



ELECTIONS STUDY

HB 311 Findings & Implementation Considerations

STUDENT RESEARCHERS

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HB 311

HB 311: THE QUESTION BEFORE US

THE BILL DIRECTS A TWO-PART STUDY

PART 1(a)

Security risks of in-person voting vs. voting by mail

- Comparison with states that do not primarily vote by mail
- Potential and actual fraud
- Voter-roll accuracy
- Issues raised in audit 2024-20

PART 1(b)

Best practices for checking ID at a drop box before a ballot is deposited



Logistics



Wait times



Costs



Ballot
processing

WORKING ASSUMPTION FOR PART 1(b)

For this analysis, identity verification at the ballot box is a required step before a ballot may be returned.

METHODOLOGY

HOW WE CONDUCTED THE STUDY

LAWS, AUDITS & DATA

- Utah election law and legislative changes
- 2024, 2025, and 2026 audits/reviews
- Election data, administrative records, and fraud databases

STATE-LEVEL EXPERTS

- Lt. Governor's Office
- Office of the Legislative Auditor General
- Other election-policy stakeholders



METHODOLOGY

HOW WE CONDUCTED THE STUDY

ON-SITE FIELD RESEARCH

- Utah counties
- Urban, rural, and frontier election systems
- Washington · Colorado · Arizona · Arkansas · Tennessee

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

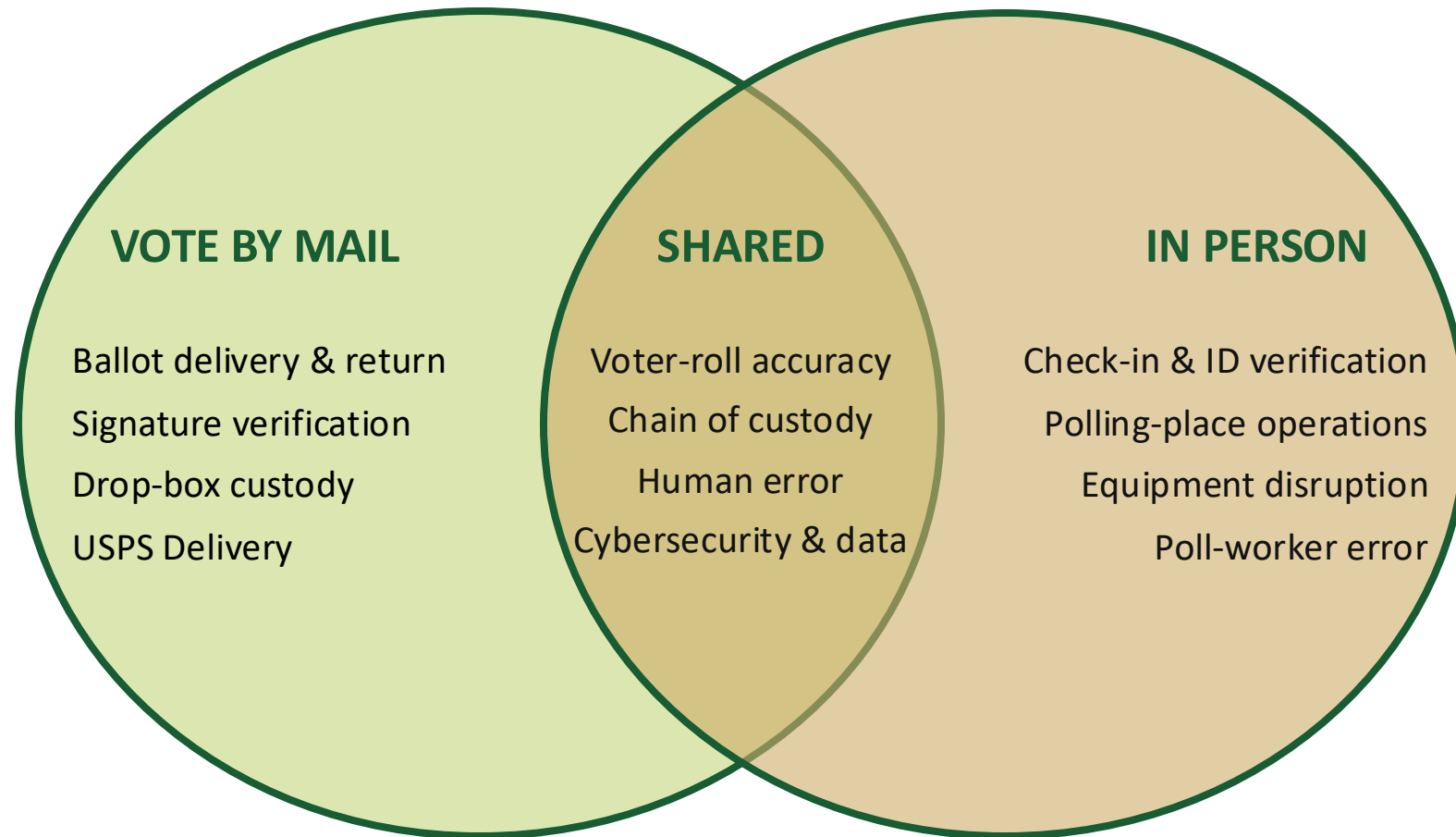
- Compared mail, hybrid, and in-person systems
- Security risks and safeguards
- Staffing, costs, access, and implementation

OBSERVED AND EXAMINED IN PRACTICE

authentication · ballot custody · processing · equipment · staffing · voter-roll maintenance · reconciliation · audit procedures



COMPARISON OF RISKS



No voting method eliminates risk. Security depends on how vulnerabilities are managed.

VOTER ROLLS & STATE AUDITS

PERTAINING TO PART 1(a) OF THE BILL

VOTER ROLLS: MAIL VS. IN PERSON



Both have an incentive to keep voter rolls updated.

Our research found no significant difference in voter-roll maintenance between vote-by-mail and in-person states.

AUDITS SHOW MEASURABLE PROGRESS

2024 → 2026

POTENTIAL DECEASED VOTERS

2024 → 2026

1,400+ → **70**

POTENTIAL DUPLICATE RECORDS

2024 → 2026

300+ → **2**

Both audits: no significant fraud identified.

FRAUD CONCERNS & MITIGATIONS

EACH CONCERN IS MET WITH MULTIPLE SAFEGUARDS



NON-CITIZENS / DEAD VOTERS ON
ROLLS OR SENT A BALLOT

MITIGATIONS

- Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)
- Voter rolls updated accurately in Voter Information and State Tracking Application (VISTA)
- Audits/support from the Lt. Governor's Office



INSIDER THREATS: THREATS INTERNAL TO
BALLOT PROCESSING

MITIGATIONS

- Chain of Custody:
 - Badge/ID access to rooms and tabulators
 - Two-person rules
 - 24/7 cameras
- Canvassing board certifies the results are correct
- Audits:
 - Signature verification audit (1% of ballots)
 - Post-election hand-count audit (one auditor from outside the county)

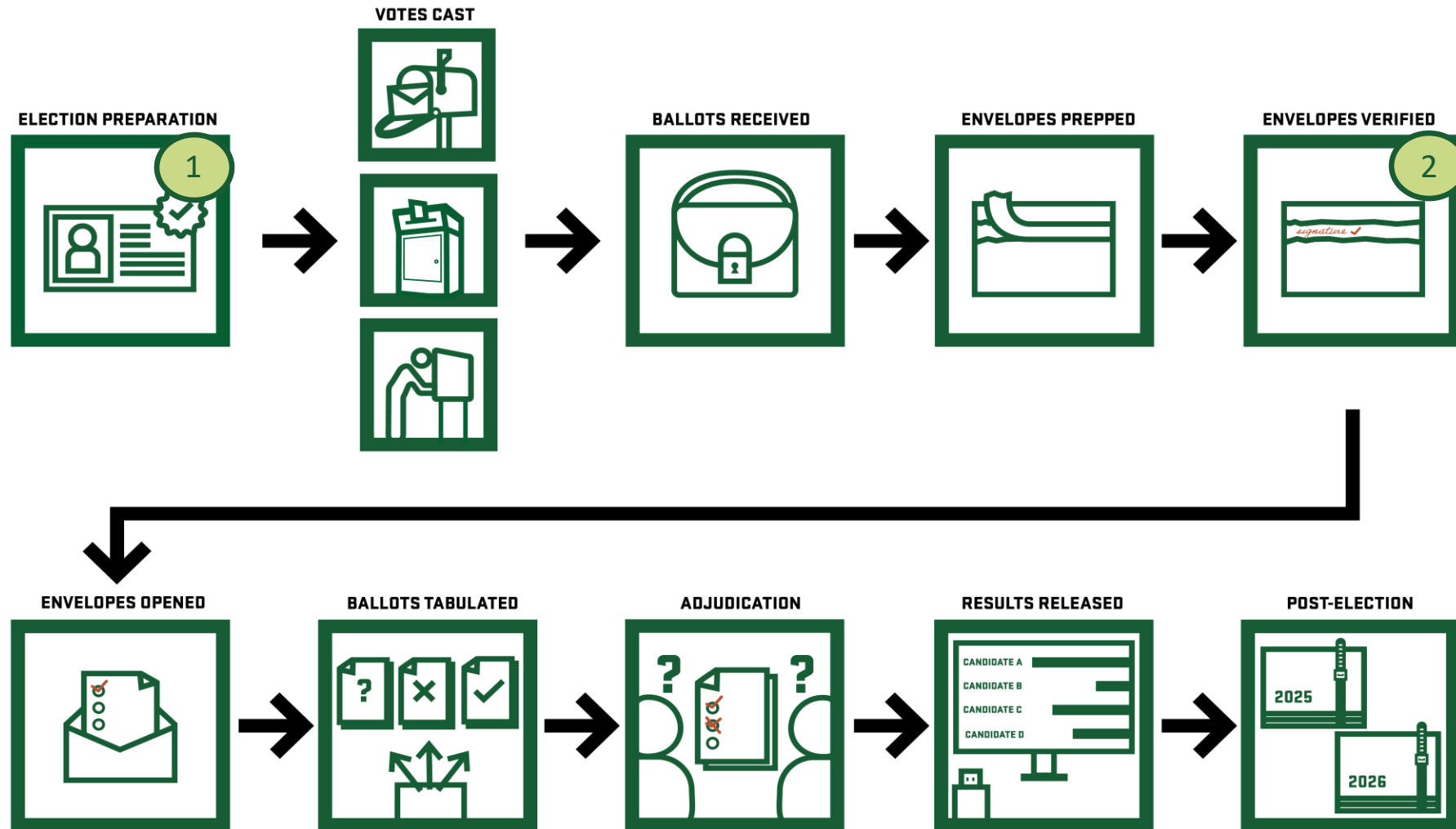


BY-MAIL MASQUERADE
VOTING: VOTING AS SOMEONE
ELSE

MITIGATIONS

- Ballots sent only to registered voters' addresses
- Publicly available ballot tracking systems
- Identity Verification:
 - Last 4 of ID (as of H.B. 300)
 - Signature verification

UTAH VERIFIES IDENTITY TWICE



Identity verification happens twice in Utah. The question is whether to add another step at the point of ballot return.

ID AT THE DROP BOX: THREE APPROACHES

PERTAINING TO PART 1(b) OF THE BILL

OPTION 1 · STAFFED



Voter → Election worker
→ Poll pad ID check →
Deposit

- Election workers at each drop location
- Poll pads used to verify voter record in real time
- Limited operating hours

OPTION 2 · SMART DROP BOX (ID NOT VERIFIED)



Vote System Vendor
(Runbeck's Sentinel)

- Photographs the voter while casting
- Scans the envelope barcode and photographs the envelope and signature
- Data is stored in the box itself:
vulnerable to hacking on-site or to the
box being destroyed

OPTION 3 · SEDI



State-Endorsed Digital
Identity

- Unique QR code on ballot envelope
- Unique QR code on ballot drop box
- Voter scans both QR codes verifying identity and location, then deposits ballot

The verification method determines the staffing, equipment, facilities, cost, and capacity that follow.

ID CHECK AT DROP BOX

ONE REQUIREMENT, MANY DECISIONS

WHO?	WHAT?	WHEN?	WHERE?	WHY?
Who checks ID?	What ID qualifies?	When must verification occur?	Which drop locations stay open?	What vulnerability does it address?
Workers, volunteers, or technology?	What information is checked?	How long before Election Day?	Indoor or outdoor?	Does it close that gap if USPS return remains?
Who responds when equipment fails?	Where is voter data stored, and what can it connect to?	Election Day only, or the full voting period?	How many locations?	Is the benefit worth the cost and access tradeoff?

RELATED STATUTORY QUESTIONS

- Can someone return another voter's ballot?
- Can ballots still be returned through USPS?
- How are military, overseas, and disabled voters handled?
- What happens when verification can't be completed?

BALLOT PROCESSING QUESTIONS

- How is the ID check recorded and linked to the ballot?
- Does it replace or add to signature verification?
- Where are ID records kept, and how are they secured?
- How is custody documented from box to count?

“Require ID at the drop box” sounds like one decision. It triggers a chain of dependent ones.

LOGISTICS AND WAIT TIMES

**2 OF EVERY 3 UTAH BALLOTS
GO THROUGH A DROP BOX**

44%

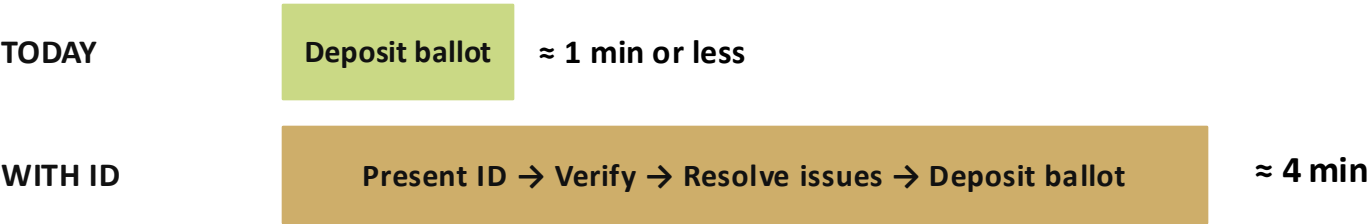
arrive in the final two days

≈ 430,000

ballots in last 48 hours

Capacity must plan for the busiest
days, not the average day.

OPTION 1 (STAFFED): ID VERIFICATION CHANGES THE TRANSACTION



TIME TO SERVE 5 VOTERS IN A ROW (ILLUSTRATIVE: 1 MIN VS. 4 MIN EACH)



DETERMINANTS OF WAIT TIME



COSTS



SEDI:

Minimal Costs (printing and unknown software development costs)

SENTINEL:

Upfront for 323 boxes	\$4,360,500
5 years of support and warranty	\$4,287,127
Total	\$8,647,627



STATEWIDE STAFFED LOCATIONS:

≥ \$8.1 million

Continuous (per election year)

≥ \$1 million

Upfront (one-time)

323

drop-box locations
today

**AVERAGE COST PER DROP BOX, PER
ELECTION**

≥ \$12.5 k

**Base estimates only,
additional costs will likely be incurred*

COUNTY CONCERNS

URBAN COUNTIES

- Greater ballot volume
- More simultaneous transactions
- Larger total staffing need
- More equipment
- Traffic and queue management

≈ 370,000

**voters who returned their
ballots via USPS would
have to change how they
vote**

*USPS returns statewide, 2024 general
election*

RURAL & FRONTIER COUNTIES

- Smaller labor pools
- Large geographic areas
- Longer travel distances
- Hard to staff multiple sites
- Fewer feasible facilities
- Pressure to close drop boxes

The same statewide requirement creates different burdens across counties.

Comparison of Mail-in and In-person Voting Systems

- Type of election system is not an accurate predictor of security
- No evidence of significant nor widespread fraud in Utah elections
- No substantive difference in voter roll maintenance between in-person and mail-in voting systems
- A continuous effort on the part of state election officials to mitigate potential fraud

Checking ID at the Drop Box

- Many statutory and ballot processing questions are raised by this requirement
- Each ID checking option would have varying costs and other considerations
- SEDI would need more research to evaluate its feasibility
- Not returning ballots via USPS would result in approximately 370,000 voters having to change their behavior
- Urban counties and rural/frontier counties would be impacted differently

IN SUMMARY

WHAT WE FOUND

There is no evidence of significant fraud or that fraud has impacted the outcome of elections in Utah

Frequent changes may harm security by causing confusion in voters and election officials

A lack of funding can lead to insufficient implementation due to lacking resources

With confusion among officials and frequent change, voter confidence may be harmed



GOOD ELECTION GOVERNANCE

Continuously monitor and implement policy when evidence requires it based on audits and other findings

Implementation done in collaboration with county officials, allowing adequate time for change

Fund state required changes to ensure better county compliance

When implementing election policy, ensure adequate voter education

QUESTIONS?

Thank you for the opportunity to conduct this study.