

## How to Help STOP Election Sabotage

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### Welcome to How to Help Stop Election Sabotage!

I'm Emily Levy, the founder and Executive Director of Scrutineers, which is a nonpartisan organization working for the freedom to vote and elections that are transparent, so every voice is heard.

I started working in election protection back in the aftermath of the 2004 election. I founded Scrutineers in January 2020 because there wasn't a place for people to go who were concerned about our election systems and wanted to learn more and work to increase the trustworthiness of our elections.

I'll tell you more about Scrutineers toward the end of this presentation. The presentation is a little over a half hour long, so we'll have time for Q&A at the end.

I know there are a lot of places you could be today. I really appreciate that you chose to be here with us, learning about how you can help stop election sabotage by becoming a vote count observer. I promise to give you all I can in the short time we have together, and also to tell you how you can go deeper with the topics we're going to cover today.

You know, lot of people think of elections as pretty simple: people vote, the votes get counted, and the winners are announced.

- 1. People vote**
- 2. Votes are counted**
- 3. Winners are declared**

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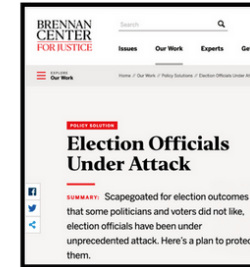
But the more you learn about elections, the more you'll understand just how complicated they are, and how hard it is to get them right. The people who run elections have really challenging jobs,

1. People vote
2. Votes are counted
3. Winners are declared

**NOT SO FAST!**



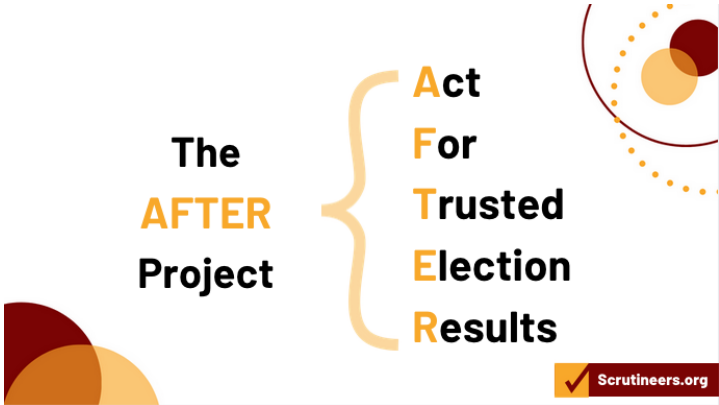
especially now when they're under attack by people who don't want every voice to be heard!



Most of the people running elections believe in democracy and the right to vote, and are doing their best.



Today’s training is part of Scrutineers’ AFTER Project – Act for Trusted Election Results. We know many people who care deeply about elections will be busy before and during the upcoming election, right up until the polls close on election night.



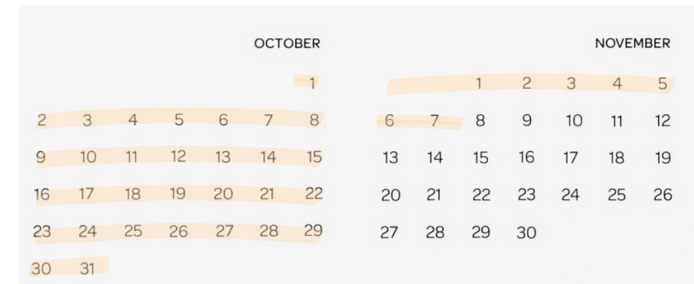
Some of you may be doing activities now like registering voters, getting out the vote, and campaigning. You may also vote early. Are you doing or planning to do any of these activities this fall? Go ahead and type into the chat.

| OCTOBER |    |    |    |    |    |    |  | NOVEMBER |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|         |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |  |          | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |    |
| 2       | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |  | 6        | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 9       | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |  | 13       | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 16      | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |  | 20       | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 23      | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |  | 27       | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |    |
| 30      | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |  |          |    |    |    |    |    |    |

- Registering Voters
- Getting Out the Vote
- Campaigning
- Early Voting



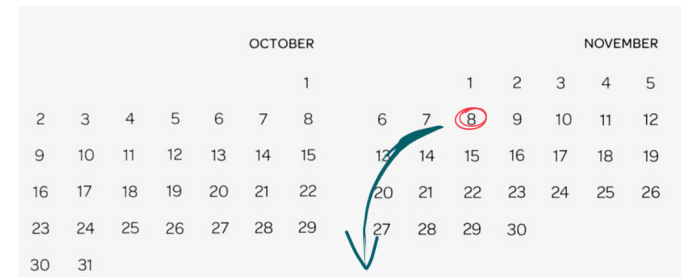
Again, those activities happen *before* Election Day.



Registering Voters  
Getting Out the Vote  
Campaigning  
Early Voting



On Election Day, the activity changes to voting (if you haven't yet). You may be working the polls or serving as a poll watcher. Get Out The Vote work continues throughout the day.



**Voting**  
Working the Polls  
Poll Watching  
Getting out the vote



Our focus today is what happens *after* the voting, starting when the polls close on election night and on the days and possibly even a couple of weeks that follow, until the election is certified and any audits are complete.

We'll teach you about how you can help ensure the votes are counted *fairly* and *accurately* by **observing at your local election office or vote-counting center**.

We need volunteer observers all over the country, in communities large and small, in the remaining primaries and the general election. Some observers are only able to work once for a couple of hours, others show up day after day, all the way up until the results are certified. That generally happens a couple of weeks after voting ends.

I've found that it's quite common for dedicated people to work hard leading up to an election and sometimes on election day, and then go home and wait for results, often feeling like they wish there was something more they could do to make a difference. I'm here to tell you there *is* something more you can do, and it's really important!

### Here's what we'll cover today:

People do election observation w/o any training at all. Some may crowd into election offices without knowing what to do. We need to come together to make sure votes are counted fairly and accurately.

And the more you know, the more effective you'll be. So I'm really glad you're here today.

There's a lot of information in this training, so you may want to take notes. We'll also share the slides and a rough transcript with you, as well as other resources.

| OCTOBER |    |    |    |    |    |    |   | NOVEMBER |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|
|         |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 |          |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |  |
| 2       | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |   | 6        | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |  |
| 9       | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |   | 13       | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |  |
| 16      | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |   | 20       | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |  |
| 23      | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |   | 27       | 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |    |  |
| 30      | 31 |    |    |    |    |    |   |          |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |

OUR FOCUS  
TODAY



## What We'll Cover

- What happens after voting ends
- Why observe
- When you arrive to observe
- What you will see & look for
- Reporting problems
- How to prepare
- Conclusion & next steps



What does happen after voters leave the polls?

At polling places, poll workers have procedures to follow to close up shop. While you may be able to observe at a polling place on election night, in most cases it's more useful to observe at the election office or wherever the votes are coming in from the polling places and being processed.

Throughout the processing, election workers must make sure they don't lose ballots, double-count ballots, or permit ballots to be changed, or let anyone tamper with the election computers.

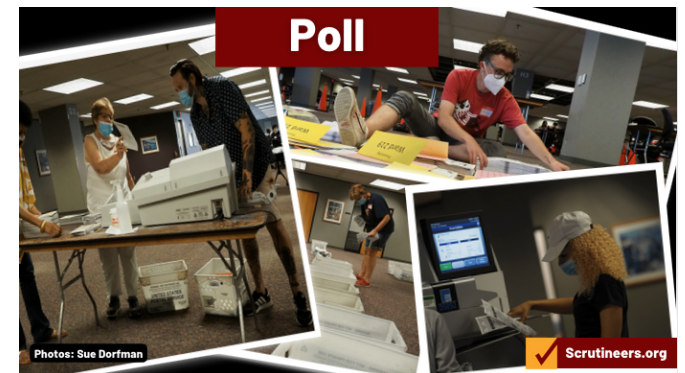
Now I'm going to show a poll question: How accurate do you think election workers will be in doing their jobs?

Which of these statements seems the truest to you?

1. All are completely accurate
2. Most are completely accurate
3. We all make mistakes so most workers do, too
4. Some will be intentionally unfair to one side
5. Many will be intentionally unfair to one side

After poll: We've found that most people don't think workers will be perfect. And that is one of the key reasons to observe.

[Show poll results](#)



## Why observe?

There are three major reasons.

We just talked about **the first one: to catch mistakes**. Election offices are often underfunded and understaffed, which makes it even harder to get everything right. If you've ever had a job where you were expected to do more than you could possibly do, you probably felt the urge to cut corners. Observers being present while the votes are counted will help the workers resist those urges and make sure procedures are being performed well.

**2: Get problems corrected.** If you see problems, you may actually be able to get them corrected. Later in this presentation, we'll tell you who you can talk to to get issues fixed.

**3. Observers help protect election workers from false allegations** of problems. We've seen what can happen when lies are circulated about stolen elections. Your factual documentation may be helpful if false allegations occur. Many election workers will recognize this and welcome you.

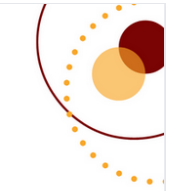
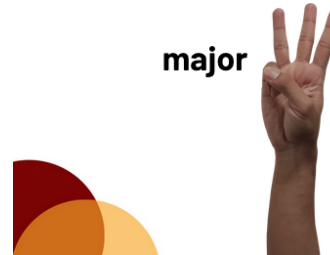
**Observe as accurately as you can! You'll be the eyes of the public, whether you are party-affiliated or not.**

**As an observer, you can help increase public confidence in the fairness of the election process.**

The number of observers present at a counting center can vary quite a bit. We strongly recommend you go with at least one buddy. You'll be able to compare notes, make decisions together, and even observe different stations in the room. If you can recruit a team of people go to, you can coordinate so you cover as many of the days as possible.

## Why Observe?

major reasons



## Why Observe?

- 1 Catch mistakes
- 2 Get problems corrected
- 3 Protect workers from false allegations



Photo credit: Simone Hogan





Here's a real-life example of observers making a difference. In the California primary election in 2016, observers were watching vote processing in Los Angeles County. In California, the Democratic Party allows independent voters to vote in their primary, but they have to use special "crossover" ballots. Election workers were incorrectly processing these ballots in a way that was not counting the votes for president!

The observers were able to get the count stopped while the supervisor figured out what to do.

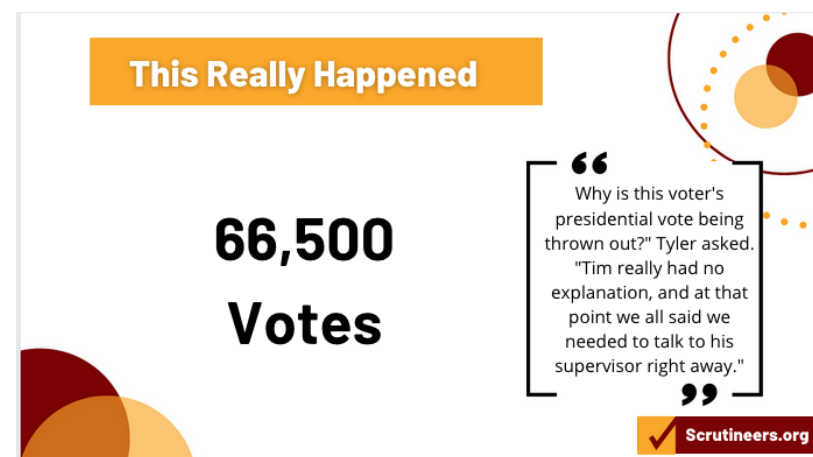
The supervisor agreed it had been an error, and corrected the ballot processing procedure, including going back over the ballots that had been processed incorrectly. As a result, an estimated 66,500 votes for president were counted *in the Presidential Primary* that would not have been counted if those observers hadn't been present.



Sixty-six thousand, five hundred votes. In one county.

It could be you who prevents a huge mistake like this in the future!

Even when problems are corrected, it's important to document what happened and, in some cases, even share it with others, which we'll talk about in a little bit.





Now we'll go through the steps involved in doing the actual observing.

We'll use as an example observing the arrival and initial processing of votes. These processes start after the polls close on election night and continue at least into the next day. If you won't be able to observe until later in the week, you'll be watching other parts of the process. But most of what we'll cover here will still be useful. We have resources available about observing other election processes.

Whenever possible, we recommend you find out what processes will be happening on the day or days you can observe, so you can go over the appropriate training materials beforehand. We'll cover how to do that later in this presentation.

When you arrive anywhere to observe, you may need to sign in.

Introduce yourself and ask staff who you should pose your questions to. Stay respectful. You'll see more and catch more issues with honey than with vinegar. Be thoughtful about not taking too much of staff's time.

Ask staff if you may take photos and video. Greet other observers you see, and as the day goes on see if you can make allies of them.

## Observing



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### When you arrive:

Ask staff in room who you should pose your question to



Ask staff if you may take photos and video

Be respectful & don't take much staff time




Try to make allies of other observers you meet

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While you're observing, take notes! Notes will help you remember what you see, to discuss with others. Write your notes right away, since additional events may make it hard to remember details later. **Print copies of a form to take notes such the one provided on our site, or take note paper**

1. The main things to note are names of people, what happens and what time.
2. Make sure to keep the facts separate from any opinions you write down.
3. Even if you don't know what the people you watch *should* be doing, watching and listening will teach you.
4. Video is by far the best way to document what you see, though some places don't allow it. Video preserves memories, since things happen fast. You may not realize until later the importance of what happened, but of course you can't take photos afterwards! If a video isn't possible, an audio recording may be legal and helpful. If you have a smartphone, it probably has a voice recorder app, or you can download one in advance.

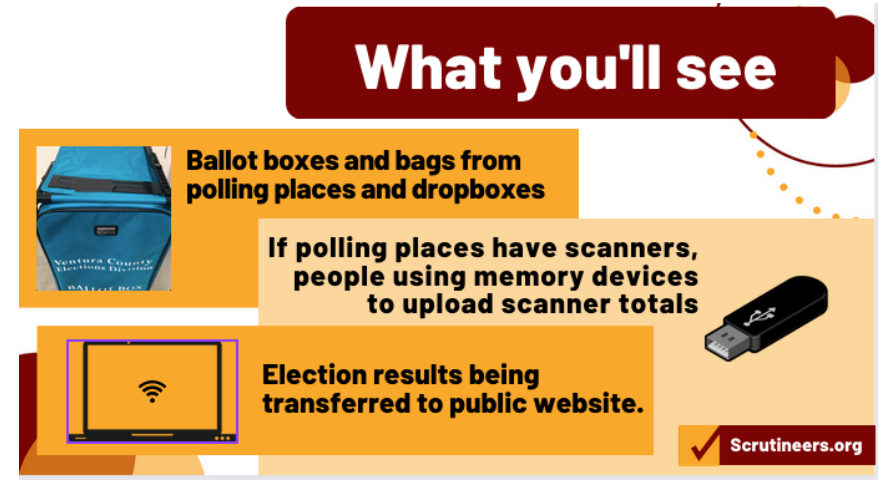


**While you're observing:**

- Write notes on our form or on a notepad
- Include names or descriptions, dates, times, & events
- Keep facts & opinions separate

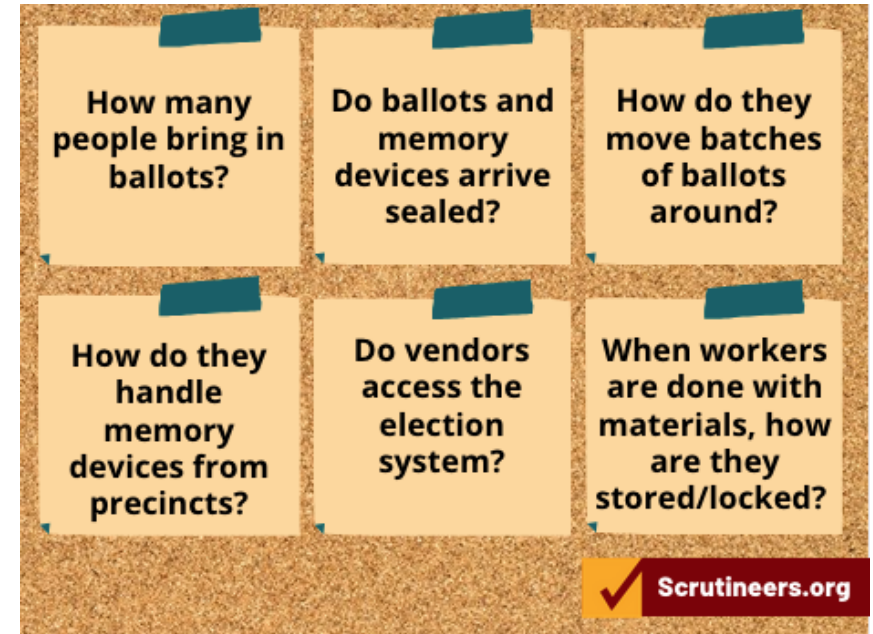
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- On election night at the central facility, you can expect to see staff receiving and opening boxes or bags of ballots, and probably feeding them through a high-speed scanner. Most places close down any drop boxes when the polls close and bring bags of ballots from the drop boxes. These may be processed later than other ballots.
- Some votes will arrive on a memory device (such as a thumb drive or flash drive). In some places, ballots are scanned at the voting location. Then both the paper ballots and memory devices are transported to a central location. In other places, scanning happens at the central location only, so only the paper ballots will be delivered. Thumb drives or other memory devices may arrive inside the scanner, or inside a bag, box or envelope. Staff will take them out, put them into the central equipment, then you need to watch where staff put them.
- You may also see the election results being transferred to the public website.



Here are some examples of what to look for. More details are available on the Scrutineers website.

- Many places require two people to bring in each ballot box for security, so note how many people you see if you're observing the arrival of ballots. Is anyone bringing in election materials unaccompanied?
- Do ballots and memory devices arrive sealed? The seals usually have numbers on them, and workers may have a list of the seal numbers. Before opening do staff check seal number against the list? Where do they look it up or write it down? We also have training materials about locks and seals, in case you'd like to learn more about these.
- How do they track batches of ballots to ensure each is scanned once and only once? Usually, they move them to distinct parts of the room, and may seal them.
- If the jurisdiction scans ballots in the precincts, results arrive on memory devices. These are small and not very noticeable, so they're hard to track. How do they handle them, so no one can substitute, miss or double-count a device?
- Do workers from the voting computer companies, often referred to as "vendors," access the election system? Contract staff may upload new software or fix errors, which can be troublesome if local staff can't keep track of what the vendors do, or if software changes during the election. It's good to write down anything done by vendor representatives and ask what they're doing.
- When workers are done with materials, either at the end of an activity or at the end of the day, how are the materials stored and locked? Write down what you notice.



## Are voting systems connected to the internet?

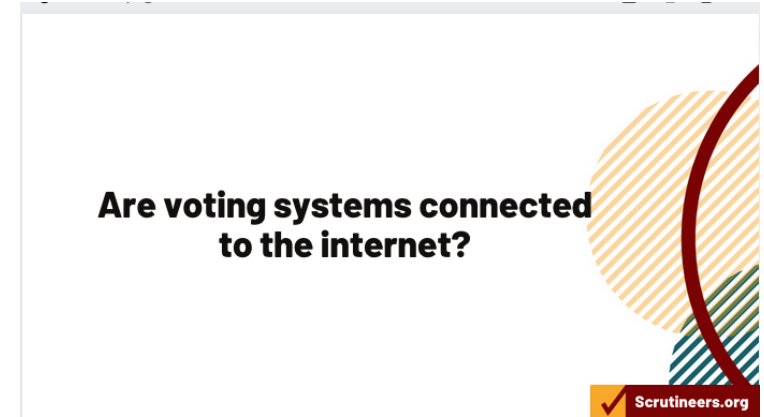
You've probably heard in the news that there's no need to worry about our elections being hacked because voting systems aren't connected to the internet. But is it true?

Almost all computers get security updates for their software. These come from the internet and are loaded on USB drives or CDs. If these updates contain malware, that goes into the election computers and infects them.

Also, some of the voting systems now in use connect to the internet to send vote totals to the central office.

Even when a particular computer isn't internet connected, it's not necessarily safe from hacking because it's indirectly connected to the internet.

Let me explain.



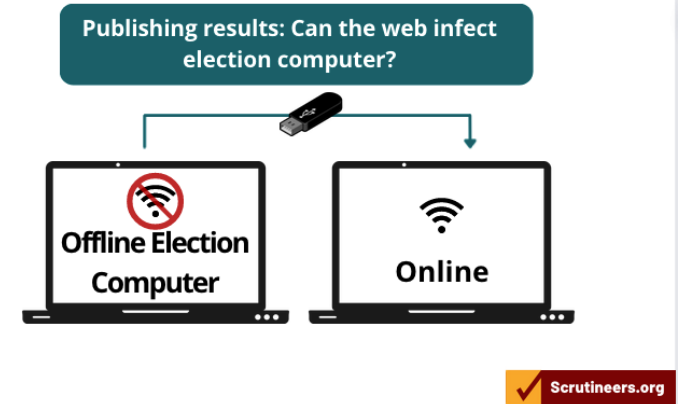
On the left we've got an offline computer. This is where the vote counts from the precinct are being fed in. If you've ever watched election night coverage on TV, you've heard them update the totals to say things like, "with 47% of precincts reporting..." You're getting gradual updates on the vote count. Every half hour or so, staff move partial results from the election computer to an online computer to post on their website, send to the state office, send to news agencies, etc.

There's a right way and a wrong way to do this.

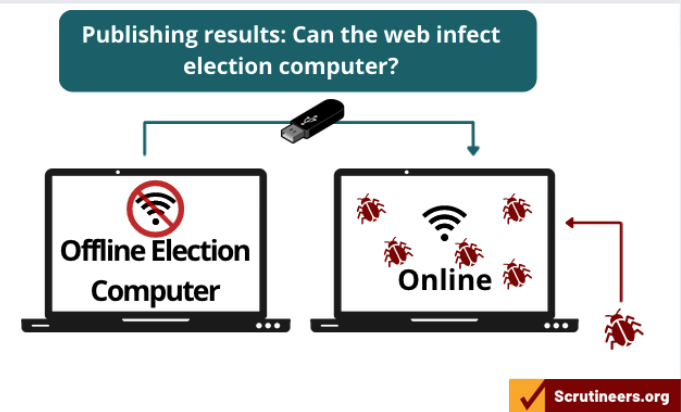


Let's say results from the offline computer are loaded onto a flash drive.

This is then inserted into the online computer system used to transmit results.



Malware from the internet can rapidly infect the online computer and even create false results.



This malware could infect the flash drive. They often put the same flash drive back in the election computer for the next update.

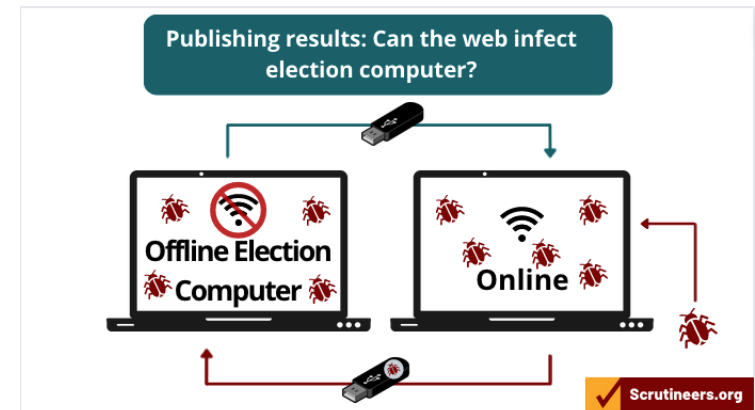
So malware can follow the USB back into the election computer.

That's the wrong way. Because this is how it's often done it's misleading to say the election computer cannot be manipulated because it's not connected to the internet.

Marilyn Marks, executive director of the Coalition for Good Governance in Georgia, says this is like "sharing needles."

Best practice is for each update to be performed using a single use CD, a paper printout, or a new USB drive fresh from a factory-sealed package.

If you see this "sharing needles" problem, make sure to put it in your notes.



Now let's talk about reporting any problems that come up.

You'll need to use your own judgment about who it makes sense to tell about a specific situation. Think about things like ...

- **What/Who is causing the problem?**
- **Does action need to be taken immediately to correct the problem?**
- **Who has the power to correct it?**
- **Is this something that needs outside intervention from a hotline, party, or candidate?**

**Reporting any problems**

- **What/Who is causing the problem?**
- **Does action need to be taken immediately to correct the problem?**
- **Who has the power to correct it?**
- **Is this something that needs outside intervention from a hotline, party, or candidate?**

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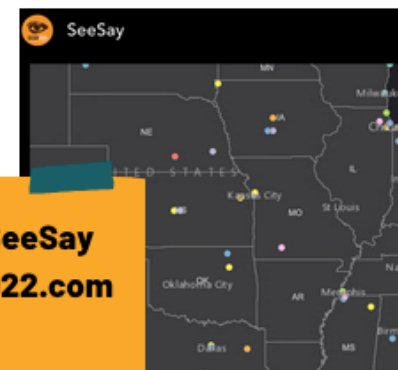


- When you arrived to observe, you asked the staff who you should speak to about what you see. If you see a problem, tell them immediately, and ask for an explanation.
- Consider comparing notes with other observers in the room, which may include your buddy and candidates or their representatives.
- If it still seems a problem, you can also post the issue on SeeSay2022.com which puts issues on a map so other observers and journalists can see if there's a pattern. This image of the SeeSay map is from 2020.
- You can also call, text, tweet, email or talk to a local group or candidate. Our web page includes links with contact information. You may know of other groups in your community who would want this information.
- Whether you find issues or not, we'd like you to send a brief summary to any of these groups, and to us at Scrutineers. Hearing from you will help us improve our training in the future.
- If you see a serious problem, the hotline at 866-Our-Vote run by the non-partisan Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights. (There are other hotlines available, including in languages other than English, linked from our site.) 866-OUR-VOTE may be able to help you with legal guidance or even dispatch lawyers to the site. This is a free service.

## Reporting any problems

**Officials in room**

**SeeSay 2022.com**



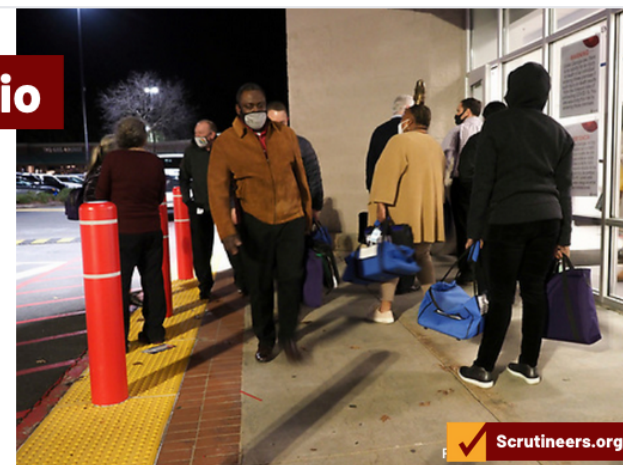
**Other observers in room**

**Local group, candidates or party**

**Lawyers at 866-OUR-VOTE**

Here's a scenario, so you can imagine how this might work when you're observing. Suppose you've been seeing pairs of workers bringing containers of ballots to the counting facility. Once inside, they set the containers on a table, where others process them.

## Scenario



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Then you see 1 or 2 people bring in a similar box and put it in the corner & leave. You watch it for a few minutes and it just stays there. What do you do? It may be more than one thing. Take a moment to think about it, and type your responses into the chat.

Did you think of any of these options? (Read them)

*[options in poll]*

1. Write down time, description of event & people in your notes
2. Go closer & write down any labels or photograph if photos allowed
3. Tell your buddy or other observers
4. Ask a friendly election official in the room about it
5. Ask even a gruff election official in the room
6. Call or email a more senior election official not present
7. Post a report on SeeSay2022.com
8. Send message to Scrutineers
9. Tell a local group
10. Tell a candidate or party
11. Tell a non-partisan lawyer at 866-Our-Vote
12. Other (please describe in chat)

## Scenario



## Let's talk about how to prepare to observe.

Rules about who can observe vary from state to state. Most states allow nonpartisan observers, but some states only allow representatives of political parties or campaigns to observe. Some states may have other limitations, such as having to be a resident, a registered voter, or over 18. Some jurisdictions may let you observe remotely. While this is better than nothing, it's usually very difficult to see what's happening, and there's generally no opportunity to ask questions.

Our site links you to the rules in your state.

Gray areas on this map mean there are some gaps in the laws about who can observe.

If you have to do some initial steps, like signing up at your election office or through a candidate or party, please do this as soon as possible.

Find a buddy to observe with you if possible. Even having only one additional person will help you feel supported and give you someone to talk with about what to do with what you observe. They can watch or read this training if they have time.

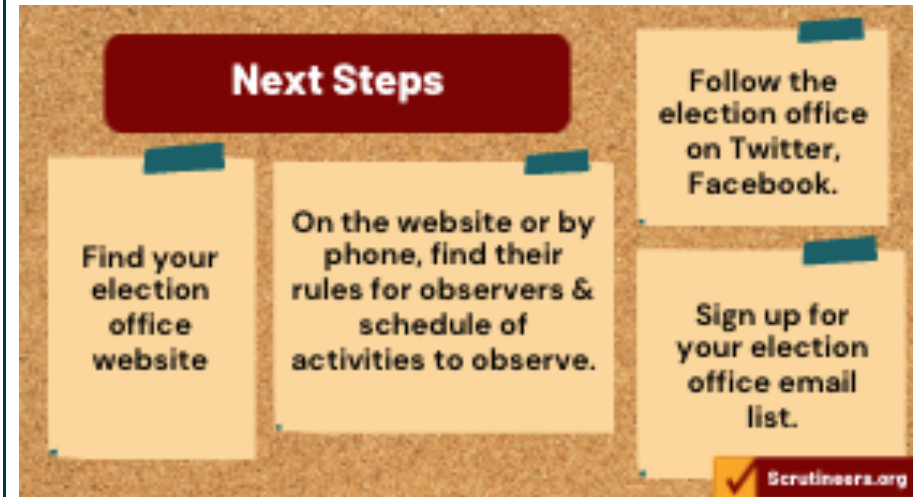


**Find your election office website** Elections are run by counties except in New England, Michigan and Wisconsin, where towns run elections.

- **On the website or by phone, find their rules for observers & schedule of activities to observe.** If you'll have to stand a certain distance away from election workers, prepare by putting a measuring tape app on your phone so you can confirm that you're as close as you can get.
- **Follow the election office on Twitter, Facebook.**
- **Sign up for their email list.**

Activities in different states can include deciding which provisional ballots and vote by mail ballots are valid and must be counted. Offices may re-copy torn ballots. Some states check or audit some results by hand, to catch computer mistakes and ensure computer tallies are accurate. We encourage you to observe as as many parts of the process as you can.

A list of what we recommend you bring is available on our website.

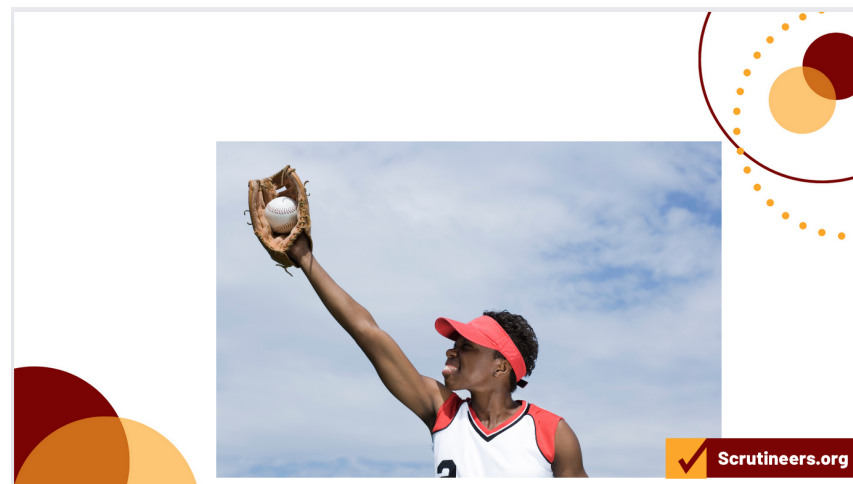


Observing after the election is one of the most underused tools in the election protection toolbox. This work can be rewarding, and – honestly – it can also be boring. It's kind of like playing outfield in a baseball or softball game. Most of the time, you're standing around not doing much. But you have to pay very close attention, because sometimes a moment will come when your taking quick and decisive action will make a big difference. (I credit Patty Wipfler with that metaphor, who used it about parenting teenagers, but I think it also applies here.)

If you've never observed before, you'll learn a lot even if you can only observe once for a couple of hours. You can decide how deep you want to dive into learning about the different processes involved in processing and counting votes.

Even if the outcome of an election is announced right away, those results aren't final until all the steps are complete. That in-between time is crucial, and it's important that we be there to help make sure it goes well.

More public oversight of our elections is a powerful way to increase voter confidence.



**Poll:** On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to observe for the next election, after the polls close or in the days that follow, with 5 being 'definitely?'

What's your number?

*5 Definitely will observe*

*4 Probably*

*3 Maybe*

*2 Not likely*

*1 No*

Think about why you didn't pick a lower number. If you don't mind sharing that, type it into the chat.

It's great to hear that folks understand how important it is that we participate in defending our democracy, especially now when it's under attack.

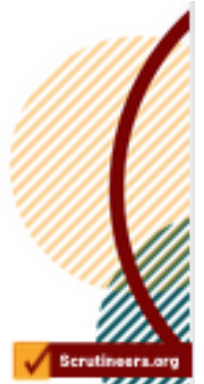
In a moment, I'll give you the link to find all the resources mentioned today.

First I want to take a quick moment to tell you about Scrutineers.



Scrutineers is a NONPARTISAN online community of people who care about fair elections and want to help make elections more transparent, more accessible, and more secure.

# About Scrutineers



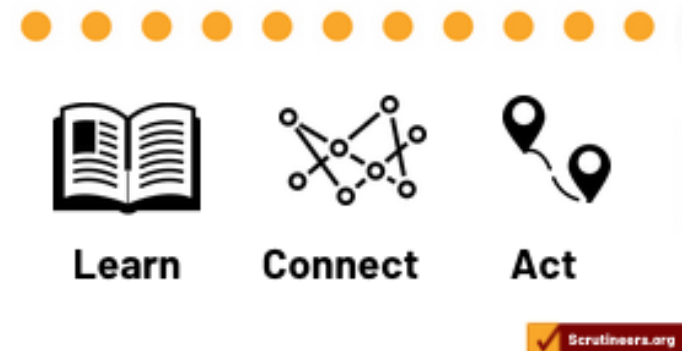


Scrutineers members work in their own communities all around the U.S. and also help out in hot spots in other communities, usually from their homes. Inside our membership site, members share information, watch videos of trainings on things like the different types of voting systems in use and their vulnerabilities AND how to advocate for change in your community. We sometimes have special events for members, and lots of opportunities to get involved and make a difference.

The membership site is designed to be a place where people who care about fair elections can ...

- **learn** information like what we've shared with you today, **connect** with others, and **take action** to make elections fairer, more transparent, more accessible, and more secure.
- We're making short trainings about observing available even to non-members on our site. Inside our membership site we have more in-depth training.
- For those of you who aren't already members, I invite you to **join the community** at Scrutineers.org.
- Fighting for the freedom to vote is hard work, and it's more powerful and more satisfying to work in community.

We charge a one-time fee of \$1.99 to join, which is something we do to keep bots out of our site. If that payment is a problem for you, contact us through the form on our site and we'll work it out. I want to be clear that it's not necessary to become a member of Scrutineers in order to access the additional post-election observation training. We'd love to have you if you want to get more involved! And as a member, you can look for others planning to monitor in your area.

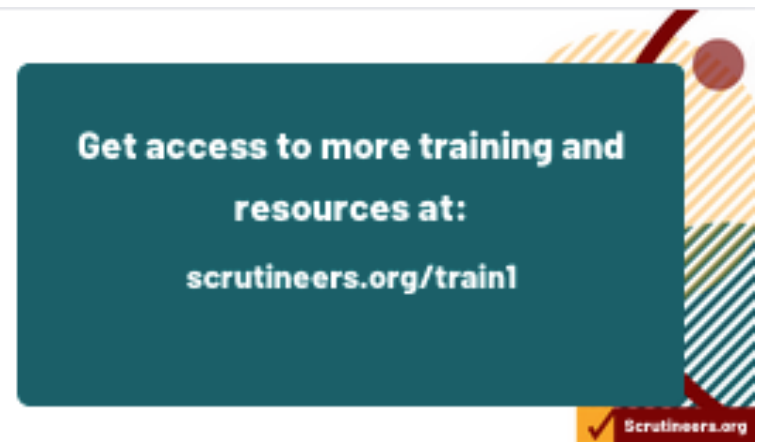




You'll find a recording of this presentation, the slides, the transcripts, and other materials I've referred to at [scrutineers.org/train1](https://scrutineers.org/train1) We'll also send this link to you by email.

At the bottom of the page, there's a form for you to can fill out to get access to even more resources, and to let us know when and where you plan to observe. We won't be coordinating volunteers, but we will be able to send you reminders, and follow up with you. So please complete that form. Those who complete the form will also be notified when we add new training materials to the site.

Before we move on to your questions, I invite you to share in the chat something you learned today. Something that surprised you, something you want to remember. Here's a little reminder of some of the things we've talked about.



A final reminder: We strongly encourage you to get the schedule of activities that can be observed in your county, figure out when you can go, and check out our training materials specifically related to those activities. We'll help you understand what will be happening and what sorts of problems are most likely to occur.



## Thank you!

Thank you so much for attending today.

A special thanks to those of you making plans to observe. Please report back to us about your experience with observing!

We hope to see some of you as new members of Scrutineers.

We'll be offering this training throughout the year. If you have friends who you think would like to take the training, ask them to sign up at [Scrutineers.org](https://Scrutineers.org)

And if you're part of an organization you think would benefit from this training, please reach out in the chat or through our website and we'll follow up!

Remember: Your voice matters! Your vote matters! Your work matters!

