

Electronic Voting Glossary

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Introduction

The purpose of this glossary is to provide a central reference to provide definitions of over 2000 terms used in conjunction with electronic voting and voter registration systems in the United States. No effort is made to address the terminology or systems of other countries.

Voting is one of the oldest organized governmental functions in this country, long predating the establishment of the Union. It consists of venerated practices imbued with tradition and mandated by statutes, all of which differ from state to state. This has given rise to a rich body of terms, many of which do not have consistent meanings throughout the country. It is a goal of this document to provide authoritative explanations of the various ways in which terms are used with reference to official documents and statutes, where possible. Another goal has been to provide a reference for users of the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines.

About the Author

Michael Ian Shamos is Distinguished Career Professor in the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and an attorney admitted in Pennsylvania and before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office..

From 1980-2000 and from 2004-2006 he was an examiner of computerized voting systems for the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. From 1987-2000 he was the Designee of the Attorney General of Texas for electronic voting certification. He has conducted more than 120 voting system examinations. In 2004 he designed and taught a course on electronic voting at Carnegie Mellon University. In 2006 he taught a course on voting system testing for the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Dr. Shamos has been an expert witness in a number of lawsuits involving electronic voting, including *Wexler v. Lepore* in Florida, *Schade v. State Board of Elections* in Maryland, *Taylor v. Onorato* in Pennsylvania and *Gusciora v. McGreevey* in New Jersey. He has also testified in several patent cases involving voting technology, including *Avante v. Premier Election Solutions*. He was the author in 1993 of “Electronic Voting — Evaluating the Threat” and in 2004 of “Paper v. Electronic Voting Records — An Assessment,” both of which were presented at the ACM Conference on Computers, Freedom & Privacy. He has provided testimony on electronic voting to the Pennsylvania legislature, the Election Assistance Commission and on five occasions to committees of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

Further information is available at <http://euro.econ.cmu.edu/shamos.html>.

Abbreviations Used

Admin. Administrative

Ala. Alabama

Ann. Annotated

ANSI American National Standards Institute

Ariz. Arizona

Ark. Arkansas

Art. Article

Bull. Bulletin

Cal. Proc. California “Procedures for Approving, Certifying, Reviewing, Modifying, and Decertifying Voting Systems, Vote Tabulating Systems, Election Observer Panel Plans, and Auxiliary Equipment, Materials, and Procedures”

C.F.R. Code of Federal Regulations

CIVTF. California Internet Voting Task Force. Technical Committee Recommendations.

Col. Colorado

Comp. Compiled, as in “Ill. Comp. Stat.”

Conn. Connecticut

Const. Constitution

CRS Congressional Research Service

D.C. District of Columbia

Del. Delaware

Elec. Election

Fischer. Eric Fischer, “CRS Report for Congress: Voting Technologies in the United States” (2001)

Fla. VSS. Florida Voting System Standards

Ga. Georgia

Gen. General

Gen’l. General

Ill. Illinois

Ind. Indiana

I.S.O. International Standards Organization

Jones. Douglas W Jones on Mark Sense Voting. Available at www.cs.uiowa.edu/~jones/voting/optical/.

Kan. Kansas

Ky. Kentucky

La. Louisiana

Mass. Massachusetts

Md. Maryland

Me. Maine

Mich. Michigan
Minn. Minnesota
Miss. Mississippi
Mo. Missouri
Mont. Montana
N.C. North Carolina
N.D. North Dakota
N.D.C.C. North Dakota Century Code
Neb. Nebraska
Nev. Nevada
N.H. New Hampshire
NIST National Institute of Standards and Technology
N.J. New Jersey
N.J.S New Jersey Statutes
N.J.S.A. New Jersey Statutes Annotated
N.M. New Mexico
N.Y. New York
Okla. Oklahoma
OMB Office of Management and Budget
O.R.S. Oregon Revised Statutes
Pa. Pennsylvania
Pasco ESP. “Election Security Procedures” Version 1.9, issued by Pasco County (FL)
Supervisor of Elections.
Proc. Procedures
Regs. Regulations
Rev. Revised
R.C.W. Revised Code of Washington
R.I. Rhode Island
R.S. Revised Statutes
SBE State Board of Elections
S.C. South Carolina
S.D. South Dakota
Sec’y. Secretary
Stat. Statutes
Tenn. Tennessee
U.S.C. United States Code
Va. Virginia
Vt. Vermont
VVSG. The Voluntary Voting System Guidelines
W. Va. West Virginia
W.V.C. West Virginia Code
Wash. Washington
Wisc. Wisconsin
Wyo. Wyoming

Abbreviations not listed in the above table are defined as entries in the glossary. See, e.g. “ABS.”

References in small caps are cross-references to other entries in the glossary

Terms

abandoned ballot

A ballot that has been partially filled out but not cast. A ballot left by a FLEEING VOTER. Iowa Admin. Code §721-26.60(49). The states differ as to whether such a ballot should be cast without being examined by precinct officials or invalidated. In Iowa, it is cast. Iowa Admin. Code §721-22.432(52). A “ballot that the voter did not place in the ballot box or record as cast on [a] DRE before leaving the POLLING PLACE.” 2005 VVSG GLOSSARY.

ABP

= ACCESSIBLE BALLOT PRINTER.

ABS

Abbreviation for ABSENTEE BALLOT SYSTEM.

absent ballot

= ABSENTEE BALLOT. A “ballot voted by a person who expects to be or is absent from the polling place for his precinct or district on election day.” Nev. Rev. Stat. §293.013.

absent ballot mailing precinct inspection board

The absent ballot mailing precinct inspection board shall:

1. Perform functions similar to those of the central ballot inspection board and the ballot duplicating board as those functions are applicable to absent and mailing ballots.
2. Bundle the empty absentee and mailing return envelopes according to ballot type or precinct and deliver the bundles to the county clerk.
3. Treat any absentee or mailing envelope found not to contain a ballot as a rejected ballot and place each such envelope in a separate larger envelope on which must be written the ballot code or precinct and the reason for the rejection.” Nev. Rev. Stat. §293B.370.

absent uniformed services voter

A term from UOCAVA defining the class of people who benefit from the statute:

“‘absent uniformed services voter’ means –

(A) a member of a uniformed service on active duty who, by reason of such active duty, is absent from the place of residence where the member is otherwise qualified to vote;

(B) a member of the merchant marine who, by reason of service in the merchant marine, is absent from the place of residence where the member is otherwise qualified to vote; and

(C) a spouse or dependent of a member referred to in subparagraph (A) or (B) who, by reason of the active duty or service of the member, is absent from the place of residence where the spouse or dependent is otherwise qualified to vote.” 42 U.S.C. §1973ff-6(1).

absent voter

A “registered voter who has received or who has voted an absent ballot.” Nev. Rev. Stat. § 293.015.

candidate register

A “record that reflects the total votes cast for the candidate. This record is augmented as each ballot is cast on a DRE or as digital signals from the conversion of voted paper ballots are logically interpreted and recorded.” 2005 VVSG GLOSSARY.

candidates who remain

A term associated with INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING, meaning “all candidates who have not been eliminated at a previous STAGE.” Wash. Rev. Code §29A.53.030.

canvass

The “the entire process of determining that the votes have been counted and tabulated correctly, culminating in the authentication of the official election results.” N.C Gen. Stat. §163-182.5. “Compilation of election returns and validation of the outcome that forms the basis of the official results by political subdivision.” 2005 VVSG GLOSSARY. A “review of the election results by the board of county commissioners or the mayor and city council or the justices of the Supreme Court, by which any errors within the election results are officially noted and the official election results are declared.” Nev. Rev. Stat. §293.032. Similarly, Ark. Code §7-1-101(4). The “process of examining, in detail, a ballot, groups of ballots, election subtotals, or grand totals in order to determine the final official returns of a primary, special, or general election and in order to safeguard the integrity of the election process.” Wash. Admin. Code §434-240-010(4). The “audit function that culminates in the final certification of official election returns.” Wyo. Stat. §22-1-102(a)(xl). See also RECANVASS.

canvassing board

A committee of officials responsible for producing the official tally of votes and certifying the results of an election. Also COUNTY CANVASSING BOARD.

capacity

Number of parties, candidates, questions
Total votes

card stock

“Paper manufactured in accordance with certain specifications rendering it suitable for use in card reading equipment.” Cal. Regs. §20204

cartridge

The “permanent memory which stores the BALLOT DISPLAY information and records the votes for each Direct Recording Election Machine.” Wyo. Rules §1.4(p).

cast

To cause a vote to be recorded.

cast ballot

A “BALLOT in which the voter has taken final action in the selection of CONTEST CHOICES and irrevocably confirmed his or her intent to vote as selected.” 2007 VVSG. See also COUNTED BALLOT, READ BALLOT.

cast vote record

A “permanent record of all votes produced by a single voter whether in electronic, paper or other form. Also referred to as BALLOT IMAGE when used to refer to electronic ballots.” 2005

VVSG GLOSSARY. An “archival record of all votes produced by a single voter.” 2007 VVSG. Abbreviated CVR. Sometimes ELECTRONIC CAST VOTE RECORD.

catastrophic system failure

“A total loss of function or functions, such as the loss or unrecoverable corruption of voting data, or the failure of an on-board battery for volatile memory.” FVSS Appendix.

caucus

“A meeting of a political party or committee.” Me. Rev. Stat. §21-A-1(6). An “open meeting held in a political subdivision to nominate the candidates of a political party for public office to be elected in such subdivision at which all the enrolled voters of such party residing in such subdivision are eligible to vote.” N.Y. Election Laws (consol.) §1-104(28). Any “meeting, at a designated hour and place, or at designated hours and places, of the enrolled members of a political party within a municipality or political subdivision thereof for the purpose of selecting party-endorsed candidates for a primary to be held by such party or for the purpose of transacting other business of such party.” Conn. Gen. Stat. §9-372(1).

CCOS

= CENTRAL-COUNT OPTICAL SCANNER.

CDPD

= CELLULAR DIGITAL PACKET DATA.

cellphone

Cellphones equipped with cameras provide an easy vote-selling mechanism. The voter can dial a number and transmit video images of her activities within the voting booth to a remote observer, who can then reward her based on her vote. An increasing number of jurisdictions ban cellphones from POLLING PLACES for this reason.

cellular digital packet data

A mechanism for wireless data transfer used in some voting systems for uploading precinct results for central tabulation. Abbreviated CDPD.

central absentee voter precinct

A “precinct established by a county or city ... for the processing of absentee ballots for the county or city or any combination of precincts within the county or city.” Va. Code §24.2-101.

central ballot counter

A “marksense ballot counter that reads and tabulates marksense ballots at a central location to which ballots are transported after the polls close. There may be more than one central counter in a county.” Ala. Admin. Code §307-X-1-.01(3).

central ballot inspection board

The central ballot inspection board shall:

1. Receive the ballots in sealed containers.
2. Inspect the containers, record the number indicated on each container and its seal pursuant to [statute] and remove the ballots or storage devices which store the ballots voted on mechanical recording devices which directly record votes electronically.
3. Register the numbers of ballots by precinct.