

As reflected in the "District Canvass", the total absentee ballots that were counted were 2,051. We believe that total is correct and all ballots contained in that total were valid. The concern is over the apparent discrepancy between the total ballots counted on the day of the election, which is the final and true number of absentee ballots counted, and various totals on the two other incomplete internal database reports. We attribute the differences to three possible situations. At this point however, it would be impossible to attribute exact numbers to any of these situations. The three explanations of why there could be a difference in these counts are as follows.

Incorrect data entries such as under what circumstances to record a ballot as having been received and/or placed in the voided category. This misunderstanding has now been cleared up with the Secretary of State for the future. Our staff has reported that when a ballot was entered as voided (due to being lost, damaged, etc.) they were not reporting it as being received since they didn't have the original ballot in hand. According to the Secretary of State they should have been entered as both being received and voided so the numbers would balance. Our best estimate is that there were about 7 ballots that were voided but that weren't also entered as received in order to keep the numbers in balance.

Another error that could throw the count off is if a voter returned a ballot on Election Day and the receiving clerk took it back to the counting room without scanning the envelope in as having been received. While our clerks are given instructions to scan in every returned ballot, sometimes in the crush and confusion of Election Day itself it's possible that this step could be missed. Again, given our learning experience in this election, I have directed that in the future we will have a dedicated ballot box just for ballots returned on Election Day and it will be confirmed that all ballot envelopes in that box have been properly verified before they go to the counting room. However, there is no way to verify if this happened in this election or if so, how many ballot envelopes may have gone to the counting room without being scanned in. Our best guess would be just a few.

The other way that the total count of valid ballots counted on Election Day (2,051) might be different from those other incomplete reports is if more than one ballot was returned in the same "voted ballot" envelope. At the point that the "voted ballot" envelopes are opened they have already been removed and completely separated from their original return envelopes so there is no way to tie them to a specific voter. That is done of course to ensure voters their right to a secret ballot. However, this does happen and is mostly likely a husband and wife thinking they are somehow saving a little money or effort by putting them both in one envelope. Recognizing the concerns that have been raised over this I have directed my staff in the future to include language in the instructions that go out to all absentee voters that they need to use a separate envelope for each ballot. While this won't absolutely prevent it from happening in the future it should help to minimize the

possibility. I've also directed my staff to keep a record of any "voted ballot" envelopes that have more than one ballot so that even if we can't tie them to a specific voter we at least can better reconcile any differences in the reports and actual counted ballots. Again, this might account for a small number of the difference but we are sure it wouldn't be all nine ballots in question.