



Invited Responses to Investigation Report: Mono County Election Procedures: Challenges and Opportunities

Findings:

F2: The 2025-2026 Grand Jury found that, where still relevant, the Recommendations of the 2016-2017 Grand Jury had, for the most part, been implemented. The Grand Jury found the current Registrar of Voters to be experienced, competent, thorough, and more than capable of carrying out the job requirements. Clear and comprehensive procedures have been written for every aspect of the election process. Staff are trained in these procedures, and staff development and education is on-going. Regular staff meetings are held, with the number of such meetings increasing at critical times during the election period. All written material is currently proof-read by the Registrar and her Deputy and then further scrutinized by one or two additional staff members who provide fresh eyes and a final review. The elections page on the Mono County website has been updated and is kept current. However, despite the fact that the 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report found that the “Mono County’s Registrar of Voters Office needs to conduct additional voter education and outreach to eliminate confusion during elections”, the Election Procedures Committee received testimony that, at this time, zero staff hours are allocated to voter education and outreach.

Response to F2: Agree. The Board recently approved a resolution to create an Elections Program Coordinator position on April 21, 2026. Voter outreach is one of the core responsibilities of the Elections Program Coordinator. The Coordinator will also assist with things like ballot preparation and polling place management, and will be tasked with staying up to date with any legislative changes that may impact the administration of elections.

Previously, the Registrar’s Office was managing voter outreach through regular elections updates at the Board of Supervisor’s meetings during election seasons and collaborating with a local high school to recruit eligible students to volunteer as poll workers on election day.

The Elections Program Coordinator will be able to greatly enhance those existing efforts by attending community meetings, conducting registration drives, and reaching out to high schools to conduct pre-registration drives. School outreach has been and will continue to be a vital part of elections work. The Registrar’s Office has previously done outreach at schools, which can also assist in developing a new base of elections volunteers, as students 16 and older can serve as volunteers.

The Registrar’s Office made an internal promotion of an individual to the role of Elections Program Coordinator. That individual is already familiar with the workings of the office and has already begun work to prepare for the fall General Election.

Implementation of F2: Ongoing.

Implementation Timeline for F2: Ongoing.

F4: Whilst the Registrar of Voters and her staff are to be commended on the quality of their work, the Elections Procedures Committee heard testimony reporting an inability to perform to the standard and timeliness desired because staffing levels have not increased to meet the current workload. The testimony



stated that existing staff are operating at or beyond capacity, which increases the risk of errors and delays in the administration of elections.

Response to F4: Agree. The Registrar's Office is grateful for the recognition of the work we do, but certainly acknowledge that before the addition of the Elections Program Coordinator, the staffing within the Elections Office was not adequate to meet all the demands of elections work. Now that the Elections Program Coordinator role has been created and filled, it substantially increases the capacity of the Office to meet the workloads.

Implementation of F4: Complete.

Implementation Timeline for F4: Complete.

F5: The Grand Jury noted the observation made by election staff that ballots returned via the USPS are increasingly delayed, on occasions by a matter of weeks. This has a particular impact on voters in Benton, Swall Meadows and Lee Vining who must mail-in their ballots using the USPS or drive to a neighboring community to deliver their ballots, as their locations do not offer polling places or drop boxes. The Grand Jury found this to be unsatisfactory.

Response to F5: Agree. Delays within the USPS system are a state-wide concern for the 2026 General Election, and the Registrar has been in meetings with the USPS and the Secretary of State regarding delays. First and foremost, voter education about how to mitigate the impact of possible delays is an immediate remedy.

The Registrar's Office also has plans to purchase two additional drop boxes to be deployed at the Lee Vining Community Center and Benton Community Center that will be in place by the 2026 General Election.

The Registrar's Office can consider the placement of additional drop boxes in Swall Meadows or Paradise in the future. It is important to note that drop boxes come with significant additional collection requirements. They must each still be closed by 8 p.m. on Election Day, which requires a staff member or volunteer to be present to close them at that time. When the drop boxes are not affiliated with an existing polling location, it requires two workers to be on site and lock the boxes.

There is a general shortage of poll workers and the Registrar's Office is actively working to recruit additional volunteers, which could support the placement of additional boxes. Fortunately, the community of Chalfant has had an active volunteer base to draw on to assist with the new drop box in Benton. The Elections Program Coordinator can work to build the volunteer base and relationships that may facilitate adding drop boxes that can be adequately staffed.

Implementation of F5: The Registrar will continue efforts at voter education, with a focus on mitigating the impact of USPS delays and mailing ballots early. Additional drop boxes will be placed in Lee Vining and Benton for the 2026 General Election in November.

Implementation Timeline for F5: Efforts described will take place prior to the 2026 General Election in November.



Recommendations:

R1: In accordance with the findings of the 2016-2017 Grand Jury, the Registrar of Voters should institute a program of outreach work and voter education to eliminate confusion during elections. Such program might include:

- Expanding community partnerships, e.g. collaborating with County libraries and schools to host voter education workshops and voter registration drives
- Increase Multilingual Engagement
- Strengthen Youth Engagement
- Ensuring that all voters are aware of locations of polling places and drop boxes, and options for returning ballots.

Action: Chief Administrative Officer. Registrar of Voters

Timeframe: 3 months

Response to R1: Agree. This program of outreach is underway with the Elections Program Coordinator Position filled. The Registrar of Voter's Office is working to translate all materials into Spanish, as well as newspaper notices, physical postings, and voter inserts with instructions.

The Registrar currently relies on internal staff for translation, but the CAO's office can explore adding the Registrar's needs to an existing translation contract used by Health & Human Services and Behavioral Health.

Implementation of R1: The staff to achieve these outreach goals is in place and translation work to increase multilingual engagement is underway.

Implementation Timeline for R1: Translation work for materials will be completed for the 2026 General Election in November.

R2: Mono County should increase the staff of the elections office by a minimum of one full-time person to work on election management. This would enable outreach and voter education work proposed in Recommendation 1 to be carried out, ideally allowing one day per month for this work. The additional staff time would also ensure that the increasingly complex and evolving election laws and regulations are implemented in a timely manner; the more frequent and special elections can be efficiently managed; voter rolls are accurately maintained; written materials are produced that are accessible and accurate; and that all election procedures including the recruitment, training, and supervision of temporary staff is carried out.

Action: Board of Supervisors. Chief Administrative Officer. Registrar of Voters.

Timeframe: 3 months

The Mono County Civil Grand Jury is pleased to note that the Board of Supervisors, on 04.21.2026, approved an increase in staffing for the Office of the Registrar of Voters.

Response to R2: Agree. The staffing levels within the Office have presented a challenge, which the Board helped address by approving the Elections Program Coordinator. Voter outreach and



education is part of the job description for that role, and the addition of that role will facilitate and ease the delivery of

Implementation of R2: Complete.

Implementation Timeline for R2: Complete.

R3: Consideration should be given to increasing the number of polling places and/or the location of drop boxes to ensure that all communities are equally able to cast a vote or return their ballots in a nearby location.

Action: Board of Supervisors.

Timeframe: 3 months

Response to R3: Agree. The Registrar's Office should consider increasing polling places or drop box locations, but the Board recognizes that there are significant barriers to quickly standing up new polling places, such as identifying appropriate and accessible facilities in communities that may not currently have simple locations like community centers, as well as significant volunteer and staffing needs to cover a polling place or appropriately close drop boxes.

Lee Vining and Benton drop boxes will be in place and operational for the 2026 General Election in November. The Registrar can explore full polling places or additional drop boxes based on community outreach and input.

Implementation of R3: The Registrar will explore additional polling places or drop box locations through community outreach and volunteer base development to support those potential additional locations.

Implementation Timeline for R3: Any additional polling places or drop boxes, as determined feasible by the Registrar, will be completed by the 2028 General Election.