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Supervisor Wilcox Assures Voters That Vote-by-Mail Is Secure

Marion County, FL. April 17 -As with every election, Marion County Supervisor of Elections Wesley Wilcox encourages voting by mail and assures voters that vote-by-mail is secure. The Supervisor of Elections office is the trusted source of voting and election information in Marion County and outlines the vote-by-mail process in an ongoing effort to educate voters and provide the facts.

Requests and Tracking

Only the voter, their immediate family member, or a designee are authorized to request or pick up a vote-by-mail ballot. It is illegal for any person to offer or accept any benefit in exchange for distributing, ordering, requesting, collecting, delivering, or otherwise physically possessing more than two vote-by-mail ballots per election, except as outlined in F.S. 104.0616.

Voters can easily request and track their vote-by-mail ballot at www.VoteMarion.Gov and are able to view when their ballot was requested, sent, received and counted.

Processing and Verification

As daily returns are received, the signature on each vote-by-mail envelope is examined to verify it matches the signature on the voter's record. If the signature matches, the ballot is accepted and the voting status is updated, to prevent a voter from voting twice in the same election. If there is no signature or a signature mismatch, the voter is immediately notified and has until two days after the election to cure. A minuscule number of vote-by-mail ballots are rejected; the majority due to the signature being completely missing!

Once all ballots are processed, they are sorted by precinct, counted, verified and reconciled against the report of total returns. All ballots are then securely stored for canvassing.

Canvassing and Tabulation

One of the biggest myths is that vote-by-mail ballots are only counted if needed. In fact, vote-by-mail ballots are counted first. Canvassing begins about 22 days before the election. The Canvassing Board (a county judge, county commissioner, and the Supervisor of Elections) and elections personnel convene at the advertised dates/times to publicly open and count all accepted ballots.

All accepted vote-by-mail ballots remain organized by precinct and are opened in teams. To maintain voter secrecy, one person removes the ballot from the envelope and hands it to the next person, who then unfolds it and places in a stack facedown. Once all ballots from a precinct have been opened, they are inserted into a high-speed reader to be tabulated. The total count is then verified against the number of ballots accepted. If there are any discrepancies, they are immediately addressed by the Canvassing Board.

Results are securely stored until after the close of polls on Election Day. By 7:30 p.m. on Election Day, a copy of the first set of unofficial results is published on the website, which contains the total of all accepted vote-by-mail ballots.

Audit and Retention

A public manual audit is conducted after each election. A randomly selected contest and precinct(s) is chosen by the Canvassing Board. Then all ballots (Vote-by-Mail, Early Voting, and Election Day) containing the selected precinct and race are hand counted to ensure the human count matches the machine count. Voting equipment accuracy has remained at 100%.

Once the audit is complete, all returned vote-by-mail ballots and certificate envelopes are boxed, labeled, and securely stored for 12-22 months after the certification of election, depending on the election type. Once the retention period has been met, the ballots are professionally destroyed.

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Citizens are encouraged to get involved in the process by applying to become an Election Worker or attending a Public Canvassing Board meeting! For additional information or questions, please contact our office at 352-620-3290 or visit www.VoteMarion.Gov.

#TrustedInfo2020 #Protect2020

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