



Chambers County Clerk
Election Records Inspection Rules of Conduct
September 9, 2024

Background

House Bill 5180 (88th Leg., R.S., 2023) amended Section 1.012 of the Code, effective September 1, 2023, to provide that, beginning on the first day after the date of the final canvass for an election, the general custodian of election records shall make available for public inspection any election records that are images of voted ballots (if maintained) or cast vote records. The bill further clarifies that original voted ballots shall be made available for public inspection beginning on the 61st day after election day. The general custodian of election records must adopt procedures to ensure that any personally identifiable information of a voter that is contained on a ballot is redacted before making the voted ballot available for public inspection.

Procedures:

First and foremost, the integrity and condition of the documents must be maintained throughout the process. To that end, the Chambers County Clerk adopts the following rules of procedure pursuant to Texas Government Code section 552.230 relating to the inspection of sensitive documents:

- The term “documents” refers to any physical records being interacted with, to include paper ballots and printouts.
- Requests to conduct an in-person inspection must be made a minimum of three (3) business days in advance of the desired date of inspection. Dates will be scheduled based on availability of space and resources.
- Elections Administration is constantly in the process of preparing for or conducting an election. Therefore, it may be up to 90 days or more before an in-person inspection of documents at the Elections Administration can be scheduled. The Elections Administration will make every effort to allow an in-person inspection of documents as

soon as practicable but cannot guarantee any specific turnaround time for every request.

- Per Texas Government Code section 552.225(a), requestors have up to 10 business days to complete their inspection of documents and may only do so during normal business hours of the Elections Administration. Normal business hours are Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM, excluding County holidays. (The courthouse is closed from 12-1pm daily)
- There will be specific tables designated for handling the documents.
- No writing or marking instruments are allowed around the documents while they are on the inspection tables.
- No food or drinks are allowed on the inspection area.
- All interaction with the documents by non-elections personnel may be subject to both video and in-person monitoring.
- No more than two boxes or containers (inasmuch as the documents are in boxes or containers) may be simultaneously accessed per table. This constraint may be reduced to one box or container based on space and resource availability.
- In the event the documents are not boxed, the Elections Administration may limit the number of documents that may be accessed at the same time as allowed by physical restrictions and/or availability of said documents to avoid any potential issues.
- The number of persons allowed simultaneous access to the documents is limited to the amount of space available to reasonably monitor such access but will not exceed the capacity as determined by the Chambers County Clerk at any given time.
- Laptops, tablets, or any other electronic devices which contain network capability are not allowed to be connected to any County network.
- Ethernet cables are strictly prohibited in the inspection area.
- Any attempt to plug a device into an ethernet jack in the Elections office at any time is prohibited.
- Laptops, tablets, cell phone, and other electronic devices that do not have ethernet ports may be brought into the inspection area.
- Voted ballots must be kept in the same stacks, containers, or boxes, whichever is applicable, while public inspection is taking place.
- Voted ballots may not be removed from the room in which public inspection is taking place.

- Imaging devices may be used to take photos or make copies of the voted ballots.

Adherence to these guidelines is mandatory in the interest of integrity and transparency. The retention of each election record is 22 months.

Heather H. Hawthorne
Chambers County Clerk
September 9, 2024