



Recount Procedure Summary

DE Reference Guidelines 0010 (Updated 12/2023)

These guidelines are for reference only. They are not to be construed as legal advice or representation. For any particular set of facts or circumstances, refer to the applicable state, federal law, and case law, and/or consult a private attorney before drawing any legal conclusions or relying upon this information.

APPLICABLE LAW

- Sections [102.141](#)(7) and [102.166](#), Florida Statutes, and Rules [1S-2.027](#), [1S-2.031](#), and [1S-2.051](#) Fla. Admin. Code, govern recounts.
- This summary only represents a general overview. Please consult law and rule for specifics as they govern.

ORDERING OF A RECOUNT

- **Who orders the recount?**
 - The Secretary of State orders any recount for federal, state, or multicounty races involving candidates for office, candidates for judicial retention, and measures appearing on the ballot.
 - For all other races, the board certifying the results orders the recount.
- A recount may not begin until it has been ordered to occur by the proper authority.
- A candidate or political committee has no authority to request a recount.
- A candidate or candidates defeated or eliminated by $\frac{1}{2}$ percent or less or $\frac{1}{4}$ percent or less (whichever is applicable) from content, may request in writing that a recount not be made.
- A recount at a minimum consists of a machine recount or use of an independent recount tabulation system (IRTS)¹; it may also include a manual recount.

RACES NOT SUBJECT TO A RECOUNT (based upon the races not having “candidates” for office)

- Presidential Preference Primary (i.e., names are candidate nominees)
- Political party executive committee (i.e., state, district, and precinct committeemen and committeewomen).

PUBLIC NOTICE

- **Public notice** must be provided as soon as possible given the circumstances and the limited time schedule.
- Machine and manual recounts are **open to the public**.
- Public notice must be provided before any pre-sorting of ballots prior to a recount being ordered.
- If an IRTS is to be used, public notice must be provided anytime ballot are run through the system. A single public notice shall be acceptable if ballots will be processed through the IRTS on a recurring basis before a recount is ordered.

¹ As of 2023, no IRTS is currently approved for use in Florida.

DEADLINE TO REPORT 1ST UNOFFICIAL RETURNS

The results of the 1st unofficial returns are used to determine if a machine recount will be necessary. It is important to submit as soon as possible but no later than the requisite deadline for time and date.

STATUTORY DEADLINE TO REPORT 1ST SET OF UNOFFICIAL RETURNS (s. 102.141(5), F.S.)

- **After a Primary Election:** No later than noon on the 3rd day after the Primary Election.
- **After a General Election:** No later than noon on the 4th day after the General Election.
- **After a Special Primary or Special Election:** No later than noon on 4th day after the election. (Laws governing general elections are applicable to special primary and special elections – s. 100.191, F.S.)

MACHINE RECOUNT (s. 102.141(7), F.S.)

- **A machine recount must be ordered if** the 1st set of unofficial returns indicates that a candidate was defeated or eliminated by $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% or less of the total votes cast for an office or if an issue was approved or rejected by $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% or less of the total votes cast on the issue.
- **Exception to a machine recount:**
 - If a candidate or candidates who is defeated or eliminated from contention for the office by $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% or less requests in writing that a machine recount not be conducted.
- The canvassing board must follow the procedures in [Rule 1S-2.031](#), Fla. Admin. Code.
- The machine recount constitutes a retabulation of all ballots.
- Before the machine recount occurs using the voting system, a **new election definition** must be created for the race(s) to be recounted. Parameters must be set to reject all overvotes and undervotes.
- If an IRTS is capable of rejecting all overvotes and undervotes without needing a new election definition, no additional testing is required.
- Before the start of the recount, a **public test of the tabulating equipment** must occur. If an IRTS was publicly tested before the beginning of the election, no additional public testing is required.
- **Optical scan ballots and hybrid voting system paper outputs:** The canvassing board must run each ballot with the affected race(s) through a tabulator. All overvotes (optical scan ballots only) and undervotes (optical scan/hybrid voting system paper outputs) are outstacked to be used in the manual recount if one becomes necessary.
- **Results:** The results of the machine recount are included in the 2nd set of unofficial returns.

DEADLINE TO REPORT 2ND UNOFFICIAL RETURNS

The results of the 2nd unofficial returns are used to determine if a manual recount will be necessary. It is important to submit as soon as possible but no later than the requisite deadline for time and date.

STATUTORY DEADLINE TO REPORT 2ND SET OF UNOFFICIAL RETURNS (s. 102.141(7)(c), F.S.)

- **After a Primary Election:** No later than 3 p.m. on the 5th day after the Primary Election.
- **After a General Election:** No later than 3 p.m. on the 9th day after the General Election.
- **After a Special Primary or Special Election:** No later than 3 p. m. on the 9th day after the election. (Laws governing general elections are applicable to special primary and special elections – s. 100.191, F.S.)

MANUAL RECOUNT (s. 102.166, F.S.)

- A manual recount must be ordered if the 2nd set of unofficial returns indicates that a candidate was eliminated or defeated by $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% or less of the votes cast for the office or an issue was approved or rejected by $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% or less.
- **Exceptions to a manual recount:**
 - If the candidate or candidates defeated or eliminated from contention for the office by $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% or less request in writing that it not be conducted; or
 - If the number of overvotes and undervotes is fewer than the number of votes needed to change the outcome of the election.
- The manual recount is only a **recount of overvotes and undervotes** as outstacked from the machine recount or IRTS.
- The canvassing board must use the procedures in [Rule 1S-2.031](#), Fla. Admin. Code.
- A vote for a candidate or issue must be counted if there is a clear indication on the ballot that a voter made a definite choice. See [Rules 1S-2.027](#) and [1S-2.051](#), Fla. Admin. Code.
- **Optical scan ballots and hybrid voting system paper outputs or digital images:**
 - The canvassing board assigns **counting teams** to review the overvotes and undervotes (optical scan/hybrid voting system paper outputs). Authorized representatives are permitted to be present and object to any decision of the counting team, but they may not otherwise disturb or interfere with the recount.
 - Each counting team sorts the ballots into 3 stacks for the recounted race: 1) ballots determined to contain a valid vote; 2) ballots determined to contain no clear indication of choice; and 3) ballots set aside for canvassing board determination.
- **Results:** The results from the manual recount are contained in the certification of the official returns.

DEADLINE TO REPORT COUNTY OFFICIAL RETURNS

The results of the official returns are used to finalize the results for federal, state, and if a manual recount will be necessary. It is important to submit as soon as possible but no later than the requisite deadline for time and date.

STATUTORY DEADLINE TO REPORT OFFICIAL RETURNS (s. 102.112(2), F.S.)

- **After a Primary Election:** No later than noon on the 8th day after the Primary Election.
- **After a General Election:** No later than noon on the 13th day after the General Election.
- **After a Special Primary or Special Election:** No later than noon on 13th day after the election. (Laws governing general elections are applicable to special primary and special elections – s. 100.191, F.S.)

If the results are not received by the time specified, such returns are ignored and the results on file at the specified time shall be certified by the Department of State.

Reminder: Although the results of the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) are not subject to recount procedures, the deadlines for submission of the 1st set of unofficial returns and the official returns for the PPP are the same as for the General Election.

EXAMPLES OF RECOUNT CALCULATIONS

RACE WITH 2 CANDIDATES (PRIMARY OR GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT)

- **Candidate A:** 9,755 votes – 49.77%
- **Candidate B:** 9,845 votes – 50.23%
- **Total:** 19,600 votes – 100%
- **Calculation:** $50.23\% - 49.77\% = .45\%$; therefore, Candidate A was defeated by .45% of votes cast.
 - If this scenario was based upon the 1st set of unofficial returns, a machine recount is required because $.45\% \leq .5\%$. (Note: $\leq .5\%$ is the threshold for a machine recount.)
 - If this scenario was based upon the 2nd set of unofficial returns, a manual recount is not required because $.45\% \geq .25\%$. (Note: $\leq .25\%$ is the threshold for a manual recount.)

NONPARTISAN SCHOOL BOARD RACE WITH 3 CANDIDATES WHERE ONE CANDIDATE HAS RECEIVED A MAJORITY OF THE VOTES CAST (PRIMARY BALLOT, ONLY)

- **Candidate A:** 3,260 votes – 35.58%
- **Candidate B:** 4,583 votes – 50.02%
- **Candidate C:** 1,319 votes – 14.40%
- **Total:** 9,162 votes – 100%
- Per s. [105.051\(1\)\(b\)](#), F.S., if two or more candidates, neither of whom is a write-in candidate, qualify for such office in the primary election, then the name of the candidate who receives the majority of the votes cast shall not appear on the general election ballot unless there is a write-in candidate. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the names of the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes for the office will be placed on the general election ballot.
- **Calculation:** In the above race, both Candidate A and Candidate C are eliminated as candidates for the general election because Candidate B received more than 50% of the votes cast. Candidate A and Candidate C's combined vote total equals 49.98%; $35.58\% + 14.40\% = 49.98\%$. Candidate B beat both Candidate A and Candidate C by .02% of the votes cast; $50.02\% - 49.98\% = .02\%$.
 - If this scenario was based upon the 1st set of unofficial returns, a machine recount is required because $.02\% \leq .5\%$. (Note: $\leq .5\%$ is the threshold for a machine recount.)
 - If this scenario was based upon the 2nd set of unofficial returns, a manual recount is required because $.02\% \leq .25\%$. (Note: $\leq .25\%$ is the threshold for a manual recount.)

NONPARTISAN SCHOOL BOARD RACE WITH 3 CANDIDATES WITH NO CANDIDATE RECEIVING A MAJORITY OF THE VOTES CAST (PRIMARY ELECTION) OR ANY RACE INVOLVING "VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN 2" CANDIDATES (GENERAL ELECTION)

- **Candidate A:** 4,010 votes – 26.04%
- **Candidate B:** 7,315 votes – 47.50%
- **Candidate C:** 4,075 votes – 26.46%
- **Total:** 15,400 votes – 100%
- **Calculation:** In the above race, Candidate A was eliminated as a candidate behind Candidate C by .42% ($26.46\% - 26.04\% = .42\%$).
 - If this scenario was based upon the 1st set of unofficial returns, a machine recount is required because $.42\% \leq .5\%$. (Note: $\leq .5\%$ is the threshold for a machine recount.)
 - If this scenario was based upon the 2nd set of unofficial returns, a manual recount is not required because $.42\% \geq .25\%$. (Note: $\leq .25\%$ is the threshold for a manual recount.)