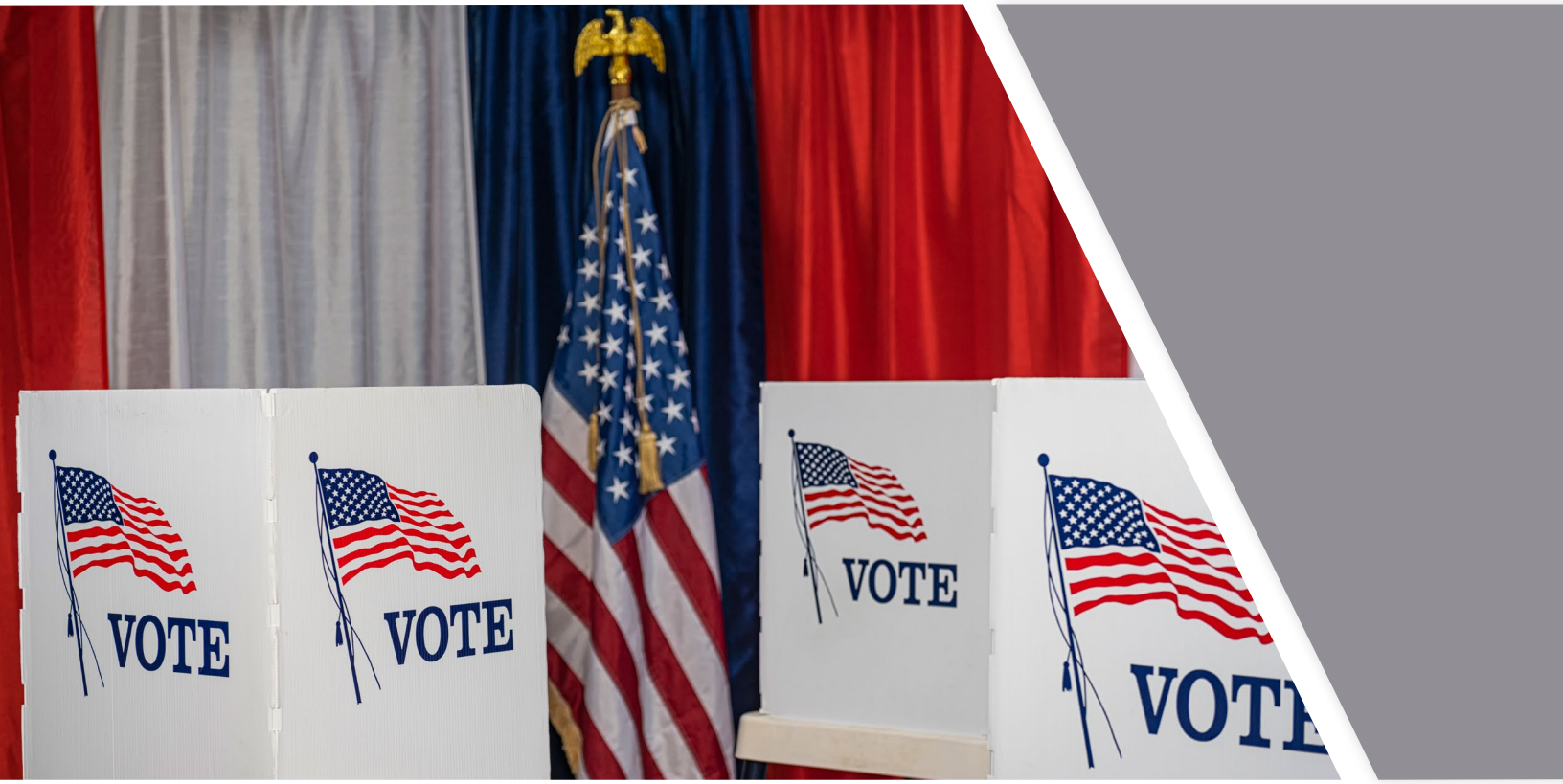
POLICY EXPLAINER/FAQ

GOVERNANCE & CIVIC POLICY

Guinn CENTER



AFTER THE POLLS CLOSE

ELECTION RETURNS AND CANVASSING THE VOTE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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You have exercised your right to vote—either in person, by submitting your mail ballot, or through Nevada's Effective Absentee System for Elections (EASE) process—and the polls have closed on Election Day. So, what happens next? This policy brief summarizes—in a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) format—Nevada's laws and procedures relating to poll closing, ballot tabulation, and canvassing of the vote.



The Polls Just Closed. What Happens at the Polling Place After Voting Is Finished?

Poll workers, who are referred to as the "election board" or "election board officers" in Nevada law and who must be voters affiliated with different political parties, are required to complete a detailed step-by-step process to secure the voting machines, vote records, "paper trail" documents, storage devices, et cetera. Specifically, upon closing of the polls, the election board officers shall:

1. Secure all voting machines and mail ballot drop boxes against further voting as required by *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 293.269921 and *Nevada Administrative Code* (NAC) 293.352;

2. Ensure that each voting machine: (1) provides a record, printed on paper, of the total number of votes recorded on the machine for each candidate and for or against each ballot question; and (2) transfers the ballots voted on the machine to the storage device required pursuant to NRS 293B.084;

3. Count the number of ballots voted at the polling place. Poll workers must also count the number of mail ballots received and place them in a sealed container along with a signed chain of custody document for delivery to the central counting location (NRS 293B.345 and NAC 293B.022);

4. Account for all ballots on the statement of ballots (NRS 293B.330);

5. Place all the records that are printed on paper provided by the voting machines, all storage devices that store the ballots voted on the voting machines, and any other records, reports, and materials into the container provided by the county for transport to the county's central counting place and seal the container (NRS 293B.330); and

6. Record the number of voters on a form provided by the county clerk. If a difference exists between the number of voters and the number of ballots voted, the election board shall report the difference and any known reasons for the difference, in writing, to the county clerk. After closing the polls, the election board officers shall compare the quantity of the supplies furnished by the county clerk with the inventory of those supplies and note any shortages (NRS 293B.330).

The local election officer (LEO) shall allow members of the general public to observe the handling of the ballots if those members do not interfere with the handling of the ballots (NRS 293B.330).

Who Delivers the Ballots and Other Election Materials from the Polls to the Central Counting Location?



At least two members of the election board shall deliver the sealed containers from the polls to a receiving center or to the central counting place, as directed by the LEO. If possible, the election board members must be of different political parties. Nevada law also sets forth specific procedures for the secure retrieval and delivery of mail ballots collected at polling locations to the central counting location (NAC 293.352). Any member of the general public may observe the delivery of a sealed container to a receiving center or the central counting place, provided that person does not interfere with the delivery of the sealed container (NRS 293B.335). Once delivery is complete, the election board members have no further responsibility for the care, custody, or security of the ballots (NRS 293B.345).

What Happens After the Ballots, Storage Devices, and Paper Trail Documents Are Delivered to the Counting Location?

The election board is relieved of responsibility for the ballots upon delivery to the central counting place and the issuing of a receipt for the ballots (NRS 293B.345). This ensures a secure chain of custody of election materials from the election board (poll workers) to those working at the central counting location.





Nevada law provides for the appointment of bipartisan citizen election boards. In addition to serving as poll workers, these boards can serve various other roles, ranging from counting and inspecting ballots (including mail ballots) and reviewing computer programs (the Computer Program and Processing Accuracy Board) to providing ballot duplication for damaged paper ballots and accuracy certification (see NRS 293B.360 through NRS 293B.390). These boards play a vital role in processing, counting, and tabulating ballots at the central counting location.

Once the ballots, including those housed on storage devices, are received at the central counting location, the counting board must prepare and count them in a public manner without adjournment until the process is completed (NRS 293.363).



What About Mail Ballots? How Are They Counted?[1]



Local election officials must establish procedures for processing, verifying, and counting mail ballots, which may be conducted by computer or other electronic methods. These procedures must align with the provisions of Nevada law relating to mail ballots (NRS 293.269925).



Mail Ballot Central Counting Board—To assist in the processing of mail ballots received, each LEO must appoint a mail ballot central counting board. The size of the counting board shall be determined based on the volume of mail ballots required to be sent to each active registered voter in the county for the election (NRS 293.269929).



NOTE: The voters appointed as election board officers for the mail ballot central counting board must not all be of the same political party. No candidate for nomination or election or a spouse, child, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild of the candidate may be appointed to serve on the mail ballot central counting board.

The mail ballot central counting board operates under the direction of the LEO.



Duties of the Mail Ballot Central Counting Board—The LEO must deliver the mail ballots to the mail ballot central counting board for counting not earlier than 15 days before the election. The board must sort, count, and account for all mail ballots by precinct or voting district and place them in a container provided by the LEO. The mail ballot central counting board can begin counting the received mail ballots 15 days before the day of the election and must complete the count on or before the seventh day following the election (NRS 293.269931).



TotalVote and Other Election Software and Systems for Mail Ballot Processing—Nevada election officials use TotalVote Election Software within Voter Registration Election Management Solutions (VREMS) in addition to other ballot sorting technology—including the TriTek system in Carson City, the Agilis system in Clark County and Relia-Vote from BlueCrest in Nye and Washoe Counties—to securely sort and process returned mail ballots. Returned mail ballot status is automatically shared with Nevada's "Poll Pad" platform to ensure that voters who have already submitted their mail ballots cannot vote at the polls (or vice versa, for voters who have already voted in person and also attempt to vote by mail). This system integration assists with voter integrity, election security, and system transparency.[2]

1. Signatures on mail ballots must also be verified. For more detailed information on mail ballot signature verification, please see the Guinn Center's election FAQ, "Mail Ballots in Nevada: Procedures, Requirements, and Processing—An FAQ," October 2026.
2. For more information regarding VREMS and Nevada's "Poll Pad" election management procedures, please see the Guinn Center's election FAQs, "Voter Registration: Procedure, Security, and List Maintenance—An FAQ," September 2026, and "Nevada's VREMS for Voter Registration Management," October 2024.

What Is Nevada's Effective Absentee System for Elections?

Nevada's EASE system is an online program that is designed to support the needs of "covered voters," who include active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces, their spouses and dependents, Nevada voters who are outside of the country, Nevada residents with a disability, and tribal voters who live on a colony or reservation in Nevada. These voters may register to vote and securely cast their ballot using a computer, phone, or tablet (see NRS 293.269951 and Chapters 293D of the NRS and NAC).

The system is available for all state, county, and municipal elections no less than 45 days before Election Day and can be accessed at NVEASE.gov. It closes automatically at 7:00 p.m. on Election Day, based on Nevada local election time. Covered voters use digital or electronic signatures already on file with the LEO or the DMV to register to vote, fill out their EASE packet, and facilitate the return of their EASE packet, which includes the appropriate electronic ballot on which the covered voter may securely mark and submit.

Please see a demonstration of Nevada's EASE system here.



We Have Mail Ballots, Early Voting, and Election Day Votes to Count. When Does This Happen?

The returns of the mail ballot vote must be reported separately from the other votes that were not cast by mail ballot in the precinct unless reporting the returns separately would violate the secrecy of a voter's ballot (NRS 293.269935). To protect voter secrecy, results must NOT be reported separately if a precinct has fewer than 10 election returns from early voting or fewer than 10 returns of mail ballots. Instead, these returns must be reported together with the precinct's regular votes (NAC 293.357).



Please note that no voting results of mail ballots may be released until all polling places are closed and all votes have been cast on Election Day. Any person who disseminates to the public in any way information pertaining to the count of mail ballots before all polling places are closed and all votes have been cast on Election Day is guilty of a misdemeanor (see subsection 3 of NRS 293.269935).



REMINDER: Mail ballots postmarked on or before Election Day must be received by the county no later than 5 p.m. on the fourth day following the election (November 7, 2026) (NRS 293.269921). The "curing" of signatures must be completed no later than 5 p.m. on the sixth day following the election (November 9, 2026) (NRS 293.269927 and NAC 293.332). As a result, final tabulations may not occur until after this deadline (and before the canvass deadline—see below).



Early Voting—After 8 a.m. on Election Day, the election board responsible for counting ballots shall count in public the returns for early voting.

Like mail ballots, the results of early voting must be reported separately from the regular votes of the precinct (unless doing so would violate the secrecy of a voter's ballot).

Like mail ballot returns, the results for early voting must not be reported until after the polls close on Election Day. A person who disseminates early voting results before the polls close is guilty of a gross misdemeanor (NRS 293.3606).

Election Day—Once the ballots are received at the central counting location, the counting board must prepare and count the ballots in a public manner without adjournment until the process is completed (NRS 293.363).



How Are Results of Votes Cast by Mail, During Early Voting, and on Election Day Combined?

According to the Secretary of State's *2026 Elections Procedures Manual*, "tabulation is the processing of totaling of individual votes from all sources: in-person votes, mail ballots, and EASE ballots." The manual outlines three ways that votes in Nevada are tabulated: (1) recorded elecronically in-person on a DRE (electronic voting machine); (2) scanned selections made on paper ballots using an electronic scanner (mail ballots and regular ballots in some counties, for example, are processed this way); or (3) hand-counted selections made on paper ballots.

According to the manual, after tabulating ballot selections, all methods and sources are combined using centralized software. Each DRE voting machine saves totals to removable media, which the centralized tabulation software reads in order to combine the totals for all the DREs. Paper ballots that are electronically scanned also use removable media to add the ballot selections recorded (including additions from mail ballots received after the election that are postmarked on or before Election Day). Finally, any hand-counted paper ballot selection totals are manually entered into the centralized software.

The tabulation software combines the ballot selections for each county and provides a common data format for the Secretary of State to combine and report statewide totals, specifically for candidates and ballot questions spanning more than one county.[3]



3. For more information regarding ballot tabulation, please see the *2026 Elections Procedures Manual*.

With All the Votes Counted and Tabulated, Where Are They Posted and Released to the Public?

After counting all votes, the counting board officers must produce a tally list organized by precinct and ballot type, indicating the number of votes each candidate received and the results of any questions submitted to the voters (NRS 293.370). Each counting board must also post a copy of the voting results in a conspicuous place before adjourning and, for mechanically or electronically tabulated ballots, the LEO must post the results outside the counting facility (NRS 293.383).[4]

Concurrent with the physical posting of results, LEOs post results on their local election office websites. A list of LEOs' contact information and websites can be found on the Secretary of State's website.[5] The Secretary of State's Office also posts all election results, as well as voter turnout statistics at https://silverstateelection.nv.gov/. Be sure to follow this website on election night and the days following the election (as mail ballots are processed) for the most up-to-date election returns.



4. An LEO shall not post the results of a statewide or multi-county race (for a state constitutional officer or a multi-county legislative district, for example) until the Secretary of State has notified the county that all polling places are closed and all votes have been cast (NRS 293.383(3)).
5. See https://www.nvsos.gov/sos/elections/voters/county-clerk-contact-information.

What Is the Canvassing Process?

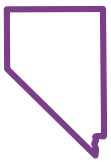
The "canvass of the vote" is a review of the election results by the board of county commissioners or the Nevada Supreme Court (for statewide results), during which any clerical errors, if any, within the election results are officially noted and the official election results are declared (NRS 293.032). At the same time LEOs are reviewing election results to determine the winners, the Secretary of State is using the information provided by the counties to determine the official results for multijurisdictional or statewide offices (NRS 293.387).[6]

County & City Canvass:



NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 13, 2026—As soon as the returns from all the precincts and districts in each county and city have been received by the board of county commissioners—or the city council for municipal elections—the board or council must meet and canvass the returns. Once the result is declared through the canvass process, the LEO must prepare a "certified abstract" of the votes, as well as an electronic version of this count—called a "mechanized abstract"—and transmit them to the Secretary of State on or before the 10th day following the election (NRS 293.387 and 293C.387).

Statewide Canvass:



NOVEMBER 24, 2026—On the fourth Tuesday of November following the general election, the justices of the Supreme Court, or a majority thereof, must meet with the Secretary of State to open and canvass the vote for: (1) Nevada's designated presidential electors; (2) United States Senator; (3) Representative in Congress; (4) members of the Legislature; (5) state officers; and (6) district judges or district officers whose districts include areas in more than one county. The votes for and against statewide ballot questions are also canvassed at this time (NRS 293.395).

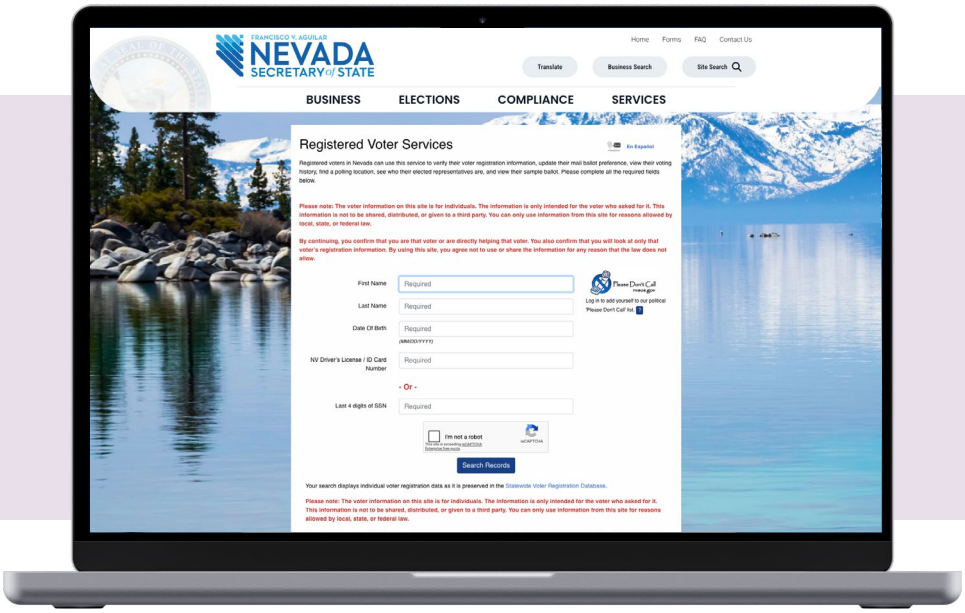
Once the canvass is complete, the Governor shall issue certificates of elections and commissions to those receiving the highest number of votes and declare, by proclamation, their election to office (NRS 293.395).

6. *Nevada's Election Process: After the Vote*, Research Division, Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau, February 2026.

Can I Track My Ballot to Make Sure It Has Been Received, Processed, and Counted?

All voters may track the status of their ballot at https://www.nvsos.gov/votersearch/. Through this website, voters can also track their voting history (including when ballot materials were mailed), find polling locations, and download and print a sample ballot.

For more information regarding election administration, election results, and other election information, please visit your county's election website or the Secretary of State's website at https://www.nvsos.gov/sos/elections. The Secretary of State's *2026 Elections Procedure Manual* provides additional details about ballot processing, counting, and tabulation and serves as a valuable supplement to the topics addressed in this FAQ.



ABOUT THE GUINN CENTER

The Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research center addressing key challenges faced by policymakers and all Nevadans.

Our staff researchers, together with academic partners and independent experts across the state, tackle policy issues that range from taxation to water use, healthcare to education, and everything in between. We identify and analyze the complex problems we face as a state and inform decision-makers about actionable, data-driven, and effective policy solutions.

We invite you to join us in creating a brighter future for the Silver State by supporting our mission, signing up for our newsletter, or getting in contact.

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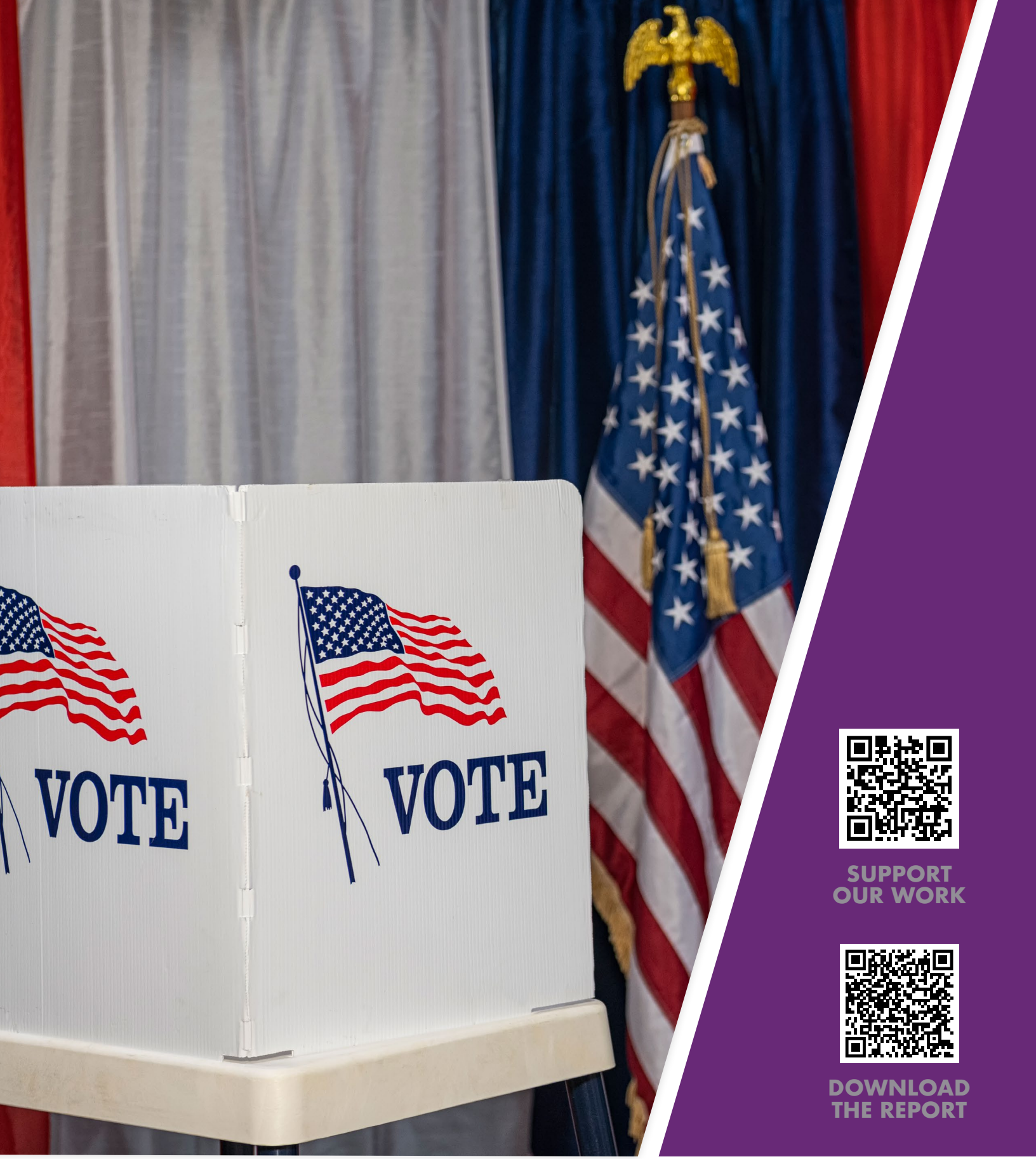
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