



City of Takoma Park
Board of Elections

Training Manual 3

**Election Worker
CANVASSER GUIDE**



Email: elections@takomaparkmd.gov
Takomaparkmd.gov/elections

TAKOMA PARK BOARD OF ELECTIONS

CANVASSER GUIDE

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to be a canvasser with the Takoma Park Board of Election (hereinafter “BOE”) during the 2020 election cycle. It is the mission of the Board of Elections to ensure a fair, transparent, and accessible City election for all voters and to protect the integrity of the City election (Takoma Park Municipal Code Title 5 Chapter 24 Section 040.)

As a volunteer canvasser, you will provide crucial support to the Takoma Park Board of Elections in the administration of the City election. You will be asked to perform the duties described herein, and otherwise assigned by the BOE, and to do so faithfully, diligently, and without partiality or prejudice.

This guide will explain how to perform mail-in and absentee ballot **canvassing**, which is the process of opening and reviewing the contents of the ballots.

Your service is essential to the administration of a fair and open City election. Thank you.

Election Worker Objectives

Your goals as an election worker are to:

- Keep yourself and others safe,
- Assist the BOE to ensure that every valid vote is counted,
- Maintain the secrecy of voters’ ballots,
- Maintain the integrity of voters’ ballots,
- Ensure that ballots are handled consistently, and
- Guard against election fraud.

Code of Conduct for Canvassers

For the sake of secrecy and to help guard against fraud and maintain integrity:

- Do not bring electronic devices into the canvass room. Yes, this means phones. There will be a safe and secure location to store your phones and other electronic devices on site.
- Do not bring pens, pencils, or other writing implements into the canvass room.
- Do not bring food or drink into the canvass room. (They might be spilled on ballots).
- If you have ballots at your workstation, do not leave your workstation unattended. If you need to go to the bathroom or otherwise leave your workstation, call over a member of the BOE or city staff.

- Under no circumstances are you allowed to remove the batch of envelopes, or any individual envelope, from your assigned workspace. If there is an issue with a batch, or with an individual envelope or ballot, please call over the attending city staff or BOE member for assistance.
- Under no circumstances are you allowed to mark, adjust, alter, or in any way modify the ballots or the envelopes beyond what is asked of you in these instructions.

Please review and follow the Election Worker Code of Conduct and the Election Worker Safety Guide.

Canvassing Procedures

If you are volunteering for the first time as a canvasser, you will be asked to sign and date a copy of this set of instructions, certifying that you read and understand your responsibilities as a volunteer canvasser.

Upon your arrival at the Takoma Park Community Center (7500 Maple Avenue Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912), you will be seated by yourself at a table, which will be your workstation (please observe the social distancing rules as described in the Election Worker Safety Guide). You will be given a batch of envelopes which contain completed voter ballots. You will be asked to sign and date a cover sheet that corresponds to that batch of envelopes for the purpose of record-keeping. You will:

- Check the batch,
- Check the envelopes,
- Check what's in the envelopes,
- Unfold and check ballots, and
- Return the results of your work



Each of these steps will be explained in greater detail below.

If anything arises that is not covered by this guide, or if you are unsure about what to do, ask for help from a city staff or BOE member.

Checking Batches of Envelopes

Each batch of envelopes should be accompanied by a cover sheet which states the number of envelopes in the batch and the ward number for the batch. If the cover sheet is missing, ask for help from a city staff or BOE member.

Count the envelopes. If the count does not match the number on the cover sheet, ask for help. If the count matches the number on the cover sheet, continue to the next step.

Checking Envelopes

For now, leave everything in the envelopes.

Check that the oath on each envelope is signed; if the oath is not signed, set the envelope aside in a separate pile. This pile will contain all envelopes which appear to have an issue which needs review by the BOE. Be careful not to mix this pile with other piles or with the batch of envelopes. At the end of this process, you will call over a city staff or BOE member to take this pile. (Note: as is true of Montgomery county canvassers, you are not expected to verify that the signature on the envelope is that of the voter, only that the oath is signed.)

Check that the ward number on each envelope (near the bar code printed on the envelope) matches the ward number on the cover sheet; if the ward number does not match, set the envelope aside in the same pile as above.

Checking What's in the Envelopes

To maintain voters' secrecy when checking what is in the envelopes:

- Keep the envelopes oath-side down on the table
- Leave ballots folded until the contents of all envelopes have been checked.

Your envelopes may arrive already opened; for unopened envelopes, you will be provided a letter opener.

Remove the contents of each envelope that you have not set aside. Check that there is exactly one ballot in the envelope, and that it is for the ward number shown on the cover sheet.

If the envelope contains no ballots, multiple ballots, or a wrong ballot, put everything that was in the envelope back and set the envelope aside.

If the envelope contains exactly one correct ballot, put anything else that was in the envelope back in the envelope, add the envelope (still with the oath face down) to a pile of completed envelopes, and add the ballot (folded) to a pile of ballots to check.

Unfolding and Checking Ballots

Now unfold each removed ballot in turn. Set aside any ballots that require special processing, including:

- Torn or ripped ballots,
- Taped-together ballots,
- Stained ballots,
- Ballots with crossed-out choices,
- Signed ballots,

- Ballots with distinguishing marks (pictures; writing other than names in write-in boxes).

Do NOT set aside:

- Ballots where a voter has not voted in either or both contests,
- Ballots with “overvotes” (multiple candidates with the same ranking; multiple rankings for the same candidate),

If a ballot does not require special processing, flatten it as much as possible (bending it back along any folds) and add it to a pile of ballots to scan.

Returning the Results of Your Work

At this point you should have:

- A number (possibly zero) of set-aside envelopes (with unsigned oaths, wrong ward numbers, late postmarks, missing postmarks, no ballots enclosed, multiple ballots enclosed, or a wrong ballot enclosed)
- A number (almost surely not zero) of envelopes from which single ballots have been removed
- A number (possibly zero) of set-aside ballots requiring special processing
- A number (almost surely not zero) of ballots to scan

Ask for help from a city staff or BOE member; they will record numbers of envelopes and ballots on the cover sheet and take the envelopes and ballots off your hands.

Your City...Your Vote!

