

Montana 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 Montana, state law does not require that counties send near-final versions of the ballot to candidates to review,¹ but counties are **permitted** to do so. So start by asking County Election Administrators how to get involved.

Even if you are not able to review a pre-print version of the ballot, you should review the sample ballot, which County Election

¹ While state law does not mandate that candidates be given a role to participate in ballot proofing, the Secretary of State does contact individual candidates regarding the pronunciation of their names for the audio file for voter assistance terminals (ADA devices).

Administrators must make available to the public prior to the election.²

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.

WHEN DOES THE PROCESS START?

The process in Montana will likely start in late August or early September. At the latest, **you should contact counties by early August so you know what to expect.**

HOW SHOULD WE REPORT ERRORS OR OMISSIONS?

Check with each county to see how—if at all—they would like to be notified of errors or omissions, as well as any proposed corrections.

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

In Montana, the offices should appear in the following order: President, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, State Auditor, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Public Service Commissioners, state and district judges and other judicial offices, State Senator, State Representative, and other county and local offices.³

Candidate names are rotated.⁴

CONNECT WITH US!

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

ballotquestions@digidems.com

2 [13-12-214, MCA.](#)

3 [13-12-207, MCA.](#)

4 [13-12-205, MCA.](#)