

Georgia Ballot Proofing

WHAT IS BALLOT PROOFING AND WHY SHOULD WE DO IT?

The process of producing a ballot is complex. County election officials do their best to make sure they have listed every contest and every candidate correctly. But **mistakes happen**. Ballot proofing helps catch mistakes before official ballots are printed. And that's important because mistakes caught after ballots are printed often cannot be fixed. Ballot proofing is therefore one of many tools to ensure that election results accurately reflect voter intent.

So who does this proofing? County officials will proof each ballot before sending it to the printer, but **you have a role to play too**. The more eyes on the near-final version of the ballot, the better. You should feel free to invite staff, voter protection volunteers, and others to participate.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO PROOF A BALLOT?

Not long. It will take one person a few minutes per ballot to perform a complete review. Because mistakes are usually noticed by a fresh set of eyes, consider bringing in a second person to review.

HOW DO WE PARTICIPATE IN THE PROOFING PROCESS?

In Georgia, state law does not require that counties send near-final versions of the ballot to candidates to review, but counties are **permitted** to do so. So start by asking the county how to get involved. (There is a requirement that each county superintendent make sample ballots available for public inspection, but this rule only mandates that such ballots be made available at least five days before the election.¹ This may be too late in the process to correct errors. However, if you have not already reviewed a ballot at an earlier date, you should acquire a sample ballot during this five-day window.)

Remember, each county handles the proofing process differently and so you should reach out to any target counties now to confirm their process, including the date you could expect to receive a ballot to review.

1 [Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-292.](#)

WHEN DOES THE PROCESS START?

The process in Georgia will likely start in mid-August, soon after the August 11 runoff election. At the latest, **you should contact counties by early August so you know what to expect.**

HOW SHOULD WE REPORT ERRORS OR OMISSIONS?

In Georgia, there are informal and formal mechanisms to ensure that mistakes are corrected. If you discover an error or omission, you should first attempt to notify the county via email of the problem and your proposed correction. So long as you timely notify the county election official, she or he will likely correct the error promptly.² If the county superintendent decides to make a change to the ballot to correct a mistake or omission, she or he must provide “at least 24 hours’ notice to the Secretary of State and any affected candidates of the mistake or omission prior to making such correction.”³ If for any reason the superintendent does not correct the error, any voter of the county or municipality may seek a judicial remedy by showing, by affidavit, “that a mistake or omission has occurred in the printing of official ballots or in the programming of the display of the official ballot on DRE voting equipment or electronic ballot markers.”⁴ The superior county may then “require the superintendent to correct the mistake or omission or to show cause why he or she should not do so.”⁵

OTHER THAN ITEMS ON THE PROOFING CHECKLIST, IS THERE ANYTHING SPECIFIC TO GEORGIA THAT WE SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR?

Candidate names will appear with Republican candidates first and Democratic candidates second (by law, party candidates are listed in order of the number of votes that party’s nominee for Governor received in the prior election).⁶ Note: Litigation regarding this ballot order provision is ongoing⁷ and the ballot order rules may change prior to the 2020 general election.

Incumbents are noted on the ballot.⁸

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Have questions? Need help?
Please reach out to us at:

ballotquestions@digidems.com

2 “If the election superintendent discovers that a mistake or omission has occurred in the printing of official ballots or in the programming of the display of the official ballot on DRE voting equipment or electronic ballot markers for any primary or election, the superintendent is authorized on his or her own motion to take such steps as necessary to correct such mistake or omission if the superintendent determines that such correction is feasible and practicable under the circumstances.” [Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-293\(a\)](#).

3 [Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-293\(a\)](#).

4 [Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-293\(b\)](#).

5 [Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-293\(b\)](#).

6 [Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-285\(c\)](#).

7 See *S.P.S. ex rel Short v. Raffensperger*, No. 1:19-cv-04960-AT (N.D. Ga.).

8 [Ga. Code Ann. § 21-2-285\(c\)](#).