

Hand Counting Better Captures Voter Intent

By Linda Rantz, Author, *Missouri Elections: Return to Hand Counting*

The Myth: Machine Counts Always Match Hand Counts

It's often claimed that machine-tabulated election results match hand-count verifications every time. This is a myth. A 2022 survey by a clerk association revealed bipartisan hand-count teams recounted up to 8 times to "match" machine results, suggesting humans are forced to tally ballots like machines — ignoring voter intent. Why not audit the machines instead?

Finding: Machines Miss Voter Intent, Humans Don't

Machines struggle with voter intent, often misinterpreting marks outside ovals as overvotes or skipping them entirely. Missouri law (statutes 115.453, 115.456) requires a "distinguishing mark" to count votes based on intent — something humans excel at, while machines can only be programmed for certain scenarios.

Yet, election workers are often untrained on voter intent, forced to mimic machine counts, neglecting the voter's true choice. In 2022, I witnessed a certification where a machine missed a vote for an unexplained reason. The election judges flipped through ballots until they found one they decided had an oval not filled in entirely, and assumed it caused the machine to skip it.

Ensure Accurate Counts with Hand Counting

Hand counting prioritizes voter intent, using human judgment to interpret marks machines miss. The hand count training emphasizes state laws on voter intent, ensuring counters honor the voter's choice — unlike machines that may discard valid votes.

[Action for Elected Officials](#)

Protect voter intent with hand counting. Machines and untrained audits can't match human discernment. Support policies that prioritize hand counting and train election workers on voter intent laws. For more, including voter intent examples, scan the QR code, visit the hand count [website](#), or email ContactUs@ReturntoHandCounting.com.

