

North Carolina 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 North Carolina, 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. The State encourages County Boards of Elections to invite others, including candidates and their representatives, to proof ballots as well. (The State also proofs ballots before counties print them.¹) So start by asking the county how to get involved.

Remember, each county handles the proofing process differently

1 [N.C.G.S. § 163-165.3\(a\)\(4\), \(5\)](#).

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 North Carolina will likely start in August. Ballots must be proofed by both the County and State Boards of Election before they are printed for early voting. Early voting ballots will be distributed as early as September 4. 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 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 NORTH CAROLINA THAT WE SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR?

Candidate names will appear in either alphabetical order or reverse alphabetical order, subject to a coin flip performed by the State Board of Elections.²

The contests will be listed as follows:

1. President;
2. United States Senator;
3. United States Representative;
4. Governor;
5. Lieutenant Governor;
6. Other state, county, and local offices.³

CONNECT WITH US!

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

ballotquestions@digidems.com

² [N.C.G.S. § 163.165.6\(c\).](#)

³ [N.C.G.S. § 163.165.6\(b\).](#)