Pollbook Connectivity Issue	These worksheets contained electronic pollbook (EPB) connectivity issues that caused the imbalances. For example, on one worksheet, the clerk overstated the voters checked in on the EPB by three voters. After updating with November 2022 General Election turnout report data—data logged by the host server that shows the count of voters who were issued voting credit—the worksheet reconciled. A similar situation occurred on the other two worksheets. 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.
3	Paper Poll List Issue	These worksheets contained more ballots voted than voters checked in. Two of these worksheets had one more ballot voted than voters checked in and the third had three. This was likely due to either not using or counting signatures from the paper poll list.
1	Data Entry & Paper Poll List Issue	This worksheet contained a data entry issue and paper poll list issues. On the worksheet, the clerk understated the ballots scanned by 4 ballots. After updating the worksheet based on Scanner/DS200 data, there were five more ballots scanned than voters checked in. As such, this was likely due to either not using or counting signatures from the paper poll list.
1	Electronic Pollbook Connectivity & Paper Poll List Issue	This worksheet had more ballots voted than voters checked in due to EPB connectivity issues. After updating the worksheet with turnout data, the worksheets still did not reconcile due to not using or counting signatures from the paper poll list, as described above.
1	Voter Left w/o Casting Ballot	 This worksheet included at least one more voter checked in than ballots voted, which was likely due to a voter not casting his 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: 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.
3	Not Completed	These worksheets did not reconcile because they were not completed. For two worksheets, the line was blank and there were no values at the top of the worksheet to determine reconciliation. For a third worksheet, the line was blank and there were some but not enough values at the top of the worksheet to determine reconciliation.

Again, updating the county's worksheet review process to check the worksheets against returned election materials—paper poll lists and results from the voting equipment—as well as the turnout report and correct noted errors can assist with resolving these imbalances. Furthermore, during the review process, having county staff complete blank worksheets based on returned election materials and the turnout report 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 Sumter County Voter Registration and Elections Office should collect and retain all its ballot reconciliation worksheets for two years after an election, as required by state regulation.
- 2. The Sumter County Voter Registration and Elections Office should, during its worksheet review process and prior to certification, ensure the worksheets are returned completed. If worksheets are incomplete, staff should complete them based on returned election materials, such as paper poll lists and results from the voting equipment.
- 3. The Sumter County Voter Registration and Elections Office should count individual ballot cards prior to supplying them to its polling locations.
- 4. The Sumter County Voter Registration and Elections Office should enhance its poll clerk ballot reconciliation worksheet training to feature:
 - Completing the worksheets.
 - Accounting for hand-marked paper ballots.
- 5. The Sumter County Voter Registration and Elections Office should compare its ballot reconciliation worksheets to the paper poll lists and host server turnout data and make corrective edits to them, as needed.

Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

This report provides the results of our compliance audit of the Sumter 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: Sumter County Comr	nents	S
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No comments.