SOUTH CAROLINA
ELECTION COMMISSION

January 2026

AN IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF RICHLAND 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 Richland County's ballot reconciliation worksheets from the November 2022 General Election, 45% were completed, 12% were reconciled, and 1% were not available for review. Of the 53% of worksheets that were partially completed, this was likely due to the lack of a requirement from the State Election Commission (SEC) to fill every field, even if zero. If these worksheets contained zeros, then 80% would have been completed. For the remaining 19% of incomplete worksheets, this was due to clerks not completing rows that contained required information per state law. For the 87% of the county's worksheets that were not reconciled, this was due to ballots provided issues, not accounting for unused ballots, data entry issues, out-of-date worksheet issues, transcription issues, and completion issues.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 S.C. State Election Commission (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		Ballot Cards
B	Ballots Supplied	Hand-Marked Paper Ballots
C		Additional Ballot Cards
D		Additional Hand-Marked Paper Ballots
E		Ballots Scanned
F	Ballots Used	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: $\underset{\text{(Ballots Used)}}{\text{Total 2}} + \underset{\text{(Ballots Not Used)}}{\text{Total 3}} = \underset{\text{(Ballots Supplied)}}{\text{Total 1}}$

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

Line 2: $\dfrac{\text{Total 4}}{\text{(Voters Checked In)}} + \dfrac{\text{G}}{\text{(Spoiled Ballots)}} = \dfrac{\text{Total 2}}{\text{(Ballots Used)}}$

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 Richland 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 136 polling locations. The random sample included 75 of these polling locations, and the results were calculated at a 99% confidence level with a margin of error of ±10 percentage points. Therefore, these results can be generalized about all of Richland 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

Retention of the Worksheets

One worksheet (1%) for the sampled polling locations was 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. Due to the turnover in 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. As of October 2024, the county has a checklist that is used on election night to ensure all required materials are collected from poll clerks during the intake process. Ensuring the worksheets are collected and retained by the county for two years will allow the county to meet retention requirements**.**

Use of Out-of-Date Worksheets

For the available worksheets within the selected sample of 75, all were completed on an out-of-date version of the State Election Commission (SEC) worksheet from 2019. The most up-to-date version of the worksheet during the 2022 General Election is pictured above in Figure 2.

The main difference between the worksheets was the Line 2 reconciliation formula. Mainly, the equation for Line 2 on the 2019 version of the worksheet was used before the implementation of the electronic pollbook (EPB). Until 2020, a single paper poll list was used to checked in *all* voters. The contract for EPBs to be used as the voter check-in system was awarded in September 2020. Consequently, the voter check-in process was revamped to use the EPB for most voters checked in while a paper poll list was only used for voters who had to be checked in manually. This change was reflected on worksheets from October 2020 onwards. Therefore, the 2019 version of the worksheet does not provide a breakdown of voters checked in on the EPB compared to the paper poll list. As such, the cause of most reconciliation issues on Line 2 or whether the issues were related to the paper poll list or the EPB could not be determined.

Specifically, Line 2 on the 2019 version contained:

$$\text{Line 2:} \quad \underset{\text{(Ballots Used)}}{\text{Total 2}} \quad - \quad \underset{\text{(Spoiled Ballots)}}{\text{H}} \quad = \quad \underset{\substack{\text{(Number of} \\ \text{Signatures on the} \\ \text{Poll List)}}}{\text{K}}$$

Alternatively, Line 2 for the 2022 General Election version contained:

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

Note, this is the same equation but written differently, as row K (Number of Signatures on the Poll List) accounts for the total number of voters checked in. As such, we were still able to determine completion and reconciliation on these worksheets.

Additionally, the 2019 worksheet contained an additional row in Total 2 that was not present on the 2022 version: ballots not scanned. This row was meant to account for ballot cards and emergency ballots voted on but unable to be scanned; this row would normally have zero.

Figure 4 below provides a visual of the 2019 worksheet used. Due to the turnover in the county office, it is unknown why the county used this worksheet in the 2022 General Election. However, according to an election official, the county currently uses the most up-to-date worksheet available from the SEC.

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Figure 3 and Figure 4

Figure 3:
S.C. State Election Commission's 2022
Ballot Reconciliation Worksheet

Figure 4:
S.C. State Election Commission's 2019 Ballot
Reconciliation Worksheet Used by County in 2022

Source: S.C. State Election Commission

For Richland County, ballot reconciliation worksheets for 45% (34/75) of the polling locations were completed, 53% (40/75) were partially completed, and 1% (1/75) was not available for review. Additionally, 12% (9/75) were reconciled, 87% (65/75) were not reconciled, while again 1% (1/75) was not available for review. Figure 5 below provides a breakdown of the completion and reconciliation status of these worksheets.

Figure 5: Overall Completion and Reconciliation Status of the Worksheets
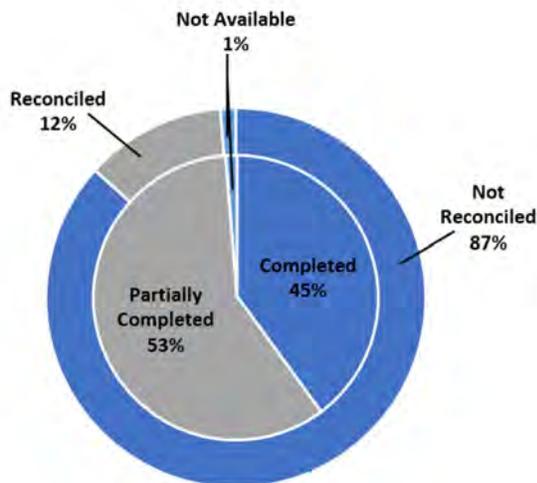
Note: Inner chart off by 1% due to rounding.

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

Completion of Worksheets

For 26 partially completed worksheets, this was because fields were left blank, but other fields on the same worksheet contained zeros. For example, on one worksheet, rows C (Additional Ballot Cards Supplied) and D (Additional Hand-Marked Paper Ballots Supplied) were blank while zeros were present on rows F (Ballots Not Scanned) and G (Provisional Ballots Used). If the poll clerks had filled in the necessary zeros, then 80% (60/75) of the worksheets would have been completed. The SEC's 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 19% (14/75) partially completed worksheets, this was due to clerks not completing rows for additional ballots supplied (row C and row D), ballots used (rows E–G), and voters checked in (row K). Due to the turnover in the county office, it is unknown why these worksheets were not completed, as the details of the training or worksheet review processes that were in place during the 2022 General Election were not available. However, according to a county election official, the office currently provides hands-on training to poll clerks on how to complete and reconcile the worksheets. Additionally, the county office has implemented a worksheet review process that works with the poll clerk and collects all necessary data to resolve any errors present on the worksheet. Continuing both practices will likely improve completion of the worksheets.
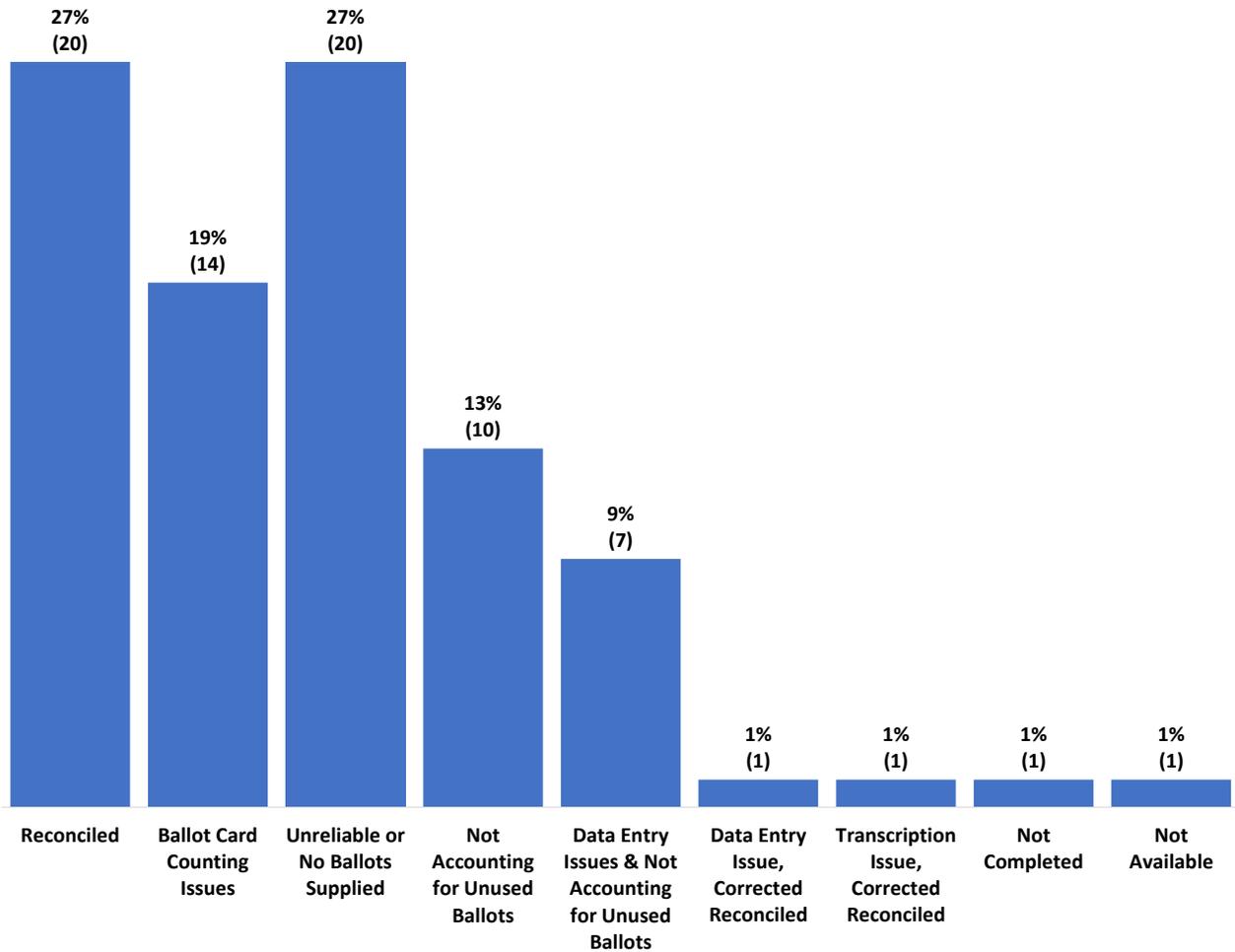
Reconciliation of Line 1

For Line 1, 27% (20/75) of the worksheets were reconciled. Figure 5 below provides a breakdown of the reconciliation status of Line 1.

Figure 6: Reconciliation Status of Line 1

Note: Off by 1% due to rounding.

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

For the 54 worksheets that did not reconcile as written by the poll clerk below is a description of the issues that caused these worksheets not to reconcile.

# OF WORKSHEETS	MAIN ISSUE	ISSUE DESCRIPTION
14	Ballot Card Counting Issues	These worksheets did not reconcile likely due to not counting individual ballot cards. It is important to note the ballot card packaging process weighs rather than counts ballot cards and, therefore, ballot packages could be off by ±2%; for example, 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 row A (Ballot Cards Supplied) and row C (Additional Ballot Cards Supplied) could be incorrect and, therefore, cause Total 1 (Total Ballots Supplied) to be incorrect. Due to turnover in the county office, it is unknown whether the individual ballot cards were counted by either county election staff or poll clerks. However, according to a county election official, county office staff complete row A and row B (Hand-Marked Paper Supplied) but only count individual ballot cards when using loose ballot cards or ballot packages of 250. The county standardly sends out packages of 25 ballots which are not counted. Additionally, the county train clerks to count individual ballot cards once the ballot packs are opened to verify the count listed. Counting individual cards when completing row A and row B in office and continuing to train poll clerks to count individual ballots to verify accuracy of row A and row B will likely improve reconciliation.
20	Unreliable or No Ballots Supplied	These worksheets did not reconcile due to an unreliable number of ballots supplied or there being no ballots listed as supplied. Specifically, either the Ballots Supplied section (rows A–D) was left blank or zero was written for hand-marked paper ballots supplied (row B), with some worksheets also having a blank field for additional hand-marked paper ballots supplied (row D). However, data was entered in the Ballots Used section (rows E–H) and Ballots Not Used section (rows I–J). Since it is not possible to use a ballot that has not been provided, the values provided or not provided on the worksheets were not reliable. Without reliable totals for these ballots, it was not possible to determine the issue on these worksheets.

It needs to be noted that counties, by law, must provide a fixed percentage of hand-marked paper ballots to each voting place. Specifically, S.C. Code §7-13-430(A) requires emergency ballots for up to 10% of registered, qualified voters, and S.C. Code §7-13-430(C) requires failsafe ballots for up to 5% of registered, qualified voters. Both emergency and failsafe ballots are hand-marked paper ballots. Due to turnover in county election officials since 2022, the county's process for supplying these ballots during the November 2022 General Election is unclear. As mentioned above, the county currently completes rows A and B in office. Continuing this process will likely improve reconciliation. Furthermore, this will provide the information needed to discern what, if any, issue occurred with reconciling the ballots supplied with the ballots used. |
| 10 | Not Accounting for Unused Ballots | These worksheets did not reconcile likely due to not accounting for unused ballots. For example, on one of the worksheets, there were 750 ballot cards supplied, 477 were used, but 23 was written for ballot cards not used. This practice of not accounting for unused ballot cards, unused hand-marked paper |

		ballots, or both was present on the other nine worksheets. Due to turnover in the county office, the training provided to poll clerks for the 2022 General Election is unknown. However, according to a county election official, as of 2023, the county began using SEC-provided training materials combined with hands-on practice. Additionally, poll clerks are trained through an election-day scenario to complete a sample worksheet. In this scenario, row A (Ballot Cards Supplied), row B (Hand-Marked Paper Ballots Supplied), row E (Ballots Scanned), row F (Provisional Ballots), row G (Spoiled Ballots), and row J (Electronic Pollbook/Voters Checked In) are provided, and the rest of the worksheet must be completed and reconciled by the clerks. Continuing this level of training will likely improve reconciliation.
7	Data Entry Issues & Not Accounting for Unused Ballots	These worksheets did not reconcile likely due to a combination of data entry issues and not properly accounting for unused ballots. The most common data entry errors were on row E (Ballots Scanned), row F (Ballots Not Scanned), and row G (Provisional Ballots Used). This was evident after examining Scanner/DS200 data and provisional ballot reports. As above, the same practice of not accounting for unused ballots was present on these worksheets. Again, information on poll clerk training for the 2022 General Election is unknown, however, the county election office, as of 2023, provides hands-on training on how to complete and reconcile the worksheet. Continuing this level of training will likely improve reconciliation.
1	Data Entry Issue, Corrected Reconciled	This worksheet did not reconcile due to a data entry issue. On the worksheet, the number of provisional ballots used was overstated by one, which was evident after reviewing the provisional ballot report. Had the correct number of provisional ballots been written down, the line would have reconciled. As mentioned above, information on poll clerk training for the 2022 General Election is unknown, however, the county election office, as of 2023, provides hands-on training on how to complete and reconcile the worksheets. Continuing this level of training will likely improve reconciliation.
1	Transcription Issue, Corrected Reconciled	This worksheet did not reconile due to a transcription issue. Total 2 was incorrectly transcribed to Line 1. Had it been correctly transcribed, the line would have reconciled. As mentioned above, the county election office has implemented a worksheet review process that checks them with poll clerks and, if issues are present, acquires necessary data to resolve these issues. Continuing this process will likely improve reconciliation.
1	Not Completed	This worksheet did not reconcile due to not being completed. Except for row F (Ballots Not Scanned), row H (Spoiled Ballots), and row I (Ballot Cards Not Used), the worksheet was not completed. Therefore, the worksheet did not contain sufficient information to determine reconciliation. As mentioned above, the county election office, as of 2023, provides hands-on training on how to complete and reconcile the worksheet. Continuing this process will likely improve reconciliation.

Reconciliation of Line 2

For Line 2, 33% (25/75) of the worksheets were reconciled. Figure 6 below provides a breakdown of the reconciliation status for Line 2.

Figure 7: Reconciliation Status of Line 2
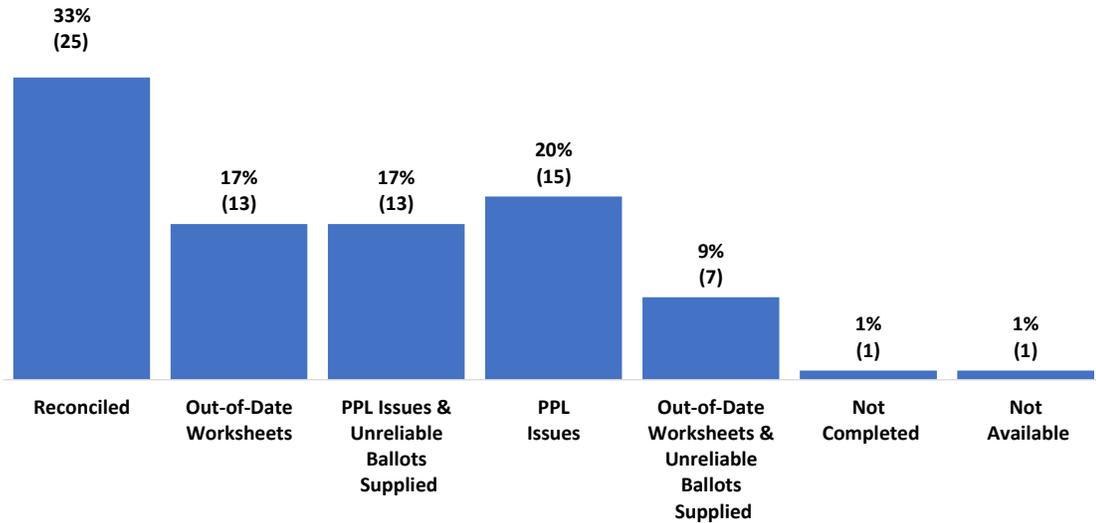
PPL = Paper Poll List

Note: Off by 2% due to rounding.

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

For the 49 worksheets that did not reconcile as written by the poll clerk, below is a description of the issues that caused these worksheets not to reconcile.

# OF WORKSHEETS	MAIN ISSUE	ISSUE DESCRIPTION
13	Out-of-Date Worksheets	The reason these worksheets did not reconcile could not be determined because they were completed on an out-of-date 2019 version. This version did not reflect separate numbers for the voters checked in on the EPB and the paper poll list unlike the most up-to-date version for the 2022 General Election (see Figure 4).
		For example, on 1 worksheet there were 728 ballots scanned, 1 provisional ballot used, and 732 voters listed as checked in on the poll list. However, without the breakdown of voters checked in on the EPB and paper poll list, it could not be determined whether the reason for more voters checked in than ballots scanned was linked to the EPB, the paper poll list, or another issue with the check in process.
		On another worksheet, there were 273 ballots scanned, 5 provisional ballots used, and 273 voters listed as checked in on the poll list. Without the

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		breakdown of voters checked in with the EPB and the paper poll list, it was not possible to determine the source of the issue. Although this issue affected all worksheets, not all of them were unreconciled. As mentioned above, it is unknown why these worksheets were used during the 2022 General Election. However, according to a county election official, the most up-to-date worksheet available from the SEC is currently in use. Continuing to use the most up-to-date SEC worksheet will likely improve reconciliation and provide the information needed to discern what, if any, issue occurred with the number of voters checked in.
13	Paper Poll List Issues & Unreliable Ballots Supplied	These worksheets had issues with row K (Number of Signatures on the Poll List) and issues with an unreliable number of ballots supplied, as discussed on Line 1. The issues were either row K not being completed, or the number of voters checked in not being consistent to the number of ballots voted. For example, on one worksheet, 260 ballots were scanned, but no signatures for voters checked in were listed on row K. Additionally, no ballots were listed as supplied. This issue most likely stems from the out-of-date worksheet issues that are discussed above. As previously mentioned, continuing to use the most up-to-date SEC worksheet will likely improve reconciliation.
15	Paper Poll List Issues	These worksheets had the same issues with row K (Number of Signatures on the Poll List) as the worksheets above. For example, on one worksheet, 426 ballots were listed as scanned, but there were zero signatures for voters checked in on row K . As mentioned above, continuing to use the most up-to-date SEC worksheet will likely improve reconciliation.
7	Out-of-Date Worksheets & Unreliable Ballots Supplied	These worksheets featured the same out-of-date worksheet issues as well as the same issues with an unreliable number of ballots supplied, both are described above. For example, on one worksheet, no ballots were listed as supplied, 527 ballots scanned, 7 provisional ballots used, and 537 voters checked in. As stated earlier, ensuring that the most up-to-date SEC worksheet is used, and that rows A (Ballot Cards Supplied) and B (Hand-Marked Paper Ballots Supplied) are completed by the office before being sent to polling locations will likely improve reconciliation.
1	Not Completed	This worksheet did not reconcile as it was not completed. Except for row F (Ballots Not Scanned), row H (Spoiled Ballots), and row I (Ballot Cards Not Used), this worksheet was not completed. Therefore, the worksheet did not contain sufficient information to determine reconciliation. As mentioned above, the county election office, as of 2023, provides hands-on training on how to complete and reconcile the worksheet. Continuing this process will likely improve reconciliation.

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 Richland County Voter Registration and Elections Office should ensure that its current worksheet collection process retains worksheets for two years by county election staff.

2. The Richland County Voter Registration and Elections Office should count individual ballot cards prior to elections to ensure the correct number of ballots are being supplied.

Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

This report provides the results of our compliance audit of the Richland 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: Richland County Comments

Voter Registration & Elections of

Travis Alexander
Director

Richland County, South Carolina

01/08/2026

This letter is submitted in response to the findings of the Audit of Richland County Voter Registration and Elections Ballot Reconciliation Worksheets for the November 2022 Election.

During 2022, multiple changes were implemented for election officials statewide, including expanded use of technology, enactment of new election laws, implementation of Early Voting, recruitment of new election workers, and updated training requirements. While these changes presented operational challenges, they were adopted and implemented by the Richland County Voter Registration and Elections Office prior to the November 2022 Election.

The Ballot Reconciliation Worksheets and their handling were among the documents and procedures that were updated in 2022. Since May 2023, Richland County has implemented policies and procedures to address the deficiencies identified in the 2022 Ballot Reconciliation Audit. These include election scenarios and in-depth hands on training for Clerks, hand counting *or* machine counting of large ballot card packs, documented election night check in which includes a ballot reconciliation station, and the development of retention policies and procedures. In addition, beginning in May 2023, the office enhanced election material retention practices to ensure compliance with the 22-month retention requirement. In November 2024, a designated secure retention area was procured for all required election documents and materials.

Current training for election workers emphasizes the requirement to count each pack of ballots prior to use. Beginning in January 2024, large quantities of ballot card packs have been hand-counted *or* machine-counted before being distributed to election workers for Early Voting and Election Day use. Due to a conflict between the process recommendation by the State Election Commission and the best practices and procedures provided by the state-mandated voting equipment vendor, the office requests additional training, procedures, and guidance regarding the handling and unwrapping of manufacturer-sealed ballot cards (see vendor guidelines below).

In conclusion, the Richland County Voter Registration and Elections Office acknowledges the findings of the November 2022 audit. Retention procedures have been updated to include a designated area for election worker documentation where Ballot Reconciliation Worksheets and other documents required by federal and state statutes are stored. The Richland County Voter Registration and Elections Office remains committed to maintaining the integrity and transparency of elections conducted in Richland County and to cooperating with the South Carolina Election Audit Division in future audits.

Kindest Regards,

Richland County Voter Registration and Elections

Guidelines from the South Carolina Mandated Voting Equipment Vendor

"Best Practices - Card Handling Card Handling Recommendations
TIPS FOR HANDLING ACTIVATION CARDS
Whether by poll workers or by voters, proper card handling can have a significant impact on the performance of your election equipment. Follow the guidelines below to ensure activation cards are handled properly before use with the ExpressVote...

Poll Workers
Proper card handling by poll workers will ensure cards are free of damage when issued to voters.
    Leave unused activation cards in their shrink wrap sleeve until they are needed. □
    Handle cards with dry hands. To prevent damage from moisture, you should always:
    Avoid wetting a finger for grip.

Be aware of residue from hand sanitizers or screen cleaners.
    Store stacks of cards on a flat surface.
    Do not pre-stage a card into the printer while waiting for the next voter.
    Transfer Pressure: Avoid using activation cards as a writing surface. This can cause impressions that may inhibit the ability of the barcode to successfully print."