

VERIFYING AND CURING SIGNATURES

*COVID-19 and Election Administration:
Approaches for Election Officials*
June 23, 2020

Housekeeping

- Be gracious about **work-from-home setups**
- **Restart Zoom** if needed
- **Slides and captioned recordings** will be available on the registration page
- Use the **chat panel** to say hello, chat with other attendees, and ask questions

Today's objectives

- **Audit and expand** your existing signature files
- Explore resources to **train election workers** on the fundamentals of signature verification
- Review options for **helping voters “cure” signature** issues after they submit their ballots

Today's agenda

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Building a foundation (10 minutes)
- Review Framework & Verification Training (20 mins)
- Cure process (10 minutes)
- Q&A (10 minutes)
- Wrapping up and course survey (5 minutes)

Hello, there!



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Brittny Petersen

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- ~3800 registered voters
- Rural community



Rey Valenzuela

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- ~2.4 million reg. voters
- 1.7 million on permanent early voting list
- Largely urban, some rural areas



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Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL)

Harnessing the promise of
technology to modernize the
American voting experience

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Federal resources

- Set of documents provide guidance for state, local, tribal, and territorial election officials
- Written by the Joint COVID-19 Working Group
 - Cyber Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
 - Elections Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council (GCC)
 - Elections Infrastructure Sector Coordinating Council (SCC)

<https://www.cisa.gov/protect2020>

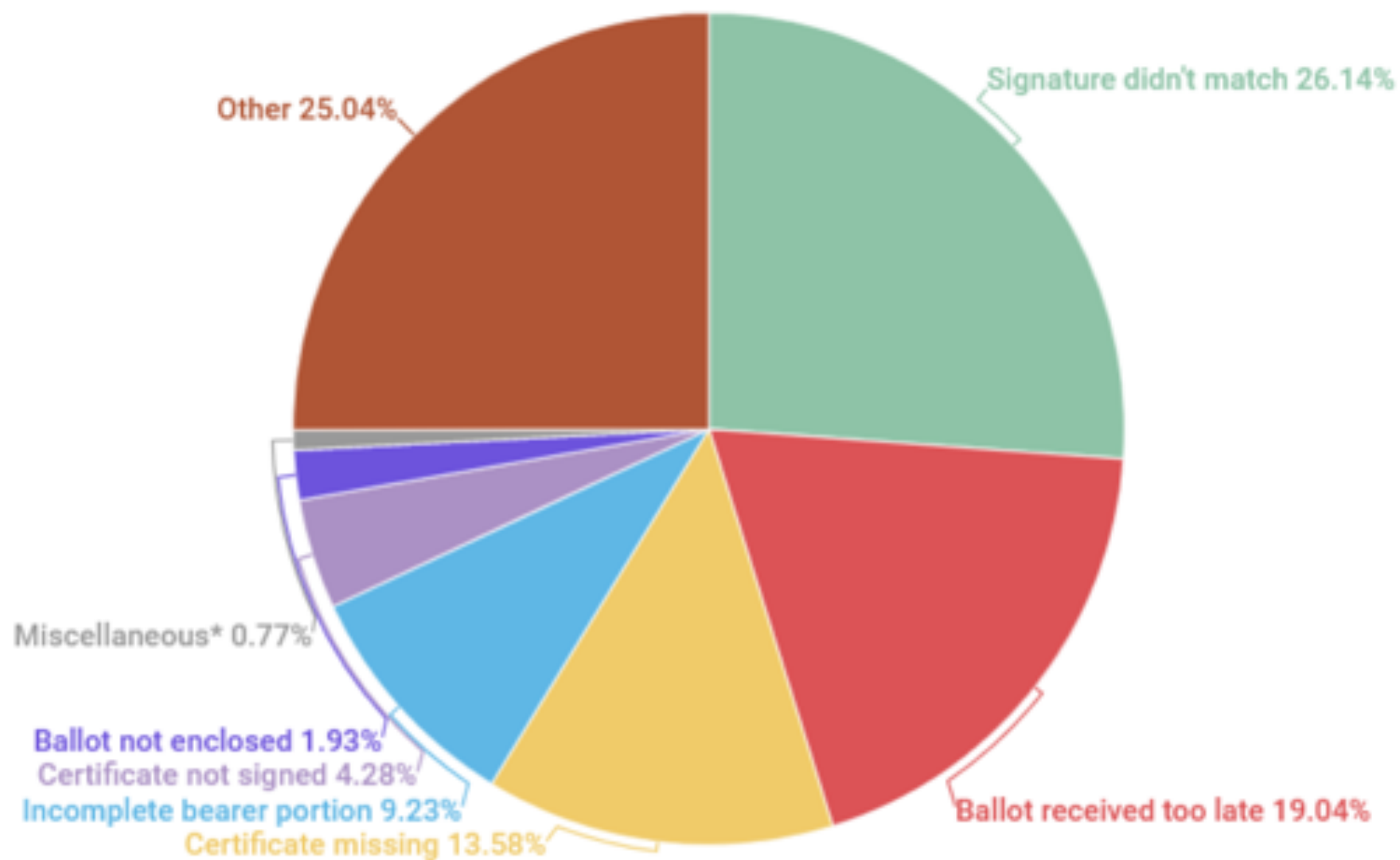
Keep in mind

1. This is tough!
2. One size doesn't fit all
3. Things will change
4. Preparation and flexibility > certainty
5. A supportive team > a solo mission
6. Your work *matters*, and it's hugely appreciated

Collecting, updating, and auditing your signature files

BUILDING A SIGNATURE FOUNDATION

Reasons for ballot rejections



* *Miscellaneous reasons are: voter registration ID missing, bearer book not signed, bearer brought too many ballots, moved out of county, incomplete assister portion, candidate assisted voter.*

2018 EAVS Survey Data

Table 1. Most Common Reason for By-Mail Ballot Rejection is "Other"³²

Top Reasons for Rejecting By-Mail Ballots	
Reason	Percentage of Rejected Ballots
"Other" reason given	34.9%
Ballot not received on time/missed deadline	26.9%
Non-matching signature	15.8%
No voter signature	13.0%
No witness signature	2.5%
All additional reasons	2.2%
Voter already voted in person	1.4%

Signature Challenges

- Unscanned transfers from a legacy paper systems
- Outdated signatures
- Signatures collected from electronic pads
- Identity verified through non-signature means

Updating signatures

- Send voters a signature card
- Update files from other agencies (if possible)
- Create or begin a signature history

Lessons learned

Rey - Maricopa County, AZ

- Quality & “Quantity”
- Build a sample signature repository

Brittney - Cherry County, NE

- Utilize advantages of small jurisdictions to contact voters
- Use all the signatures that you have access to

What processes can you put in place to review signatures?

SIGNATURE REVIEW PROCESS

A tiered system of review

Tier 1

- Manual or automated
- If automated, have a tight tolerance
- Compare envelope and image file
 - “almost perfect match”

https://www-cdn.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SLS_Signature_Verification_Report-5-15-20-FINAL.pdf

A tiered system of review

Tier 2

- Ballots did not pass tier 1 review
- Always done by human inspection
- Reviewers utilize training and re-review signature
 - Ideally - history of signatures
- Shouldn't require more than 30 seconds

A tiered system of review

Tier 3

- Final arbitration
- Did not pass tier 1 and tier 2 review
- Much deeper inspection
 - Deeper look at past signature
- Have a bipartisan team inspect
- Can take up to 3 minutes

Lessons learned

Rey - Maricopa County, AZ

- System of redundancies
- Know your audience
- Use voter-centric cure methods

Brittney - Cherry County, NE

- Have administrative procedures ready
- The Nebraska tiered review process

How can you verify signatures?

SIGNATURE VERIFICATION

Training for Sig. Verification

Broad Characteristics





- Type of writing (cursive v print)
- Spacing
- Size and proportions
- Position (slant v straight)

Training - broad characteristics

Type of Writing

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	

Overall Spacing

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	

Training for Sig. Verification


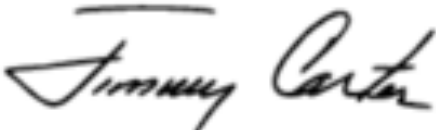
Local Characteristics

- Internal spacing
- Letter size & combos
- Curves, loops and cross points
- Beginning and ending strokes

<https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/docs/SignatureVerificationGuide.pdf>

Training - local characteristics

Internal spacing

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	

Curves, loops and cross points



How to handle manual verification

- Create a single process
- Know how long each step takes
- Have a ballot tracking system
- Reconcile ballots regularly

Automating the process?

- It is possible!
- Can speed up the verification process
- Integrated into mail ballot sorting equipment & VR system
- Can support reconciling and accounting of ballots

Lessons learned

Rey - Maricopa County, AZ

- Create a redundant system
- Capture signatures from returned packets
- Create signature statuses or codes

Brittney - Cherry County, NE

- It's an evolving process
- Increase in voting by mail state-wide
- COVID created a unique scenario

Handling signature discrepancies

SIGNATURE CURE PROCESS

Signature cure process

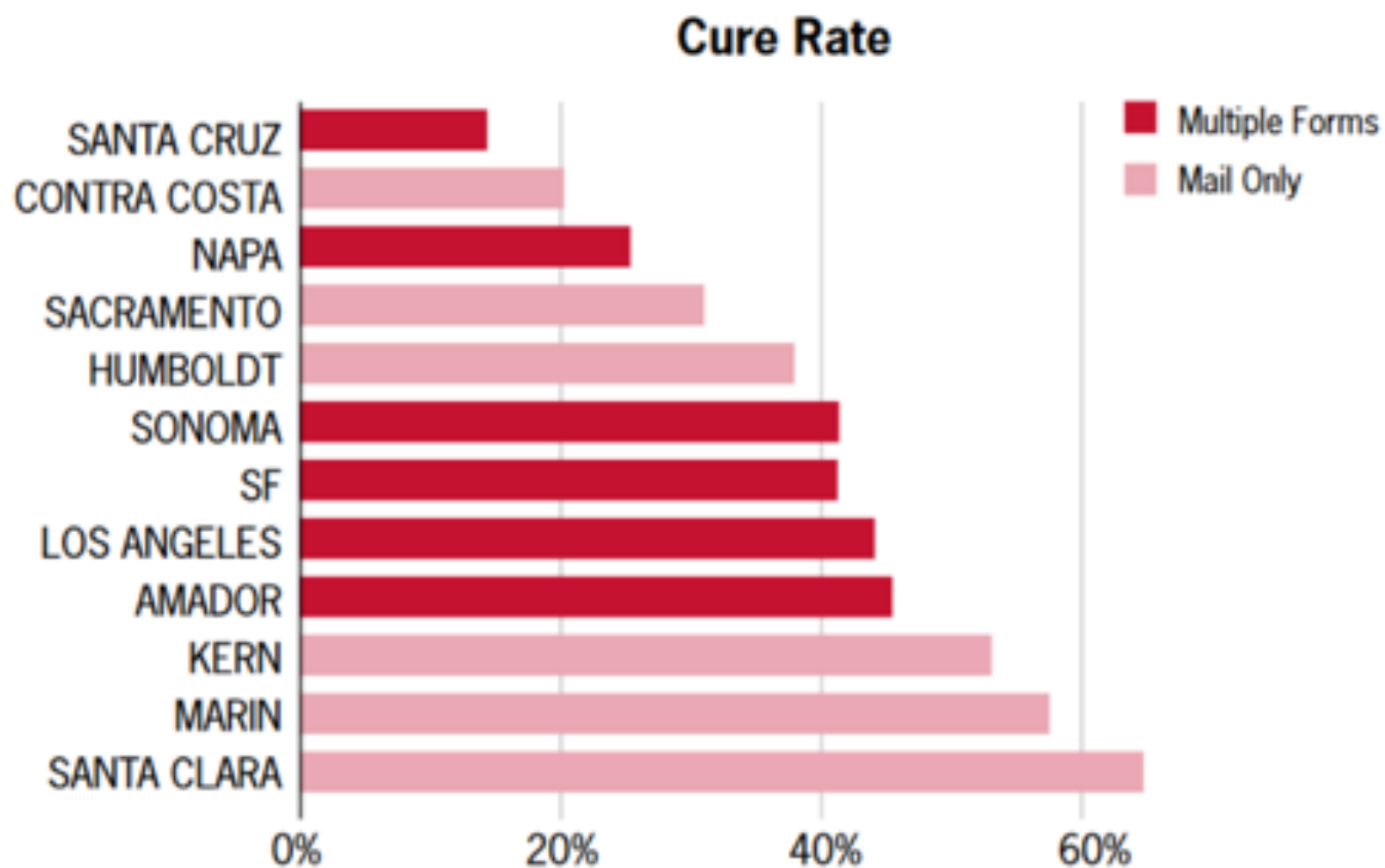
- 19 states require notification of signature discrepancy
- Daily process
- Notification to voters that their ballot has been rejected (for the moment)
- Provides solutions to “cure” their ballot
 - Signed affidavit w/ copy of ID

Signature cure considerations

- Organize a system for rejected ballots
- Track cure letters
- Aim for quick notification
 - Message through ballot tracking app
 - Send letters via email
 - Send a text reminder or text-to-cure app

FIGURE 11: Remedy Rate by Notification Form

Mail-only counties had some of the highest cure rates, particularly Santa Clara and Marin which send voters follow-up letters.



Center for Civic Design

- Short form cure letter - California
- Cure letter form layout - Florida

<https://civicdesign.org/tool-kit-for-scaling-up-vbm/#signaturecure>

Your signature is missing on your vote-by-mail ballot envelope

The Santa Cruz County Elections Department received your vote-by-mail ballot envelope without your signature. For your ballot to be counted, we must get your signature.

You may either come to our office and sign your ballot envelope as soon as possible, but no later than 5pm June 15, 2016 or submit the unsigned ballot envelope statement below. (Elections Code §3019)

Read these instructions carefully before completing the statement. Failure to follow these instructions may cause your ballot not to count.

1. Complete the statement below and make sure you sign your name.
2. Use one of the following methods to return your statement:
 - Mail the statement to Santa Cruz County Elections, 701 Ocean St., Room 210, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 so that it will reach us no later than 5pm, June 15, 2016. Make sure you have sufficient postage. You may also deliver the statement to our office or have someone else deliver it for you.
 - FAX the statement to 831-454-2445 no later than 5pm, June 15, 2016.
 - Deliver the statement on Election Day to a polling place in Santa Cruz County by 8pm, Tuesday, June 7, 2016 or
 - Drop the statement off on Election Day in a designated ballot drop box in Santa Cruz County by 8pm, Tuesday, June 7, 2016.

Unsigned ballot envelope statement

I, _____, am a registered voter of Santa Cruz County, State of California.

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I requested and returned a vote-by-mail ballot, and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, or if I aid or abet fraud or attempt to aid or abet fraud in connection with voting, I may be convicted of a felony punishable by imprisonment for 16 months or two or three years. I understand that my failure to sign this statement means that my vote-by-mail ballot will be invalidated.

Voter's Signature:

X	Date:
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If the voter cannot sign his/her name, have the voter make a mark in the box above and then the witness signs here: _____

Address where you live in Santa Cruz County:

Number & Street

City

State

Zip

Which would you rather fill out?

VOTE-BY-MAIL CURE AFFIDAVIT – INSTRUCTIONS AND FORM

This affidavit is for a voter who returns a vote-by-mail ballot certificate that does not include the voter's signature or whose signature does not match the voter's signature on file.

A. Instructions. READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THE AFFIDAVIT. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR BALLOT NOT TO COUNT. In order to ensure that your vote-by-mail ballot will be counted, your affidavit should be completed and returned as soon as possible so that so it can reach the supervisor of elections of the county in which your precinct is located no later than 5 p.m. on the second day after the election. You must:

Complete and sign the affidavit below - sign on the line above "[Voter's Signature]"

Make a copy of one of the following forms of identification (ID):

Tier 1 identification - Current and valid ID that includes your name and photograph: Florida driver license; Florida identification card issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles; United States passport; debit or credit card; military, student, retirement center, neighborhood association, or public assistance ID; veteran health ID card issued by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; Florida license to carry a concealed weapon or firearm; or employee ID card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the Federal Government, the state, a county, or a municipality.

OR if you do not have one of the above forms of ID, use one of these instead:

Tier 2 identification - ID that shows your name and current residence address: current utility bill; bank statement; government check; paycheck; or government document (excluding voter information card).

Return the completed affidavit and the copy of your ID to your county supervisor of elections:

- Deliver in person or by someone else,
- Fax or email (attach the completed affidavit and copy of the ID), or
- Mail, if time permits (insert the completed affidavit and copy of the ID into a mailing envelope and address to the supervisor; be sure there is sufficient postage and the supervisor's address is correct)

Address, fax numbers, and email addresses for each Supervisor of Elections can be found here: <http://dos.elections.myflorida.com/supervisors/>

Remember, your information MUST reach your county supervisor of elections no later than 5 PM on the second day after the election, or your ballot will not count.

B. Form

Vote-by-Mail Ballot Cure Affidavit

I, _____, am a qualified voter in this election and registered
(print voter's name)


voter of _____ County, Florida. I do solemnly swear or affirm that I requested and
(print county name)

returned the vote-by-mail ballot and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, vote a fraudulent ballot, or vote more than once in an election, I may be convicted of a felony of the third degree and fined up to \$5,000 and imprisoned for up to 5 years. I understand that my failure to sign this affidavit means that my vote-by-mail ballot will be invalidated.

Voter's Signature

Voter's Address

Form DS-DE 139 (eff. 7-2019) Florida Department of State/Division of Elections Form Section 101.80(4), Florida Statutes



Your signature is missing on your vote by mail ballot, or it doesn't match the one we have on file.

To make sure we count your ballot, follow the instructions below and return attachments by 5:00 pm the 2nd day after the election.

<p>Provide Identification</p> <p>Send a copy or email a photo</p>	<p>Provide a current, valid ID that includes your name and photo. It could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver license • State ID issued by Dept of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles • US passport • Debit or credit card • Military, student, retirement center, neighborhood association, or public assistance ID • Veteran health ID card issued by U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs • License to carry a concealed weapon or firearm • Employee ID card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the Federal Government, the state, a county, or a municipality. <p>If you don't have any of the items on the left, provide identification that shows your name and current residence address. It could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current utility bill • Bank statement • Government check • Paycheck • Government document (excluding voter information card)
<p>Sign the affidavit</p> <p>Print your name, the county you live in, your, address, and sign your name</p>	<p>I am a qualified voter in this election and registered voter of the [State] County below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do solemnly swear or affirm that I requested and returned the vote-by-mail ballot and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. • I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, vote a fraudulent ballot, or vote more than once in an election, I may be convicted of a felony of the third degree and fined up to \$5,000 and imprisoned for up to 5 years. • I understand that my failure to sign this affidavit means that my vote-by-mail ballot will be invalidated. <p>1</p> <p>Your name _____</p> <p>The county you live in _____</p> <p>Your address _____</p> <p>Voter, sign here</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 150px; margin-left: 50px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">✕ _____</p> </div>
<p>Return form and requested materials</p> <p>Remember, your information must reach the [county] Supervisor of Elections no later than 5 pm on the 2nd day after the election, or your ballot will not count.</p>	<p>Choose one of the following options</p> <p>3</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Drop it off, or have someone else take it to [address]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fax this form and attachments to [phone] or email to [email]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mail this form and attachments to [address]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Our phone number is [phone]</p>

Let's talk

DISCUSSION



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Share your thoughts

- What resonated with you from today's webinar? (Any "ah-ha" moments?)
- What are your next steps?
- What questions do you have about what we covered today?
- What questions do you have about what we didn't cover today?

As more questions come up...

- Reach out to CTCL
 - We'll help out, or
 - We'll find someone for you who can

We've covered a lot of ground

WRAPPING UP



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Today's resources

COVID 19 Working Group
"Signature Verification and
Cure Process"

https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/electionofficials/vbm/Signature_Verification_Cure_Process.pdf

Stanford University: Every
Vote Counts Study

https://www-cdn.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/SLS_Signature_Verification_Report-5-15-20-FINAL.pdf

Center for Civic Design Tool
Kit

<https://civicdesign.org/tool-kit-for-scaling-up-vbm/#signaturecure>

Colorado Signature
Verification Guide

<https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/docs/SignatureVerificationGuide.pdf>

Elections Group
Signature Guide & Quick
Reference Guide

<https://www.techandciviclife.org/covid-19-webinars/#covid-webinar10>

Dates to keep in mind (132)

Equipment

- Purchase automated software (152 to 32 days)

Signature Files

- Review for voters with no archived signature image.
Send out form to those missing signatures. (123 to 92 days)

Document verification

- Document verification and cure process (92 to 30 days)

What was your experience with today's webinar?

- A brief survey is linked in the chat box
- Please complete the survey now to provide feedback and improve the webinar for future participants

Up next

- ~~Supporting election officials (Thursday, May 21)~~
- ~~Planning 2020 workload and resource allocation (Tuesday, May 26)~~
- ~~Ensuring access, equity, and inclusion (Thursday, May 28)~~
- ~~Educating voters about their options (Thursday, June 4)~~
- ~~Maintaining voter lists (Tuesday, June 9)~~
- ~~Managing mail ballot request forms (Thursday, June 11)~~
- ~~Organizing ballot dropoff locations (Tuesday, June 16)~~
- ~~Streamlining the inbound ballot process (Thursday, June 18)~~
- ~~Verifying and curing signatures (Tuesday, June 23)~~
- Recruiting and training election workers (Thursday, June 25)
- Implementing public health guidelines for voting locations (Tuesday, June 30)

techandcivicle.org/covid-19-webinars/

Thanks!

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