

ABSENTEE VOTING

SYNOPSIS

The right to vote is covered by the Constitution of the United States.

WHY THE GRAND JURY INVESTIGATED

Tulare County Grand Jury requested all county civil Grand Juries in California to investigate the absentee and vote-by-mail balloting methods in their counties.

AUTHORITY

California Penal Code Section 925. The Grand Jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments and functions of the county.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The Kings County Elections Officer and his assistant were interviewed by the Grand Jury.

BACKGROUND AND FACTS

The Department of Justice and the Secretary of State regulate elections. Kings County adheres to these regulations. It would require action by the legislature to authorize any change in the election process.

If a precinct contains 250 or less registered voters it may be designated a vote-by-mail precinct.

The Registrar of Voters conducts all elections (federal, state and local) except land owner districts and receives campaign disclosure filings. The Elections Office keeps all the records and prepares and tallies the ballots for all elections. "Absentee Balloting" and "Vote-by-mail" have merged. Some precincts have become "Vote-by-mail" precincts and do not have polling places while "Absentee Ballots" are requested by voters who are unable to be present to vote at their polling place on election day. Both ballot methods are counted in the same way.

Absentee, vote-by-mail and early voted ballots received are processed and tallied before election day. Results are not publicized until after the polls are closed on election day.

When a voter registers, his signature is digitized, enabling that signature to be verified electronically. The voter must sign the envelope containing the voted ballot and the signature is verified. The ballot and envelope are separated, thus ensuring the secrecy of that vote and the vote is then counted.

Approximately 120 votes are uncountable per election due to unverifiable signatures, wrong addresses or other irregularities.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

None

COMMENTS

It is apparent that the Kings County Elections Department has established a system that ensures each ballot is counted and accounted for in a professional manner.

RESPONSE REQUIREMENT

None