South Carolina Elections Explainer

South Carolina's elections — both the primary and general elections — are safeguarded to ensure fair and accurate results. In South Carolina, tried-and-tested systems are in place to make sure votes are cast fairly and counted correctly. Before, during, and after every vote is cast, many safeguards ensure accurate final results which reflect the voice of South Carolinians.

✔ **Checks and balances promote public confidence in the results.**

In South Carolina, the following processes and procedures promote election integrity and demonstrate how we can be sure the final vote count reflects the will of the voters:

- Election officials confirm voter identity and eligibility during voter registration, and when they apply for a mail-in ballot application or vote in person.

- Voters enter their paper ballot card into a ballot-marking machine, where they make their selections. This machine helps prevent unintended or improper marks. Voters review their printed ballot before submitting it into a ballot scanner,[1] and a paper record is preserved in a locked box..[2]

- In a primary, eligible poll watchers appointed by each candidate[3] and nonpartisan observers may examine the voting, tabulation, and canvassing process.[4]

✔ **South Carolina's election officials and poll workers receive training prior to the election.**

Election officials and poll workers in South Carolina — everyday South Carolinians — receive training to familiarize themselves with the state's election process, rules, and laws so they can keep South Carolina's elections fair. South Carolina law has clear requirements that result in a bipartisan network of poll workers, who go through an appointment process and are well-trained to carry out their duties.

✔ **South Carolina's election officials ensure that only registered voters and citizens vote.**

Ahead of Election Day, election officials systematically update voter registration lists based on voter requests (e.g., a name change) and data about ineligibility, such as if a voter has died, moved, registered elsewhere, or otherwise become ineligible. South Carolina also uses information from a variety of government agencies to inform annual list maintenance.[5]

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[1] https://scvotes.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/scec_11854_07_Paper-Based-Voting_8.5×11_Web_2023_01.pdf
[2] https://scvotes.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/scec_11854_19_Security-Booklet_Jan2024_WEB_01.pdf
[3] https://scvotes.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/scec_11858_12_Sept_2022_poll_mgr_handbook_Web_06.pdf
[4] https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/policies-for-election-observers
[5] https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/voter-registration-list-maintenance

✔ **Election equipment in South Carolina ensures that outcomes are accurate.**

The South Carolina Election Commission works with the Department of Homeland Security to assess the security of the locations where election equipment is kept and uses detailed logs of where it is stored and who has access.

The voting system is never connected to the internet.

Voting systems are publicly inspected and tested before and after elections, and any person has the right to observe these tests. Voting equipment is protected through a series of locks, seals, and chain-of custody logs — and no single person performs these procedures without public oversight.[6]

Each county conducts hand-count audits before certification of any federal or state-level election.[7]

✔ **Multiple systems are in place to ensure that the absentee and early voting processes are safe and secure.**

Trained local election officials verify ballots to ensure that exactly one vote per one eligible voter is counted — and counted accurately.

- Voters can request their absentee ballot by phone, mail, or in person and must return their application no later than 11 days before Election Day.
- Voters sign the voter's oath on the absentee envelope in front of a witness.
- Absentee ballots must be returned by 7:00 PM on Election Day (except those from military and overseas voters).
- There are strict rules regarding who can help another voter who needs assistance filling out and submitting their absentee ballot.
- Absentee envelopes are opened by election officials in public at a publicly-designated time.

Early voting ensures that registered voters have the opportunity to vote in person before Election Day.

- For the 2024 Republican Primary, early voting will take place February 12 through February 22 (with closures on February 18 & 19) from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM
- County boards designate as many as seven early voting centers to be open during the time periods listed above. Voters can vote at any voting center in their county.

✔ **Vote counting in South Carolina follows carefully established procedures.**

All ballots (including absentee ballots) are counted on Election Day, and they stay at the polling place until after the polls close, at which point they are verified, tabulated, and then stored in a secure location. Election results are transmitted by each county's board of canvassers to the State Board of Canvassers for certification. This board then sends a letter of determination to the Secretary of State. After the election, local election officials review the poll book and manually update the voter registration system with who voted in the election (never how they voted).

For additional information about South Carolina's elections or about the National Task Force on Election Crises, email **tfrequest@protectdemocracy.org**.

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[6] https://scvotes.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-FALL-Election-Integrity-in-SC.pdf
[7] https://scvotes.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-FALL-Election-Integrity-in-SC.pdf